
Planning, Design & Access Statement

Plots 119 – 121, Phase 1B Woodcroft Farm

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement supports the submission of the full planning application for the development of 4no. houses at plots 119-121 Woodcroft Farm. The application is submitted on behalf of Vistry Group (previously Linden Homes).
- 1.2. The application site falls within the site known as Woodcroft Farm, an allocated housing site within the Havant Local Plan which has extant permission for 288 dwellings and is currently under construction. The site is divided into three Phases of residential development (1A, 1B and 2), with the application site falling within Phase 1B. The application has extant permission under the original approval (as amended) for 4 no. maisonettes and seeks to replace these with 4no. semi-detached houses. The proposed description of development is:

“Erection of 4no. dwellinghouses with associated gardens, parking and landscaping”
- 1.3. This statement sets out the background to the application, including the history of the site and the extant permissions upon it. It describes the proposals and their compliance with national planning policy as well as assessing the proposals against the Development Plan and other material planning considerations relevant to the proposals.

2. Background

- 2.1. The original planning permission for the wider development of Woodcroft Farm, granted on 5 May 2015, forms the basis for all subsequent Vistry submissions. This application, reference APP/13/00804, includes the following description of development:

“Development of 288 residential units comprising 9 x one bedroom, 110 x two bedroom, 124 x three bedroom and 45 x four bedroom, retention of existing farmhouse, new access road from Eagle Avenue, internal access roads, associated car parking, open space and landscaping and including works to trees under TPO 1931”

- 2.2. As shown above, the application included the reinstatement of an existing farmhouse on the site, seeking to retain its established use as a single residential 3-bed dwelling. However, this was later heavily vandalised and so a s96a application was submitted for its replacement with a new build four bedroom dwelling in its place. This was approved on 6 March 2020 (APP/20/00115).
- 2.3. The application site to which this statement relates comprises plots 119-121 of the extant consent, which are located adjacent to the plot subject to s96a application (plot 289), which approved the new dwelling in place of the vandalised farmhouse. The plots within the application form part of a character area, together with plot 289, within the south-western section of the wider Woodcroft Farm development.
- 2.4. The extant consent for the application site includes 4no. maisonettes. Under APP/13/00804, in terms of dwelling size, Plots 119-122 were approved as set out below. The layout of the plots comprises two buildings of 1.5 storeys with dormer windows containing a two bed flat on the ground floor (plots 119 & 121) and a one bedroom flat above (plots 120 & 122), both to be finished with flint elevations:
- Plot 119: 2 bed flat
 - Plot 120: 1 bed flat
 - Plot 121: 2 bed flat
 - Plot 122: 1 bed flat
- 2.5. Vistry Group are seeking to alter the permitted units, replacing the maisonettes with two pairs of semi-detached houses, comprising 4no. 3 bed units. Vistry Group wish to make these changes in order to ensure that the plots are reflective of the wider development now that the farmhouse can no longer be refurbished, whilst maintaining the character of this section of the wider site.

Summary of changes to approved mix

- 2.6. The overall mix of development, as shown in the description of development of the original application (APP13/00804), was approved as below:
- 1-bed: 9
 - 2-bed: 110
 - 3-bed: 124
 - 4-bed: 45

