CHAPTER 4:

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND DESIGN EVOLUTION

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4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Paragraph 2, Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires the Appellant to provide *"a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects."*

4.1.2 This chapter describes the reasonable alternatives considered by the Appellant, including the 'do nothing' scenario, and documents how the design of the Proposed Development has evolved, taking environmental effects into account.

4.2 'Do Nothing' Scenario

4.2.1 The consideration of alternatives, as required by the EIA Regulations, should address the evolution of the Site in the absence of the Proposed Development in question. This is known as the 'do nothing' scenario.

4.2.2 In the absence of the Proposed Development, it is reasonable to assume that the Site would remain in agricultural use as arable farmland, and continue to be cropped with spring barley (as has been done over the past few years).

4.2.3 The continued use of the Site as arable farmland would mean that the Site would fail to contribute to key housing policy aspirations for the Borough of Fareham.

4.2.4 Policy CS2: Housing Provision of Fareham Borough Council's (FBC's) Core Strategy[1] states 3,729 dwellings will be provided within the Borough to meet the South Hampshire sub-regional strategy housing target between 2006 and 2026, excluding the Strategic Development Area (SDA); however, the spatial policies for the supply of housing do not meet current housing needs.

4.2.5 The Site was identified as Development Allocation HA5 in the Draft Local Plan 2036 (2017), which states that the Site has an indicative capacity of 225 dwellings. Whilst this Development Allocation was removed from the Draft Local Plan 2036 (2017), the Appellant has promoted that it be re-included.

4.2.6 The Proposed Development would comprise of 225 dwellings, of which 40% are affordable (in alignment with the draft allocation). If this Site were not to come forward it would not contribute towards achieving their housing and affordable housing targets.

4.2.7 Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that should the Proposed Development not be successful (and the Appellant is unsuccessful in promoting the Site for the Local Plan) this Site would likely remain as an agricultural field in the future.

4.3 Alternative Sites

4.3.1 Alternative locations for the Proposed Development have not been considered. The Site is in an ideal location for residential use, as it is situated in close proximity to surrounding facilities (medical, educational and recreational, as noted in **Chapter 2: The Site**) and has

[1] Fareham Borough Council (2011) Fareham Borough Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy.

good transport links, being approximately 2 km to the southwest of Portchester Railway Station and approximately 200 m to the south of the nearest bust stop.

4.3.2 Additionally, given that the Site is the only location in close proximity that is under the Appellant's control and it was identified as Development Allocation HA5 in the Draft Local Plan 2036 (2017), no other sites have been considered.

4.3.3 In these circumstances, whereby alternative locations are not explored, it is an accepted approach to look at the reasonable alternatives studied by the Appellant on the Site; this can include design options and iterations.

4.4 Consideration of Design Iterations

4.4.1 The design takes as its starting point the initial development layout that was prepared, prior to the development that was submitted as part of the August 2018 planning application, as shown below.

Initial Design (Pre-August 2018 Planning Application Design) Layout

4.4.2 The initial design layout, developed prior to the August 2018 planning application design layout, allowed for maximum development of the Site whilst taking into account the need to provide open space and surface water attenuation on-Site, as shown in **Figure 4.1**.

Figure 4.1 Initial Design (Pre-August 2018 Planning Application Design) Layout

4.4.3 This layout provided:

- a 10 m landscape buffer between properties located along the north of the Site and those neighbouring properties located along Romsey Avenue;
- a road layout which matched the surrounding context; and
- surface water attenuation in the south-west corner of the Site, due to the topography of the land; it being the lowest point on-Site.

4.4.4 However, the initial design layout was amended to reflect further Site opportunities and constraints, the type and size of dwellings required, and the provision of open space required on-Site.

August 2018 Planning Application Design Layout

4.4.5 The August 2018 planning application design layout, which was for the hybrid planning application, is presented in **Figure 4.2**.

Figure 4.2 August 2018 Planning Application Design Layout

4.4.6 This layout provided:

- a detailed element of development (in the northeast corner of the Site);
- an outline element of development (in the centre and south of the Site);
- public open space (POS) along the western boundary of the Site; and
- sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) ponds.

4.4.7 The number of dwellings to be provided on-Site was reduced to 225 dwellings (from 250 dwellings), in accordance with the aspirations of Development Allocation HA5 of the Draft Local Plan 2036 (2017), which states that the Site has an indicative capacity of 225 dwellings.

