

01 February 2021
Delivered by email

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Ref: RESS3014

Dear Richard

LAND SOUTH OF FUNTLEY ROAD, FUNTLEY

RESPONSE TO URBAN DESIGN COMMENTS

On behalf of Reside Homes, please see below our formal response to the urban design comments dated 18th December 2020 from Fareham Borough Council in relation to the current proposal for 125 units on land south of Funtley Road, Funtley, (planning reference P/20/1168/OA). We have also prepared an illustrative layout plan for Parcel C. Parcel C is identified on the Illustrative Masterplan submitted in support on this letter. This demonstrates that 27 homes can be achieved in Parcel C, and that overall upto 125 homes can be provided on this site.

Context

In September 2020, outline consent (planning reference P/18/0067/OA) was granted for 55 dwellings on the site. As such, the principle of residential development has been established. This revised outline planning application seeks to establish whether the scale and nature of the proposed development of upto 125 dwellings is acceptable to Fareham Borough Council. Full details on the scale, appearance, landscaping and layout of the scheme will be subsequently submitted through a reserved matters application. Nonetheless, the application was submitted with a full Design and Access Statement ('DAS') and accompanying illustrative drawings which were intended to explain the proposed approach.

The site has also consistently been promoted for a higher number of dwellings than the 55 dwellings proposed in the emerging draft Local Plan. We do not repeat those submissions here, but must note that the Council has to date provided no reasoned justification for its proposed dwelling yield on this. Further, in our submission we have highlighted issues and concerns regarding the supporting landscape and emerging policy approach.

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Development parcel

The proposed built form of development extends further by just 0.4 hectares on the lowest slope of the site than the parameters plan in the approved scheme, with a more fragmented countryside edge to the south than the consented outline scheme. This proposal provides 70 additional residential units of mixed type as befits the housing needs of the Borough. This results in densities which are consistent with the local context and is in compliance with Government guidance in making best use of land as set out in paragraph 122 of the NPPF. The benefit of additional housing on the site is a planning gain, particularly when the Council has neither a five year housing land supply nor an up to date Local Plan. The 'tilted balance' therefore is engaged in this case.

The thought processes for layout, design, landscape, connectivity and circulation are set out within the DAS but this must be, at this stage, for illustrative purposes only; this is an Outline application with access only to be considered. The Council must determine whether the principle of development on this fractionally larger than already Consented site, the parameter plan, and the proposed vehicular access are acceptable. The layout, scale, appearance and landscape will be subject to a subsequent Reserved Matters application and at that stage we will engage with the Urban Designer to discuss these elements including the visual character of the streets, plot depths and materials, all within the design principles established. In this respect we confirm that the roads within the site will not be offered for adoption, as set out on page 50 of the DAS.

Section 2 of the DAS sets out the constraints and opportunities of the site and how it fits within the context of the area. An analysis of this information has led to the scheme evolving from the consented 55-unit scheme to the current scheme. A full justification of the scheme is contained within the DAS, fully supported by a suite of technical reports. Nevertheless, the following commentary hopefully will assist.

Design context and approach

The Outline Consent for 55 homes was supported by a parameter plan which is very similar in area to that now proposed, and was based on principles which Reside did not always agree with (as noted above). Whilst we retained the two view corridors we have changed their location to align more closely with historic field boundaries, but we have throughout adhered to key landscape and urban design principles which were derived from the earlier work, from our own on-site observations as experienced professionals, from supplementary studies which we undertook, and from formal guidance such as FBC Policy CS17, Manual for Streets and FBC Design Guidance. A community park is also provided within the site that will benefit existing and future residents and enhance biodiversity. This will be transferred to the Council. The brief to the project architects from our client was unfettered in the sense that we were requested to consider the potential for the land and the landscape in terms of its context, connection to nearby settlements, location within Funtley and proximity to the potential major new settlement at Welborne.

Whilst this new proposal obviously took cognisance of what had gone before it is important to understand that it is a completely new Application based on a new parameter plan intending to make best use of the land in an appropriate and sympathetic way.

The design has been landscape-led in the sense that the strongest cues for the development have been derived from the inherent topography of the land, the wooded horizons and the Ancient woodland and other vegetation on site, visibility, and the need to attenuate water in as natural a form as possible. Trees considered of merit for retention as assessed through BS5837:2012, are retained in the SIN here and scrub vegetation managed appropriately - see also Arboricultural and Ecological reports and drawings. There is a full suite of information available to inform design at Reserved Matter stage. Please

refer to Section 3 of the Design and Access Statement which explains how the masterplan responds to the landscape context.

