



STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

October 2014

Land at
Wykham Park Farm
Banbury

GALLAGHER
ESTATES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared by David Lock Associates (DLA) on behalf of Gallagher Estates ('the applicant'). The statement has been produced to outline and explain the approach that has been taken and is being taken to engage stakeholders and the local community in the proposals for the land at Wykham Park Farm.

1.2 The outline planning application for land at Wykham Park Farm will deliver a number of community benefits including a local centre comprising a mix of business and community uses.

1.3 Within this context, the outline planning application is being submitted for the following:

- up to 1000 residential dwellings (class C3);
- land for a primary school (class D1);
- local centre to comprise retail, community and other services (classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1 and D2);
- green infrastructure including formal pitches, informal open space, landscape areas and children's play spaces;
- sustainable urban drainage systems including balancing ponds and drainage channels;
- connections to the surrounding highway and footpath network;
- infrastructure and utilities provision including car parking; and
- ground remodelling, engineering works.

1.4 The proposed development provides an opportunity to promote a high quality mixed use development that delivers significant planning gain in the form of new homes, jobs and community facilities (including a primary school) whilst enhancing the setting of existing site features to include significant mature trees and hedgerows.

1.5 The Cherwell Local Plan is currently at examination stage. The Examination in Public commenced in June 2014, and has now been formally suspended following a request by the Inspector to identify further land for housing so as to demonstrate the plan adequately meets its objectively assessed housing needs as identified in the 2014 SHMA. Whilst the plan does not form part of the statutory development plan, it

is a material consideration and provides an indication of the growth strategy for the district over a 20 year period.

- 1.6 The spatial strategy identified by the Plan is to manage growth within the district and focuses the bulk of growth in and around the towns of Bicester and Banbury. As such it is clear that Banbury will make a substantial contribution in meeting the housing needs of the district.
- 1.7 The emerging Cherwell Local Plan provides a robust policy framework with which to plan the development of the south-western edge of Banbury. Indeed, the application has been informed by and prepared alongside the emerging Local Plan and Banbury Master Plan, including collaboration and consultation with Cherwell District Council and their masterplanning consultants.
- 1.8 The proposals seek to deliver key infrastructure elements that are required by the proposed development, likely to be towards transport improvements and any necessary contributions towards education facilities that are necessary to mitigate the impacts of development.
- 1.9 The application proposals respond to and reflect the outcome of a public consultation event and various comments received in relation to design issues and other technical matters that have been raised alongside preparation of the application.

2.0 THE BASIS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Community involvement is an inherent and increasingly central part of planning policy formulation and decision making on planning applications. This stems from the publication of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and as part of the reformed planning system including the 'localism' agenda.
- 2.2 Increasing the transparency of the planning system and incorporating all interests within the decision-making process should occur at all levels. It is stressed that efforts should be made to involve all interested parties and that stakeholder involvement should inform and influence proposals and planning decision making.
- 2.3 This section summarises the key national and local policy guidance on the importance of public consultation and how this has informed the approach to community engagement in relation to the proposed development of land at Wykham Park Farm.

National Policy Guidance***The Localism Act (2011)***

- 2.4 The Localism Act, places emphasis on consultation to strengthen the role of local communities in planning and introduces a mechanism whereby developers of particular types of scheme may be required to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments (e.g. larger scale major developments).
- 2.5 Specifically Section 122 makes provision for a development order to be prepared to describe the proposed developments that might be subject to such a requirement.
- 2.6 Despite the passing of time since Royal Assent was given to for the Act, Regulations have yet to be placed before Parliament to give effect to the mechanism that is provided for in The Localism Act and to set out the terms of such a requirement to consult. In the absence of such provisions and Regulations there is no legal requirement to consult prior to submitting a planning application.

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

- 2.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (the “NPPF”) emphasises the importance of front loading. The NPPF states that early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties, but notes that local planning authorities “cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application” (para 189).
- 2.8 Similarly, in relation to the local community it is open to the local planning authority to “encourage” applicants to consult with the local community.

Local Policy Guidance

Cherwell Statement of Community Involvement (2006)

- 2.9 Cherwell District Council adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in July 2006. It sets out how and when people can take part in planning the future of Cherwell. For applications involving residential development in urban areas on sites of 1.5 hectares or more, a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) must be prepared and submitted with the application. This SCI demonstrates that engagement with key stakeholders and the local community has informed the evolution of the application proposals.

