To: Nicola Williams
From: Andrew Rushmer
cc: John Dawson
Date: 8 September 2017

Proposal: Up to 100 dwellings.
Ref: 17/02846/OUT
Location: Land at Swing Swang Lane, Basingstoke.
Drawing Nos: Design and Access Statement (which includes the contextual analysis, design principles, illustrative layout and sustainability statement).


Recommend’n on Consult’n No objection, however it is recommended that further consideration is given to a number of issues at the reserved matters stage.

COMMENTS

1. Background

1.1 As has been set out in the Design and Access Statement. The proposal has been subject to previous pre-application discussions with the council. This process included analysis of the proposal from an urban design perspective, based on an earlier version of the illustrative layout and supporting evidence and analysis. The comments on the pre-application submission can be summarised as follows:

- Many elements of the submission were commended
- It was felt that more information was required in order to demonstrate that 100 units can be satisfactorily accommodated
- There were concerns about the ‘kickabout’ space proposed
- There were also concerns about the how the proposal related to biodiversity aspects of the site
- It was felt that the scheme was overly reliant on 2 storey detached and semi-detached dwellings
- The density of the scheme was questioned, and it was felt that this was probably below the 36 dph stated in the submission
- The density of the development in the eastern part of the site was felt to be potentially inappropriate and it was recommended that the scale of the development in that part of the site should be no more than 2 storey
- The design of the proposed flats was questioned
• More clarification was requested in terms of what form of noise mitigation would be required along the northern boundary in order to respond to the railway line
• Significant concern was expressed about the connectivity across the site, as the footpath along the northern boundary was not designed in order to accommodate cycling
• The central street was described in the submission as being suburban, but there were concerns that it could be overly hard and dominated by car parking, making it excessively urban.
• Larger front gardens were recommended along the main street in order to soften the frontage.
• In terms of residential amenity, there were concerns about the overlooking distances, as the topography is likely to accentuate the perception of overlooking in relation to a number of the relationships between properties.

1.2 The comments below will consider the amended version of the illustrative layout. It is noted that the proposed layout is only indicative at this stage, but it is felt that this needs to be given some consideration in order to help establish the extent to which the submission responds to the stipulations set out in policy SS3.1 in the adopted Local Plan, and inform the future detailed design process. However, given that the layout is only illustrative, the consideration set out below does not go into a high degree to detail.

2. Spatial structure

2.1 The spatial structure proposed is quite ordered and based on a fairly regular grid, with a relatively high degree of consistency in terms of block sizes and shapes. The arrangement is essentially predicated on perimeter blocks, however, a number of private drives/residential courts have been incorporated. As a result that layout seems to seek to integrate some of the characteristics of cul-de-sacs within a more clearly defined perimeter block structure. In principle this is considered to be an acceptable approach.

3. Formation and expression of the spatial structure

3.1 The shape of the block structure is largely based on fairly straight streets. Consequently, it could feel somewhat static in visual terms and would benefit from a slightly more sinuous and interesting shape to the streets and spaces. This point mainly relates to the main street running through the middle of the layout, as the straight side streets running north to south have the benefit of framing views out to the countryside.

3.2 The layout has been heavily informed by the need to create a network of routes and connections across the site. It is considered that this links in relatively well with the movement network running around the site. It is welcomed that the proposed layout has been amended in order to address the comments made a pre-application stage concerning the need for the cycle route along the northern part of the site. However, there is still concern that this route constitutes a detour, and a more direct route along the line of the existing footpath link is considered
preferable. Improving the foot and cycle path connectivity in the immediate vicinity of the site would also be beneficial.

3.3 The street hierarchy is well defined in terms of its structure, as there is a main street running through the centre of the layout, with subsidiary streets to the side, and also some shared surfaces in the form of the private drives. However, the main street doesn’t appear to be expressed in a very overt manner, for example, it is not very clearly distinguished from the other streets by any particularly noticeable characteristics such as building height or a well-defined row of tree planting.

3.4 Some focal spaces have been incorporated into the layout. These are welcomed in principle, though they are not considered to be totally successful. None of these focal spaces would appear to be public spaces per se, as they do not appear to be intended to be places for people to sit or congregate. Therefore, their purpose would appear to be essentially visual. The ‘square’ in the centre also appears very cramped and the space for tree planting appears inadequate. It is considered that these elements require further consideration during the course of the detailed design of the scheme.

3.5 In terms of the incorporation of natural features and open space. The council’s natural environment team will comment on this aspect in more detail, but there does appear to be a lack of space for planting within the layout. For example, the main street running along the centre of the site does not have much space for front gardens and only a very small amount of tree planting, hence the concerns regarding this issue as expressed at pre-application stage regarding this site appear unresolved.

3.6 The urban design/parks and open space comments provided at the pre-application stage highlighted a need to provide 1600 sq.m of kickabout space. The revised illustrative layout does not provide for this specific requirement, though the reasons for this are set out in the submission and a larger area of ‘informal play space has been proposed’. The acceptability of this approach will be considered in more detail by the council’s parks and open spaces officer.

3.7 The locations of the open space appear to be effectively determined by the interpretation of the site constraints in relation to biodiversity and the relationship with the conservation area. However, the result is that the open spaces are not considered to be integrated into the layout in a manner which maximises the positive impact they can have on the proposed development, in particular the main area of open space on the western side of the site is pushed right to the edge of the site and is blocked off from the rest of the layout via the large blocks of flats and the large car park associated with them. Consequently, it is recommended that the integration of these features is given further consideration at the more detailed design stage.