These primary concerns have been modified and augmented by our observations of the village whose development for much of the 20th and 21st centuries has been dominated by roadside development of remarkably similar houses with little coherent structure or contribution to a sense of place. No matter; the village has developed in a certain way we have sought to take advantage of potential change by giving Funtley Road greater presence and by locating key buildings, water and open spaces together with some community uses to enhance a sense of place, and even distinctiveness.

We acknowledge that in the 19th Century the village developed from clay extraction for brick making and therefore it never benefitted from the slow evolution of settlement in the way that some villages, perhaps in the Meon Valley, have done. Nevertheless, that is no reason not to try to use new development of appropriate form and density to create a distinctive edge to the village.

Density

It is true that Funtley grew from a farming and later a brickworks community but later development has followed an infill and ribbon development typology typical of the 20th Century, followed by more recent, larger detached house development of up to 34 dwellings per hectare. The recent Funtley North scheme is 28 dph and the abattoir scheme is similar. The scheme presented in the illustrative masterplan is 30 to 34 dph with varying density gradients within the scheme. But density alone is a poor indicator of quality and place-making potential. Low density should not be equated with quality of place as much development undertaken across the country from the 1930's onwards demonstrates. It is no coincidence that when asked which settlements people prefer as desirable, older, more traditional village and town centres are often cited as attractive, with densities of 55dph or more being normal.

The housing mix proposed contains proportionately more smaller homes (predominantly 2 and 3 bedrooms) than recent nearby development, and this naturally produces a higher density compared to a scheme such as the old abattoir site which is of larger detached houses. At Funtley South the net density of the 55 house Consented scheme was approximately 17dph. For comparison this is lower than the density of existing housing development on Roebuck Avenue/Deer Leap/Stag Way, which is about 28 to 32dph based on larger detached homes. This larger scheme proposed at Funtley South would produce a density of 30 to 34dph but this is driven by the mix of smaller homes; for example, the footprint of a pair of semi-detached houses is very similar to that of a single 4 bed detached house. These proposed densities are more comparable to the surrounding areas and are in line with policy guidance. It is common for compact clusters at the edge of settlements to occur where a natural obstruction such as a hill or railway embankment exists; and farm court clusters as used in the current proposal are also a familiar rural form of development at the edge of the countryside.

Of course there is a contradiction between the desirability of traditional village centres (and this is also true of the Meon Valley villages) and modern ideas of car parking and vehicular movement. This needs to be recognised and designed for, but the aim must be to retain this distinctiveness. However, on this site there are two 'edges' which need to be considered; Funtley Road which is intended to create a frontage onto that road, for reasons explained in the DAS on page 44, and the southern countryside/community park edge which results in a fragmented, landscape-dominated and lower density interface with significant landscape 'interventions' into the main part of the scheme. The figure ground analysis on page 48 of the DAS shows how the proposed built form reflects a village typology that transitions from more of an orthogonal and regular pattern on its village centre side (Funtley Road) to an open, irregular, fragmented one with smaller block sizes on its rural edge. The argument supposes that an inefficient use of land is required. The proposal uses a low density but clusters homes into tight blocks

to maintain the rural vistas and views to the vegetated skyline. So, densities are not the sole driver for place-making quality.

There is therefore no cogent case for reducing the density down to 20dph, which does not meet with government advice of making best use of land, particularly where there is no landscape case to do so.

The proposal and illustrative masterplan

The Illustrative Masterplan, which does show 125 dwellings, largely houses but with some apartments, together with appropriate parking, is intended to illustrate the principles discussed in the Design and Access Statement and to give appropriate form to the development across the site. Whilst it is illustrative in the sense that it contains little detail it is realistic in the sense that it shows how the disposition and mix of the houses together with the open space, parking, pedestrian circulation, landscape and water can be achieved in combination to create a place with a distinctive identity as opposed to a conventional suburban and car dominated environment. Movement patterns are important. Our aim has been to avoid the appearance of a large, car dominated cul-de-sac. Using the main access street, secondary lanes and mews spaces, together with pedestrian and cycle connections linking the community park with the pedestrian bridge over the M27 to Funtley Road and the Public Right of Way forms a network of overlooked, safe and attractive routes. In a rather 'organic' fashion this produces a series of 'places' throughout the open space system.