3.0 APPROACH TO CONSULTATION

3.1 This section of the Statement sets out the approach that has been taken to consultation and how this has informed the formulation of the proposed scheme.

3.2 The site was subject of an application in 2013, for 1000 dwellings, (13/00321/OUT). The application was withdrawn to allow the proposals to be developed and refined. As part of the preparation of that application, a public exhibition was arranged which aimed to engage residents in the emerging proposals and draw out the key issues and define design principles.

Public Consultation Event

3.3 A public consultation event was held on Thursday the 29th of November 2012 in Castle Quay Shopping Centre, Banbury. The consultation ran from 10am until 6pm. Holding the event on a Thursday to coincide with Banbury Charter Market, in the town centre near Castle Quay provided the opportunity for as many people to attend as possible. The event was advertised through a press notice in the Banbury Guardian newspaper.

3.4 The event was held in the Centre Dome Site in the Castle Quay Shopping Centre, with a display of six, A1 boards detailing the proposals, with illustrative images and site plans.

3.5 The consultation event was attended by 114 people. The general discussion with attendees at the consultation event was generally positive, with many attendees supportive of the proposals and keen to see a sustainable urban extension located to the south of Banbury. There were however a number of issues raised both by attendees and those who completed a questionnaire.

3.6 In relation to the need for housing in the District including affordable housing, issues raised through discussion centred on the publics recognised need for housing in the area. The small number of completed questionnaire responses however suggest that Banbury is not an appropriate location to accommodate housing growth. The majority of those that completed the questionnaire live close to the proposal site, and whilst they supported the concept of housing growth in general, did not consider favourably housing growth adjacent to where they live.

3.7 There were five areas of concern raised by attendees at the exhibition and these are set out below.

Volume of traffic, congestion, transport infrastructure and parking

- 3.8 Concern was raised about the amount of traffic that would be generated by the development, particularly the increased pressure on the local road networks as a result of the proposal, particularly along Bloxham Road, as the main entrance into the site. Existing problems of car parking in the residential areas surrounding and relating to the Blessed George Napier Catholic School was highlighted as an issue.

Response

- 3.9 Traffic and local road network was considered in the development of the proposal for Wykham Park Farm; as such junction improvements were developed in consideration of this component of the development. The mix of uses on site seeks to reduce the need to travel off site for some day-to-day uses. The development will encourage sustainable means of transport. It is well located to the town centre and a wide range of local facilities, which will allow many journeys to be made on foot or by cycle. The site is well situated adjacent to footpaths and cycleways and routes within the site will connect into these. Improvements to the Oxford Road / Bloxham Road junction will be required with improved pedestrian facilities. Signalisation of the Bloxham Road / Queensway junction is proposed with pedestrian phases included to improve pedestrian facilities on Bloxham Road and Queensway. Also, Council parking standards and an appropriate mix of parking types will be adhered to ensure adequate car parking is provided as part of the proposal.

Banbury does not need any more housing

- 3.10 A number of respondents made comments in relation to housing, stating that there was no further need for housing in Banbury.

Response

- 3.11 Cherwell District Council needs to find land for additional homes as evidenced through the examination into the Cherwell Local Plan. The Examination in Public commenced in June 2014, and has now been formally suspended following a request by the Inspector to identify further land for housing so as to demonstrate the plan adequately meets its objectively assessed housing needs as identified in the 2014 SHMA. The Council, has been asked to suggest main modifications to the plan to include allocation of a range of additional development sites to meet this identified need. The emerging Cherwell Local Plan also states that it intends to manage growth around the settlements of Bicester and Banbury, on sites that are 'within or immediately adjoining' these two settlements. Wykham Park Farm is in a sustainable location immediately adjoining the town of Banbury and can deliver much needed

housing in the District. As part of the main modifications to the Plan, land at Wykham Park Farm has been allocated, through draft Policy Banbury 17, as part of a number of sites to deliver housing to the south west of Banbury to help address this need.

- 3.12 Average house prices in the District are also high (£247,106 in 2013¹), which is making it difficult for many in the District to get onto the housing ladder. The proposed development at Wykham Park Farm for up to 1,000 new homes (including affordable homes) would help provide for the existing population and to support the growth of the local economy.