4.4.8 The open space proposed for the Site was relocated to the western boundary. This was due to a Site constraint of an existing sewer running beneath the western part of the Site. This allowed for a greater quantum of open space to be provided, resulting in a higher provision of amenity space for the proposed residents, whilst also providing ecological benefits through the provision of a green corridor. This in turn would result in the health and wellbeing benefits to existing and proposed residents.

4.4.9 Surface water attenuation, in the form of SuDS ponds, remained proposed in the south west corner of the Site, to enable the Site to achieve greenfield runoff rates. This would contribute to reducing any adverse effects in relation to surface water runoff; however, it would result in the removal of existing trees located along the south western boundary of the Site, leading to potential adverse ecological effects from the Proposed Development.

Amended Layout 1

4.4.10 Since the submission of the August 2018 planning application, the proposed layout of the Site continued to change, resulting in the Amended Layout 1 (as shown in **Figure 4.3**).

4.4.11 The design provided the layout of proposed new dwellings in the form of an ‘L’ shape, resulting in a greater provision of open space located in the southern portion of the Site. Similar to the previous layout design, the increase in amenity and open space would have beneficial health and wellbeing effects for the proposed residents using such space.

4.4.12 This design allowed for the retention of existing trees located along the south western boundary of the Site, reducing the ecological impacts of the Proposed Development. However, this resulted in the potential for adverse effects in terms of surface water run-off, as the SuDS ponds were removed.

Figure 4.3 Amended Layout 1

Amended Layout 2

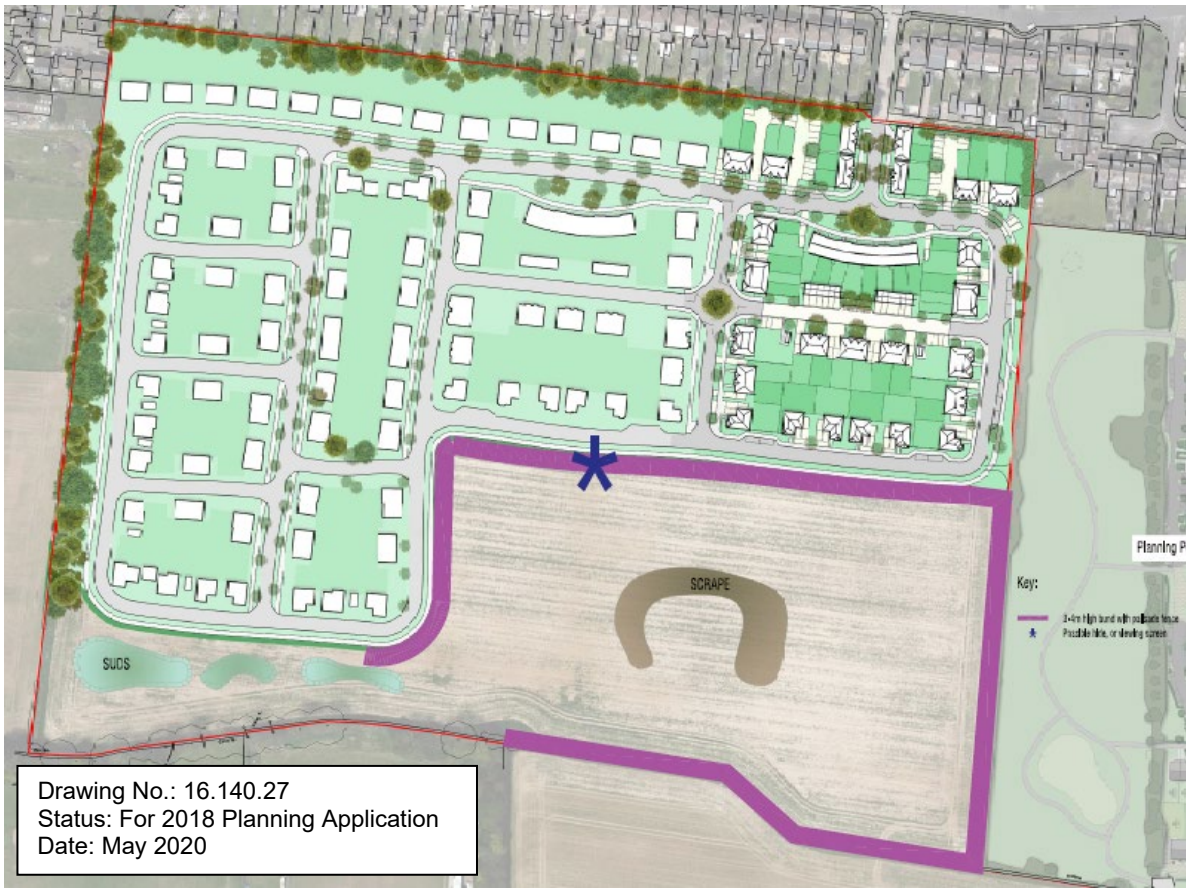
4.4.13 In order to reduce the potential impacts the Proposed Development on both ecology and surface water run-off, the layout was further developed, resulting in the Amended Layout 2, shown in **Figure 4.4**.