- 2.7. Following submission by Linden Homes in February 2018, a revised phasing plan was approved on April 9 2018 submitted against Condition 2 of the original consent. This phasing plan was based on a revised schedule of accommodation different to the approved description, as set out below:
- 1-bed: 9 (= to approved)
 - 2-bed: 111 (+1 to approved)
 - 3-bed: 122 (-2 to approved)
 - 4-bed: 46 (+1 to approved)
- 2.8. Two non-material amendment (NMA) or s96a applications were submitted following the approval of the development, altering the house types to reflect the new ownership of the site. These NMA's approved in April 2018 (APP/18/00217) and December 2018 (APP/18/01145) both followed the schedule and mix approved under the revised phasing plan.
- 2.9. A third NMA application (APP/19/00076) approved on 14 March 2019 resulted in the following mix of development (actually closer to that originally approved under APP/03/00804):
- 1-bed: 9 (= to originally approved)
 - 2-bed: 111 (+1 to originally approved)
 - 3-bed: 123 (-1 to originally approved)
 - 4-bed: 45 (= to originally approved)
- 2.10. This further proposed revision has been submitted as a full planning application rather than as an amendment to the original consent as a result of a recent High Court ruling on 5 November 2019 (Finney vs Welsh Ministers), which determined that a s73 application cannot be used to change the description of a development, which would be the case in this scenario due to the inclusion of the housing mix within the description of development of the original application for Woodcroft Farm. Notwithstanding this, the proposed changes under this application would result in the overall mix of units across the Woodcroft Farm development being as follows:
- 1-bed: 7 (-2 to originally approved)
 - 2-bed: 113 (+3 to originally approved)
 - 3-bed: 123 (-1 to originally approved)
 - 4-bed: 45 (= to originally approved)
- 2.11. As a result of the application, there would be no net change to the number of approved dwellings as the 288 plus the retained farmhouse on the original planning permission equate to the same 289 total units that the proposed changes would deliver.

3. Proposals

- 3.1. The application seeks full planning consent for 4no. dwellings within the new housing development at Woodcroft Farm. The proposals look to replace four previously consented dwellings approved under the original application (APP/03/00804) with dwellings of different design, layout and mix but without increasing the number of total units consented across the wider Woodcroft Farm site. As such the application can be seen as a swap in house types rather than a fundamental alteration.

Proposed alterations

- 3.2. Figure 1 below shows the application site both as approved by the original consent (as amended by the various aforementioned NMAs) compared with the proposed alterations.

Figure 1: Approved and Proposed Layout



- 3.3. The changes shown within these images are described below.

Layout

- 3.4. The proposal seeks to alter the layout of the approved scheme from 4no. maisonettes to 4no. semi-detached houses. This continues to take the form of two separate buildings as approved, but with some differences in layout.

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- 3.5. Firstly, the height of the buildings would alter slightly from 1.5 storeys to two storeys under the proposals. The southernmost building would continue to face to east looking towards the previous Farmhouse location (plot 289), with the northern building being altered to face the north. The proposed buildings will also now have private rather than communal gardens with the associated boundary treatment. This proposed layout allows for parking to remain located to the rear of the properties as accessed from the north.

Design and Character

- 3.6. As described above, the design of the properties would be increased in height by 0.5 storey and take the form of semi-detached buildings rather than maisonettes. The external appearance would therefore alter to show a more traditional semi-detached layout with individual front doors within the principle elevation of the dwellings, fronting the highway. It is proposed that the dwellings would continue to be constructed using flint elevations to reflect the character area of this part of the Woodcroft Farm site and respect the design of Plot 289.

Housing Mix

- 3.7. The proposed mix for the application would be 4no. two bedroom semi-detached market dwellings, as opposed to 2no. one bed and 2no. two bed maisonettes. This is a minor change from that of the extant consent for the wider Woodcroft Farm site. This would result in an overall mix of 7no. one bed, 113no. two bed, 123no. three bed and 45no. four bed units. This is largely in line with that of the original planning application for the wider site (APP/03/00804) and only a change of 2no. one beds changing to 2no. two beds following the most recent NMA to the original consent.

Parking

- 3.8. To reflect the change in housing mix proposed within the site, the application includes an additional two parking spaces. The parking court remains in the same location, to the west of the dwellings and accessed from the north. This increase creates a small additional area of hardstanding but the alterations are minimal.

Landscaping

- 3.9. As a result of the alterations in layout and parking, this application proposes some minor changes to landscaping. In terms of tree planting, it is proposed that the tree to the south of the site be relocated further to the west to the rear of plot 121. As a result of the inclusion of private gardens and increased parking provision, it is proposed that two trees will be located to the west of the parking court rather than three. This is considered sufficient, given the proximity to existing trees within the area of open space to the west of the application site. There are also minor changes proposed to the landscaping to the front of the proposed buildings, with low level planting being proposed, along with low level hedging and grassed areas around the perimeter of the site.
- 3.10. In terms of hard landscaping, there are some minor alterations to the front of the properties to allow for pathways leading to the front doors of the new dwellings, along with a small amount of additional hardstanding within the parking area. There will also be boundary treatments included within the scheme due to the introduction of private rear gardens, with brick walls being used where facing the public realm and close-boarded fencing separating the gardens.