Finally, within the masterplan a series of residential environments are proposed. Buildings are arranged to overlook Funtley Road and strengthen the design of the corners of blocks so that the proposed public realm is carefully overlooked and to 'stop' certain views but it goes further than this. On the southern side of the site the grain of the housing is broken into smaller farmstead clusters which deliberately allow the countryside to infiltrate into the scheme, but always overlooked by these tightly knit small-scale buildings, much as farm buildings in southern England have always done. This is a popular form of development for slightly larger houses where parking can be contained within the block and gardens may be smaller since the buildings themselves look out onto large areas of landscape. In the centre of the scheme family houses predominate with conventional gardens and care taken with the corner buildings so that the parameter blocks do not 'leak' onto the public space. It is important that there is strong demarcation between public and private space. In the centre of these blocks are mews courts where smaller houses could be arranged in a much tighter configuration with on-street parking and occasionally with parking under the buildings. This character is not possible with adopted roads.

The two main view corridors through the site require careful integrated design in detail as their pedestrian routes need to be overlooked. These view corridors are substantial landscape features and are a minimum of 24m wide, usually wider, and will contain swales and water attenuation. Pedestrian routes need to be used and overlooked to have value and avoid abuse. For this reason, in the eastern view corridor which respects the existing grain of the landscape, we have proposed 'The Green' is located at the northern Funtley Road end, anchored by the Community building and a possible shop together with a small number of houses overlooking this SINC whilst at the southern end at the juxtaposition of two pedestrian routes we have suggested the LEAP play area as a minor destination in its own right.

This is only 140m from The Green and we suggest that it should utilise 'woodland' equipment to introduce children to the idea of the outdoors and the natural environment rather than taking a more urban approach with standard catalogue equipment etc. In this village edge location it is particularly important that a new generation of residents is introduced in a sympathetic way to the environment and that the attention which will be given to the community park in terms of new woodland, respect for the Ancient Woodland, the excitement of using the slopes and the hillside paths, is not lost on children who

will have to grapple with the climate change emergency and the environmental challenges which that imposes. Thus the LEAP and The Green/Community Building which also both serve the existing village form a 'dumbbell' with a strong pedestrian route between. This seems a more dynamic strategy for the proposed development than concentrating everything in one place, particularly in light of the requirement that the LEAP has separation in all directions of 25m from adjacent dwellings; if the LEAP had been located at the village green area there would have been potential conflict with the status of this land as a SINC.

This well overlooked LEAP is sufficiently distant from houses to avoid nuisance, and is in a safe traffic-free environment which it would not be if it were close to the shop/community hall. Its position means that a valuable oak tree can be maintained on the SINC where wetland can be restored as part of the SUDS system. It also allows housing to be closer to the shop and hall helping the viability of both of these and providing footpath traffic to animate the scheme. The previous location of the LEAP was adjacent to a busy road surrounded by development. This proposed LEAP would be accessible to families enjoying the community park so that young children could use of the play space whilst their older siblings play in the community park. We conclude that this location of the LEAP is more appropriate than previously Consented.

The Meon Valley Historic village assessment and its applicability

Funtley is conveniently close to the Meon Valley whose settlements offer relevant instructive lessons in distinctiveness. Policy CS17 of the adopted Local Plan states that *"proposals will need to demonstrate adherence to the principles of urban design and sustainability to help create quality places. In particular development will be designed to: respond positively to and be respectful of the key characteristics of the area, including heritage assets, landscape, scale, form, spaciousness and use of external materials"*.

As set out in Policy CS17, development must respond positively to respect key characteristics of the area. It is therefore important to understand the context of the site and how it fits with the surrounding area. A Meon Valley Village Study was prepared as part of the planning application process, to assess the characteristics of the villages within the Meon Valley. It identified precedents that could serve as features of the new development. Please refer to the Design and Access Statement that explains the design and rationale of the proposed development.