3.8 The illustrative masterplan incorporates 3 different character areas. It is considered that these are not entirely effective, as for example there is a high degree of overlap between the different character areas, resulting in the main street in the centre containing all three different characters, namely, urban, suburban and rural. In addition, the differences between the character areas
does not appear to be particularly well expressed, and the development reads more like two character areas, quite hard, high density, suburban housing covering most of the development, and high density flats pushed into the corner of the site. Therefore, it is recommended that further consideration is given to the character areas, and it may be that 3 character areas are too many for a site of this size.

4. **Arrangement of buildings and creation of spaces**

4.1 Many of these considerations go beyond the scope of this process, and consequently, this issue will not be considered in detail at this point. However, some comments are offered here in as they may assist with the more detailed design stage.

4.2 The arrangement of the buildings within the blocks is relatively coherent. Some variety in the configuration of the houses within the blocks has also been incorporated in order to highlight certain marker buildings and terminate some views/vistas.

4.3 The illustrative layout indicates that there will be specific corner buildings. However, the examples provided are not considered to be particularly effective, and so the corners will need more attention during the detailed design stage. This also applies to the flats, especially as their side elevations appear to be in relatively prominent locations.

4.4 Reference has been made above to the integration of the open spaces in terms of their positions within the layout. Following on from those observations it is considered that the arrangement of the buildings around the open space could give more emphasis to fronting development onto those spaces, which would also assist with improving their integration.

5. **Movement and parking**

5.1 The illustrative layout appears to make generally good provision for pedestrians and cyclists. A significant concern at the pre-application stage was the lack of dedicated cycle path along the northern part of the site. It is welcomed that this issue has been addressed to a certain extent via the inclusion of a surfaced route for pedestrians and cyclists along the northern edge of the proposed layout, however, as has been set out above, there is concern about the directness of this route.

5.2 Parking is generally to the sides of the dwellings. This is supported in principle in urban design terms, as it allows for the vehicles to be kept away from the frontage. However, it appears that much of the parking provision is via tandem arrangements, including the use of garages. The Local Highway Authority will comment on this issue in more detail, but this approach can cause problems in terms of failing to prevent on-street parking. The comments of the Local Highway authority will need to be considered, and may impact on the proposed layout and the means of meeting the intended development capacity.
6. **Building design**

6.1 In general terms, this issue is clearly beyond the remit of this application process, as appearance is a reserved matter. However, it should be noted that the indicative material submitted at this stage does not appear to reflect an ambitious approach to the proposed architecture, and is not suggestive of the creation of a high quality development with a strong and distinctive character or sense of place. Therefore, it is recommended that the detailed design stage will need to be predicated on a more ambitious approach in architectural terms.

6.2 Notwithstanding the above, in light of the pre-application comments, a building design issue which does need to be considered at this stage is the issue of scale. The comments provided in response to the pre-application submission raised concerns about the scale of the flats in the eastern section of the site, and stated that these should be no more than 2 storey. However, these still appear to be intended to be in excess of 2 storey, and constitute a combination of two large buildings in close proximity, with a large area of car parking around the buildings. Therefore, the concerns remain regarding this part of the site in terms of the scale, density and intensity of the development in this location. Consequently, it is recommended that the detailed design of the scheme will need to involve further consideration of this part of the site planning and building design.

7. **Sustainability**

7.1 As with the other aspects of the proposal, the consideration of the sustainability credentials of the scheme needs to reflect the outline nature of the submission. Therefore, at this stage it is only practical to consider this issue in a general way. The current submission relies on the following sustainability features:

- maximise the benefits available through utilising the southerly orientation of the site
- encouraging walkability
- provision of new cycle routes
- mitigating noise pollution caused by the railway line
- use of sustainable urban drainage systems

7.2 The submission documents also set out a range of measures which *could* be incorporated at reserved manners stage. These include features such as renewable or low-carbon technologies and the use of sustainable building materials.

7.3 Therefore, the current submission is reflective of a fairly modest approach to sustainability, though it does incorporate some sensible approaches. However, to a certain extent this is reflective of the fact that this an outline submission, and hence it is probably not reasonable to require a more extensive approach at this stage.

8. **Residential amenity**

8.1 The pre-application comments expressed concern about the back-to-back overlooking distances owing to the impact of the topography, meaning that some
of the relationships would be accentuated by being on higher ground when compared to the neighbouring dwellings. The illustrative layout does not specify a scale and so it is not possible to establish the overlooking distances at this stage. Similarly, this means it is also not possible to measure the garden sizes, but on the face of it these appear likely to accord with the guidance set out in the Design and Sustainability SPD. In addition, there do not appear to be any significant instances where there could be an unacceptable overbearing impact or obstructions of views.

8.2 The case officer may wish to consider requesting a version of the illustrative layout which is to a set scale, as this would allow more detailed consideration of the residential amenity issues, and also other more detailed matters such as the parking provision.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The outline application only covers access, with appearance, landscape, layout and scale all deferred for the reserved matters stage. However, an illustrative layout has been provided, and is assessed in these comments in order to assist with the consideration of the application and provide guidance for the detailed design stage and associated reserved matters applications.

9.2 The submission is supported by a good level of site analysis, and the illustrative layout is considered to be ordered and provides the basis for a workable framework for the development of the site for approximately 100 units.

9.3 However, the approach is considered to be very restrained. It is recommended that a more imaginative approach is adopted to the detailed designed work and associated reserved matters submission(s), with the goal being to achieve a high quality development with a strong sense of place. Consequently, it is recommended that the concept plan for the site is not one of the approved plans at this stage, in order to ensure that a scheme with a stronger character can be achieved through the reserved matters process.