4. Liaison with Havant Borough Council

- 4.1. A series of draft proposals were submitted to Havant Borough Council (HBC) on an informal basis in November 2019, to seek views on the acceptability of the proposed alterations. In relation to Plots 119 – 121, the following comments made up the officer's informal opinion.
- 4.2. It was considered that the proposed changes would normally be considered a s73 (Minor Material Amendment) application. However, a recent High Court ruling on 5 November 2019 (Finney vs Welsh Ministers) means that a s73 application cannot be used to change the description of a development and a new full application would be required to change the description.
- 4.3. The original scheme provided a setting for the old farmhouse and, whilst the farmhouse has gone, it was suggested that the maintenance of this 'character area' was an important consideration to any proposed amendment. Comment was made to retaining the subservient nature of Plots 119-121 to Plot 289 where the farmhouse would have been located, and continuing the use of flint as previously proposed.
- 4.4. Regarding the current nitrate neutrality issue affecting the Solent area, it was the officer's view that the approved scheme was not required to address this under the Habitats Regulation, but it would now need to be addressed in any full application. The issue of nitrate neutrality for this application is addressed in section 7.

6. National Planning Policy

- 6.1. The Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019 is material to decision making in respect of all planning applications.
- 6.2. The planning system plays an important role in supporting house building and economic growth, acknowledged throughout the NPPF which, at its heart, is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking, the NPPF is clear that this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay (Paragraph 11).
- 6.3. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing (Paragraph 47). The application site is located within an existing strategic allocation and consented development site within the Development Plan.
- 6.4. Chapter 12 of the NPPF promotes the Government's intention to achieve well-designed places. Paragraph 124 sets out that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 6.5. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF sets out that planning decisions should ensure that developments:
- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
 - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live;
 - optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and
 - create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 6.6. Paragraph 130 states that, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.

7. Planning Considerations

- 7.1. The current Development Plan for Havant Borough Council comprises the Local Plan (Core Strategy) adopted March 2011, and the Local Plan (Allocations) adopted July 2014.
- 7.2. HBC are in the process of creating a revised Local Plan, known as the Havant Borough Local Plan 2036. The most recent development on the emerging new Local Plan was the publication of the Pre-Submission version of the document in January 2019 and the corresponding Regulation 19 consultation between 1 February and 18 March 2019. HBC have not yet submitted the emerging Local Plan for examination. A date for submission has not yet been decided upon.
- 7.3. Given the delay in the emerging Local Plan, it is considered that it cannot be given weight in assessing planning applications at this stage. As such, this section assesses the proposals against the current Development Plan.

Principle of Development

- 7.4. The land at Woodcroft Farm is allocated under Policy CS18 (Strategy Site Delivery) of the Havant Borough Core Strategy as a strategic site, critical to achieving the Core Strategy vision. The site is allocated for residential development of up to 340 units. As such, the principle of developing housing within the Woodcroft Farm site, as this application seeks to do, is well established and does not seek to increase the amount of housing to be provided compared with the extant consent.

Housing Mix

- 7.5. The proposed housing mix for the application is 4no. two bed semi-detached houses, to be provided for open market sale. Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that the mix of housing within a development meets the needs of the community. As shown in section 2, the proposed mix of the application site makes only minor changes to the mix of plots 119-121 by changing the previously proposed 2no. one bed and 2no. two bed maisonettes into 4no. two bed houses. This is largely in line with the mix approved under the original application for the wider Woodcroft Farm site, the mix for which was deemed to be acceptable, and only changes the approved mix under the most recent NMA (APP/19/00076) by an increase of 2no. two bed units and a decrease on 2 no. one bed units.
- 7.6. In addition, the proposals seek to make changes to plots which are currently consented as open market dwellings and so make no alteration to the overall mix of open market and affordable units. Policy CS9 confirms that application of less than five units are not liable for affordable housing provision in their own right. As such, it is considered that the proposed housing mix for the application is acceptable and meets with policies of the Local Plan.