Over time and economic cycles these villages have responded to the landscape in a way which produces the distinctiveness which is lacking in so much post War development. Recent development has tended to ignore the landscape and respond only to a car-centric view of life, and financial viability. However, this valuable lesson should not be taken literally since social conditions, lifestyle and transport modes have changed. We chose to apply the lessons to the frontage of the site, on Funtley Road, because there we have the combination of an important access road, an existing hedgerow, water and further attenuation of water and the need to create a positive frontage to the scheme rather than back houses onto it.

However, within the scheme it is a different matter and a perimeter block approach has been taken. If analysed carefully, it is evident that most of the historic examples include only single streets as they largely evolved as ribbon development along a street. By pairing street forms together in a back-to-back arrangement, in a linked network of routes, as Manual for Streets recommends, the same street form and design results in a perimeter block. This approach also conforms with FBC Design Guidance SPD CS17 *"ensure permeable movement patterns and connections" and "create a sense of identity and distinctiveness and one that is legible," and p11 "Making Connections: New streets should provide clear and well connected routes. A well connected street will allow people to move easily between places and provide direct routes to key services and facilities. New streets will integrate with the layout of existing*

layout of streets and routes". Funtley itself is full of recent impenetrable cul-de-sac developments that do not reflect the historic patterns of development, exacerbating vehicle use and dependence on the car, and reducing permeability.

In detail of course, many things are now different from the historical example; the burgage plots no longer have relevance but removing the need for orchards, rear courts and traditional animal husbandry, results in a development form very similar to that of our illustrative masterplan. The need to integrate the car in movement and when stored was never taken account of in the Meon Valley example, but the visual strength of corner buildings and frontages is still relevant.

More detailed matters

As set out above the idea is not to copy the Meon Valley example, but to take the general form and apply it in a modern way. We have employed a mix of dwellings types, sizes and aspect; in addition, there is a mix of dedicated and undedicated parking, made possible by the non-adoption of roads and highways by Hampshire Highways. There are many examples throughout the UK demonstrating that this is possible to achieve with commercial housebuilders, provided they are given guidance by the planning system and by the work which leads to the grant of planning permission. This is not a standard house-builder solution which presupposes that only suburban house typologies are adequate. Because it is more difficult does not mean that with skilled design and a positive approach a quality environment cannot be achieved.

Accepted design standards generally will be followed and it is the intention to submit a worked-up detail of part of one of the parcels to demonstrate that the proposals are achievable, and to avoid misunderstandings. We acknowledge the guidance in the Fareham Borough Design Guidance SPD 2015 that states "*Private gardens should be adequately sized and provide good quality outdoor space. A garden length of at least 11 metres long should be provided.*" This distance, based on the 1927 Tudor Walters Report for dealing with slum housing at the time, can be designed around with careful attention to layout, corner conditions and house types within the parcels shown. We are confident that the Council's design requirements can be achieved and we suggest it is premature to be deciding such details at outline stage.

The Design and Access Statement aims to set out in principle how the design could be produced in sympathy with the landscape. A feature of this landscape is the gently rising land in the lower parts of the site where the development is proposed; we see this as a positive aspect of the scheme because the process of moulding the development to the landform will provide distinctiveness as we do not intend that the site should be remade as a flat site.

It is important to work with landform and to expect otherwise is to prematurely predict design development at outline stage. It is perfectly reasonable to place housing of the layouts shown on slopes with careful detailing, as is common in all but the flattest parts of the UK.

The additional 0.4ha of land not included in the previous parameter plan is on land which is only slightly steeper than the Consented land and is not in our view sensitive visually. There is no policy to restrain development beyond any contour or any specific or cherished view in any local policy. The LVIA and illustrations demonstrate there is no loss of visual amenity from the undeveloped and vegetated high ground remaining visible.

This scheme needs to be assessed on its own merits and on the information supplied. Since this additional land is suggested to be used for the small-scale farmyard developments and predominantly low-density semi-detached dwellings it is unlikely that this shallow gradients will prove an impediment to design or construction. Page 39 of the Design and Access Statement provides a simple cross section

showing how the development will fit within the topography of the site. As detailed above, this is an outline planning application supported by a range of detailed and illustrative materials. The proposals add a small area of land in addition to that already approved at this site. It is considered that a high quality scheme will result, with further detailed consideration at reserved matters stage.

In support of this letter we will be submitting the following plans:

- Updated Masterplan
- Illustrative Layout Plan 'Parcel C'

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the above.

Yours sincerely

A Wright

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