Flooding / Drainage

- 3.13 A number of members of the public raised concern about the capacity of the existing drainage systems to cope with the new proposal, as well as the potential risk of flooding on the site.

Response

- 3.14 The site is not at any risk of flooding high or low as defined on the Environment Agency indicative floodplain maps. Due to the introduction of impermeable surfaces by the proposed development, appropriate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) will be implemented in order to reduce flood risk, and manage surface water generated by the site.

Concern over the Salt Way

- 3.15 A few respondents commented on the Salt Way and with concern that the Salt Way would be removed as part of the proposal.

Response

- 3.16 The development seeks to preserve and where possible enhance the landscape setting of the Salt Way, the development presents a clear opportunity to reinforce the use of Salt Way as a green movement corridor, with potential to better facilitate east-west movement, linking the Sor Brook Valley to the surrounding network of footpaths around Wykham Park Farm. The existing crossing points within the Salt Way provide direct north-south footway and cycle links between the development and the existing development to the north, connecting into Grange Road and adjacent to the play area at the junction of Grange Road and Beaconsfield Road.

¹ www.bbcnews.co.uk

Coalescence of rural settlements

3.17 A small number of comments were received suggesting the Salt Way is a boundary to growth south and the development would result in coalescence with settlements to the south.

Response

3.18 Furthermore, the design approach adopted with regard to the layout of open space at the eastern part of the site reflects a conscious approach to preclude built development so as to retain a clear visual separation between Bodicote and the site.

3.19 Other matters raised included :

- The suggestion that a “by-pass needs to be built”;
- “Houses today are built far too small – no more than 18th and 19th Century slums”;
- “Empty properties need to be improved that already exist”;
- Aesthetics of development;
- Security; and
- The “need for farming land for food production as UK population increases”.

3.20 Support for the proposals was expressed. A summary of comments received is set out below:

- The proposal would provide much needed housing to enable a number of people who are trying to get on the housing ladder.
- The scheme includes an element of affordable housing which is important when house values are so high in the District.
- The indicative master plan’s layout means that no existing residential areas are directly affected by the proposal.
- It is important that one of the Design Principles states that architecture and materials will take reference from local examples as there are a number of historic settlements in the local area which this proposal must respect.
- A mix of dwelling sizes is necessary to cater for the range of demand.

3.21 A number of people who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the design principles.

Communication with Tudor Hall School

- 3.22 Discussions took place with Tudor Hall School, a border school located south of the site, whose formal access is located immediately south of the proposed site access. Concerns were expressed over views of the employment development from the school's access road.
- 3.23 Careful consideration was given to views from the west, particularly the setting of the access to Tudor Hall School. In response, the employment area has been removed from the proposals and an area of strategic planting is proposed to create a softer landscaped site entrance and to complement and reinforce the parkland setting of Tudor Hall School.

Review of consultation responses received in respect of previous Master plan

- 3.24 A number of comments were made by Oxfordshire County Council's Transport Planner and Cherwell District Council's Design and Conservation Officer, relating to the form and layout of the proposed development and the lack of opportunities for integration and connectivity that it presents.
- 3.25 The Design and Access Statement, movement strategy and Illustrative Master Plan demonstrate the approach adopted to ensure a permeable layout that maximises the potential for walkable neighbourhoods, based around a spine route accessing Bloxham Road (A361). A public transport route is provided within the site that has been informed by informal discussions with Stagecoach who service the public transport along Bloxham Road and could provide an extended 488 service into the site, furthermore, the site's proximity to the residential area of Easington immediately north of Salt Way will provide opportunities for new residents to use the existing B1 service to Banbury that serves residents of Easington.
- 3.26 The proposals demonstrate how the site can accommodate an eastern local traffic link beyond the site to connect to Bodicote. This approach is dependent upon conclusions drawn from the wider Banbury Movement Strategy.
- 3.27 The internal layout is designed to accommodate not just public transport but the private car, cyclists and pedestrians providing multiple options to move around the site. A network of secondary and tertiary routes provides access to all other parts of the site that form a coherent hierarchy that will create an easily understood and highly accessible urban environment.