Layout and Residential Amenity

- 7.7. The proposed layout of the application seeks to have one pair of semi-detached properties facing north towards the frontages of houses on the opposite side of the internal roads, and the other semi-detached pair facing the side elevation of plot 289 to the east of the site.

- 7.8. Given the proposed layout, there are no back-to-back scenarios to be considered in line with the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (adopted December 2011). However, the layout has been designed to ensure the garden lengths and distances between dwellings are approximately 10m as per section 5.05 of the Design Guide. The minimum 10m separate distances between dwellings both within the application site and relative to those already consented beyond the red line of this application also ensures adequate daylight in accordance with section 5.08 of the Design Guide.
- 7.9. The scheme has also been designed to avoid unacceptable overlooking of private gardens, as per section 5.06 of the Design Guide, with the only side windows at first floor level being located in bathrooms. Each property within the application site will have its only private rear garden, in accordance with section 5.12 of the Design Guide. Bins would be stored in the rear gardens with bin collection points located in the rear parking area and to the side of plot 121, which provide convenient access for both residents and refuse workers, in line with section 5.24 of the Design Guide.
- 7.10. As such, it is considered that the proposed layout of the scheme is acceptable and provides a good level of residential amenity to both the proposed units and those surrounding the site.

Design and Character

- 7.11. The proposed design of the properties within this application are traditional two storey semi-detached houses reflective of the design approach across the wider Woodcroft Farm scheme. The area around the previous farmhouse location at plot 289 had been designed as a character area within the wider development but, due to the loss of the farmhouse due to vandalism, the design of plot 289 is now more in line with the wider development, providing a high quality, traditionally designed four bed detached house. Plot 289 was designed to retain features of the original proposal, including a small front garden and being built using flint elevations. The plots within this application have been redesigned to reflect the character of the amendments to plot 289. However, each of the plots are proposed to be constructed with flint elevations, mirroring the extant consent for plot 289 and helping to maintain the character of this area of the wider site. The proposed dwellings are also smaller and subservient in nature to the larger dwelling at plot 289, as was the design principle within the extant consent. As such, it is considered that the design and character of the application is in line with the extant consent for the site, reflects its location and subservient nature and is in keeping with the principle of maintaining a character area within the wider site.

Access and Parking

- 7.12. The proposed access to the application site is from within the wider Woodcroft Farm site. The layout of the internal roads are not altered by this application and so access is judged to be acceptable. The application site will join the adopted highway, with the internal roads within the wider site currently being proposed for adoption (as per the s38 plan submitted with this application).
- 7.13. The parking for the proposed scheme has been provided to meet the requirements of the Parking SPD (Adopted July 2016 – partially updated September 2019). The SPD requires a minimum of two parking spaces to be provided for each two bedroom unit. The extant consent included six parking spaces within the application site area due to requirement for two spaces for the 2no. two bed units and one space for each of the 2no. one bed units. Now that the proposals comprise 4no. two bed dwellings, there is a requirement for at least eight parking spaces to be provided. The application has therefore been

designed to include eight parking spaces for the four proposed dwellings in the same location as that of the extant consent. The additional spaces make very minor alterations to the extant layout, by extending the rear parking area by the length of an additional parking space. As such, it is considered that the access and parking is acceptable, being in line with the current permissions for the site and according with the standards of the SPD.

Landscaping

- 7.14. Policy DM8 of the Core Strategy (Conservation, Protection and Enhancement of Existing Natural Features) requires new development proposals to provide new landscape works which integrate with the local environment. The proposals within this application differ slightly from those approved due to layout changes but, in general follow, the principle of the extant consent, which was considered acceptable against the relevant development management policies. The proposals include new tree planting to supplement the existing retained trees close to the application site to the west and to enhance the appearance of the public realm. They also include low level hedging, plating and grassed areas along with sympathetic hard landscaping to accommodate new paths, parking spaces and attractive boundary treatments, as detailed in the landscaping plans provided with this application. As such, it is considered that the application accords with the requirements of policy DM8 and reflects the landscaping of the extant consent.