4.4.14 This layout incorporated a Bird Conservation Area, to reduce the potential impact on ecological receptors from the Proposed Development, by enhancing the existing ecological habitat to become appropriate for Brent Geese and wading birds.

4.4.15 This also re-introduced the SuDS ponds to the south-west of the Site, enabling greenfield run-off rates to be achieved and surface water to be sufficiently mitigated and managed on-Site.

4.4.16 Whilst the design evolution to Amended Layout 2 resulted in reduced impacts from the Proposed Development to ecological receptors and surface water run-off, there was a loss of open space provision. This would result in the availability of less amenity space for residents potentially affecting their health and wellbeing, and less ecological connectivity. As such, the layout was further revised, resulting in the Proposed Development Layout.

Figure 4.4 Amended Layout 2



The Proposed Development Layout

4.4.17 The final Proposed Development layout (shown in **Figure 4.5**, with an illustrative masterplan shown in **Figure 4.6**), for which permission is being sought for in outline, allows for the incorporation of:

- A Bird Conservation Area within the south and southeast of the Site, which would create new ecological habitat for Brent Geese and wading birds. This would result in beneficial ecological effects creating habitat to provide protection for foraging geese and waders in the winter and ground nesting birds in the summer.
- An integrated SuDS solution within the Bird Conservation Area, which would form a network of waterbodies providing a water resources and breeding habitat for a variety of species; further enhancing the ecological benefits from the Proposed Development.
- Open space along the western boundary of the Site, which would include the provision of play space. Similar to previous layouts, the provision of amenity space would encourage health and wellbeing of residents using such space.