- 3.28 Concern was raised regarding the treatment of built development in relation to Salt Way. The application proposals demonstrate a sensitive approach to development adjacent to the Salt Way, preserving and enhancing its character through the creation of a landscape buffer of some 15 metre in width along the full extent of the Salt Way where it abuts the development site.
- 3.29 Concern was raised that local site amenities should be co-located to anchor the community and foster a focus of activity within the site. The layout of the mixed use area has been reconsidered, and is now provided centrally within the site, adjacent to the bus loop and central open space. The local centre is co-located with the primary school, that sits at the northern edge to complement the existing education facilities to the north of Salt Way.
- 3.30 Concerns were raised with regard to landscape and visual impact from Salt Way, Bloxham Road and long distance views from Crouch Hill. Large corridors of open space and structural planting within the site provides distinction and relief from the built form and serves to filter views of the site.

WYG Engagement with Banbury Master Plan Process

- 3.31 In parallel with production of a Banbury Master Plan to support the plan-led growth of Banbury, the applicant and their consultant team have been engaging with Cherwell District Council's design consultants to explore the more strategic growth of Banbury and consider how the proposal for land at Wykham Park Farm could contribute to the creation of new local communities at the south west of Banbury with strong local links to the town centre.
- 3.32 Through this process it is agreed that the broad layout and design of development at the Banbury SW area should reflect the existing character and form of the landscape and should contribute to the creation and enhancement of local green infrastructure networks.
- 3.33 Key structuring elements for the site include an appropriate development interface with Salt Way, (any buffer is likely to be some 10-20 metres in accordance with the approach adopted at land east of Bloxham Road and south of Salt Way); Public open space to form a well connected network of green areas within the site, suitable for informal and formal recreation, the latter located and phased to come forward at the eastern end of the site; and creation of a principal access off the Bloxham Road (A361); and a layout that accommodates for a future east-west link for local traffic should it be required.

The Current Proposals

3.34 The illustrative master plan refines the concepts established through the design process to date. It seeks to establish an attractive, sustainable urban extension of Banbury that, importantly, will become a place where people will want to live.

3.35 Key features of the illustrative master plan comprise:

- Open space and green infrastructure framework that provides a setting for new development;
- Creation of a series of strong green infrastructure links North-south and east-west across the site to include the retention of key areas of hedgerows and trees
- Extension of the existing copse adjacent to Bloxham Road;
- Strong structural planting at the site entrance to create a landscape gateway to visually link with the parkland of Tudor Hall School;
- Areas of formal and informal open space and pitch provision, including play areas and allotments;
- Main street providing access to the new development areas which will also support public transport provision. The main street will be designed as a street within a landscape setting.
- Co-location of mixed-uses to provide a community focus, to include a local centre and primary school;
- Discrete development parcels providing an opportunity for different character areas to be established;
- Provision for surface water attenuation as part of the open space network.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Council's SCI the scheme for the proposed development that has now been submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval has been informed by targeted consultation involving the local community and key stakeholders.
- 4.2 Public consultation with the local community on proposals has assisted in the development of the application and the scheme itself which is proposed.
- 4.3 We have reviewed the consultation responses to the scheme previously proposed for Land at Wykham Park Farm, for which there was limited objection from the local community. This process has led to a number of important refinements to the Master Plan that have been discussed and agreed in consultation with the Local Planning Authority and their design consultants White Young Green.
- 4.3 It is considered that the development proposals submitted are robustly informed by public engagement and a process of critical reflection of stakeholder comments received in respect of the previous proposals for the site.
- 4.4 This feedback process have been valuable in helping to shape the form and design of the current submission and such issues have been addressed through further master plan iterations through close dialogue by representatives of Gallagher Estates, and Cherwell District Council.
- 4.5 The statutory consultation process will provide a further opportunity for consultation on the current application proposals. This will include consultation organised by the Local Planning Authority as part of its statutory and SCI obligations.
- 4.6 Further consultation is therefore likely to include:
- public advertisements including the display site notices in the vicinity and neighbour notification letters being despatched to existing residents in the vicinity;
 - the making available of the application drawings, Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, and related application documentation at the Council Offices at Cherwell District Council and through the provision of CDs where requested;

- further discussions as appropriate with statutory consultees and other stakeholders and the consideration of any formal representations received.

4.5 The applicant intends to monitor and evaluate responses made to the Council on the proposal during this process and will seek to address any issues or respond with additional information, as appropriate.

4.6 The applicant's continued aim is to deliver a high quality development that will be positive for new residents of the development and for the local community, help provide much needed housing (including affordable housing) as well as community benefits for new and existing residents.

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