Ecology

- 7.15. Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development that ensures the protection and enhancement of the environment including landscape, built form, nature conservation designations, supports an ongoing programme of survey of habitats and species, and protects wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors. The application seeks to remain fully in line with the extant consent, which incorporates a range of wildlife and biodiversity enhancements including additional planting, wildlife corridors and linkages. The application for the wider scheme fully assessed the environment and the scheme provides appropriate mitigation as set out within the approved Ecological Reports. It is considered that the proposals within this application do not alter this position.

Nitrate Neutrality

- 7.16. In 2018, it was found that the level of nitrates in the Solent Special Protection Area (SPA) were approaching a 'critical level'. In light of this, and following a Court of Justice of the European Union decision (known as the 'Dutch Case'), Natural England ruled that no planning permissions should be granted for any development that creates 'overnight accommodation' until such time a strategic solution is developed for the sub-region.
- 7.17. However, there is scope for each planning application to be able to demonstrate 'nitrate neutrality', whereby the proposals do not create a net increase in nitrate pollution, in order for planning permission to be permissible. As a result, HBC published its 'Position statement on nutrient neutral development' on 26 June 2019, setting out its stance in relation to the matter.

- 7.18. In assessing the impact of the application at hand, it is important to consider that the proposals contained within this it could normally be dealt with via a s73 application to amend the extant consent, had the original consent not included the proposed housing mix within the description of development (as detailed in section 2 of this statement). This technicality is the only reason that a full application is required in place of a s73 application. The consequences in terms of nitrate neutrality are therefore to be considered. As the application is not materially different from a s73 application, it is considered that the section 50 of the Council's Nitrate Neutrality Statement applies, which states that "*Other types of application, including reserved matters, those made under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act and re-submitted applications will be considered by the Council as competent authority on a case by case basis.*" Given there is an existing consent for the proposed development of 4no. residential units on this site, which is currently extant, and that the proposals do not seek to change the level of overnight accommodation associated with that consent, it is considered that there is no net increase in nitrates to be produced as a result of this application and is thereby neutral in impact. The site is also currently under construction across Phase 1B, demonstrating that the units consented are being delivered.

Drainage

- 7.19. The dwellings will connect into the drainage infrastructure that has been approved through the discharge of conditions 16 & 17 of the original consent, with Southern Water adopting the drainage infrastructure. As with the original application for the wider scheme, foul sewage for the proposed development will be connected to the mains, with surface water held on site before being transferred to the nearest point of discharge to the south west of the Woodcroft Farm site. Due to the presence of solution features on site, there are no soakaways proposed.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 7.20. HBC adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 1 August 2013 and, as a result, the extant consent for the wider Woodcroft Farm scheme was liable for the levy when approved in 2015. Any application for new residential floorspace is CIL liable under the HBC CIL charging schedule, with C3 units outside of Emsworth and Hayling Island having a rating of £119.29 per sqm (£80 per sqm based on 2013 data, plus current indexation to 2020). Whilst the application does not seek to alter the number of proposed C3 units, there is a slightly decreased level of floorspace proposed. The level of decreased floorspace is set out within the CIL questions form, which accompanies this application and will be discussed with the Council's CIL officer as part of the application process.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. To summarise, the application to which this statement relates seeks full planning permission for 4no. dwellinghouses located within the wider development site known as Woodcroft Farm. The application site is subject to an extant planning consent which gives consent for 4no. maisonettes. The new proposals seek to instead provide two pairs of semi-detached two bedroom dwellings, a minor change to the approved layout in this section of the site. However, due to a recent court judgement, the proposed alterations cannot be dealt with via a s73 application due to the inclusion of the proposed housing mix within the original description of development, which now cannot be changed via an amendment application.
- 8.2. Notwithstanding this, the proposals continue to be minor in nature compared with that of the extant consent and are fully in line with both national and local planning policy. As such, it is respectfully requested that the application be approved without delay.

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