Figure 4.5 The Proposed Development (Areas) Layout

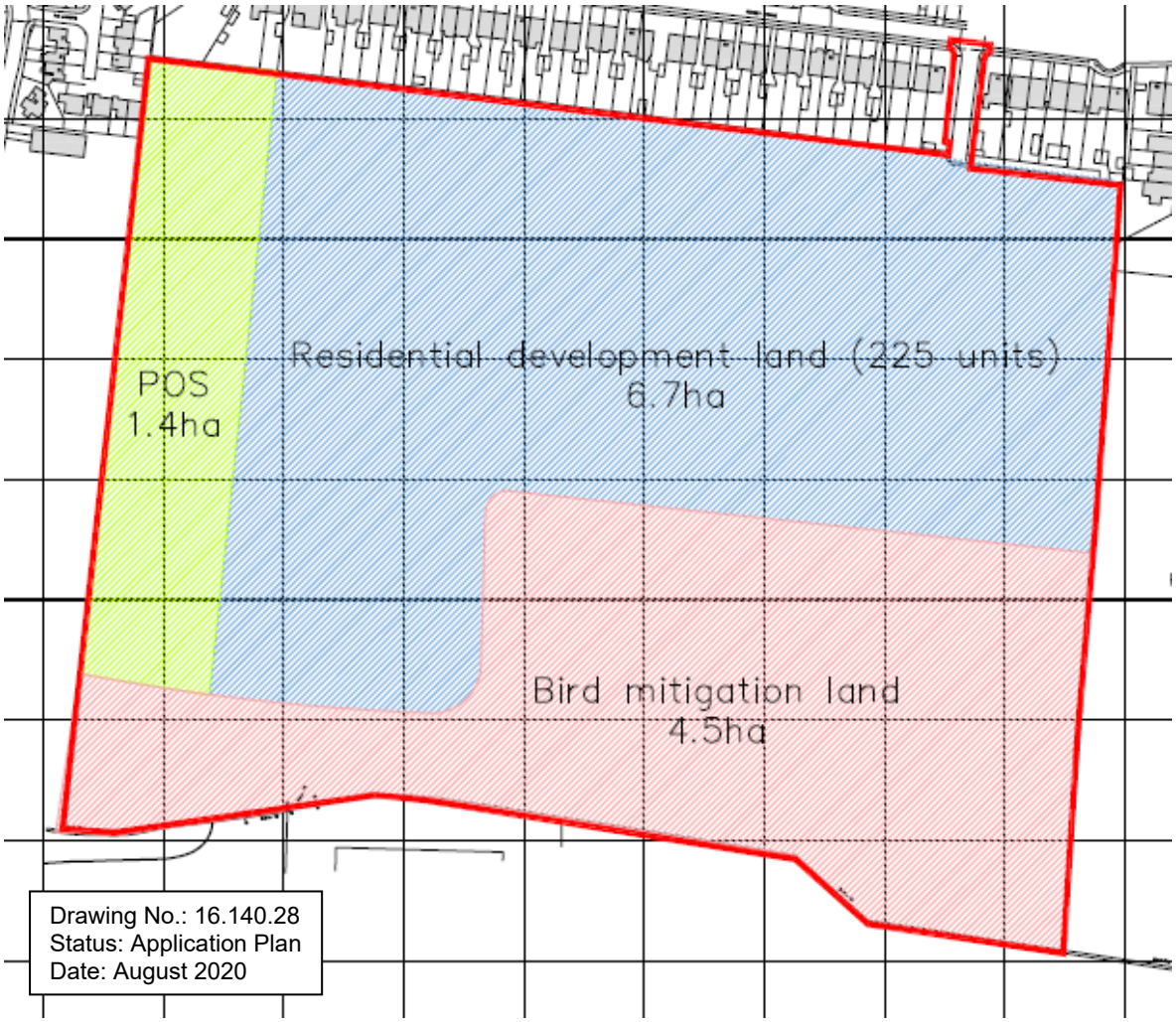


Figure 4.6 The Proposed Development – Illustrative Masterplan Layout

Environmental Considerations and Comparison of Effects

4.4.18 Throughout the design development, various layout iterations (as outlined above) were explored to maintain sufficient development potential of the Site, whilst retaining key landscape features and enhancing the existing Site for nature conservation whilst minimising the environmental effects.

4.4.19 The initial layout of the Proposed Development was designed from a practical viewpoint, to allow maximum development of the Site. However, initial designs were reviewed and amended to provide an increased area of open amenity space, encouraging the health and wellbeing of residents, whilst improving ecological linkage across the Site.

4.4.20 Whilst initial revisions to the layout increased area of open amenity space and ecological linkage, the SuDS ponds were removed, potentially generating adverse effects in terms of surface water run-off. Therefore, following consultation with technical specialists on ecology and drainage, the layout of the Proposed Development was further amended, and solutions were developed to minimise the environmental effect and provide enhancement and betterment where possible. This was done via the introduction of a Bird Conservation Area and integrated SuDS. This reduced the impact of the Proposed Development on surface water run-off, as the revised layout allowed greenfield run-off rates to be achieved and for

surface water to be sufficiently managed on-site. The revised layout also provided habitat and foraging areas for Brent Geese and waders, and greater ecological connectivity reducing the impact of the Proposed Development on ecological receptors of importance.

4.4.21 Although the introduction of the Bird Conservation Area and integrated SuDS reduced the potential impact on surface water run-off and ecological receptors of importance, it meant that the area of open amenity space was lost, reducing the potential health and wellbeing effects.

4.4.22 Consequently, the layout was revised one final time to re-introduce an area of open amenity space along the western boundary of the Site (as shown in **Figure 4.5** and **Figure 4.6**). This re-introduced the potential for greater health and wellbeing of residents using such open space.

4.5 Summary and Conclusions

4.5.1 An alternative location for the Site was not investigated as this is the only Site in the locality under the Appellant's control that meets the sustainable criteria for development. Additionally, the Site was originally identified as Development Allocation HA5 in the Draft Local Plan 2036 (2017), which states that the Site has an indicative capacity of 225 dwellings. Whilst this Development Allocation was removed from the Draft Local Plan 2036 (2017), the Appellant has promoted that it be re-included.

4.5.2 In the absence of the Proposed Development, the Site would likely remain in agricultural use and would, therefore, not be able to contribute to FBC provision of housing and affordable housing targets. The Site as an existing agriculture field would continue to be used for the production of spring barley, providing little ecological benefits. The potential for part of the Site to be enhanced and developed into a Bird Conservation Area that could be more effectively used by surrounding birds and the SPA species of importance, Brent Geese and waders, would not be realised. Additional public open space that could be used by the new and neighbouring residents would not be provided.

4.5.3 The Proposed Development went through a number of design iterations, beginning with the maximum development potential and evolving to take greater consideration of the surrounding area, retaining key landscape features while increasing the provision of open space enhancing the amenity benefits. The design was further developed to reduce the impact of surface water while enhancing the existing habitat, to maximise the ecological benefits by providing suitable nesting and foraging habitat for the protected waders and Brent Geese.