

27 February 2023
Delivered by email

Ms Charmian Eyre-Walker
South Gloucestershire Council
Badminton Road
Yate
BS37 5AF

Ref: BLOA3039

Dear Ms Eyre-Walker

LAND AT SODBURY ROAD, WICKWAR – PLANNING APPLICATION P22/01300/O

Further to various previous discussions and correspondence I write on behalf of our client **Bloor Homes South West** [“Bloor Homes”] to provide a pack of revised and additional documents in respect of this application for Outline Planning Permission. These updated documents seek to respond to various comments made following the submission of the original planning application, including at the meeting held at South Gloucestershire’s Offices in 1 November 2022, and the review undertaken by the Design West design review panel in 2022.

In addition to summarising the revised and additional documents now submitted for consideration by the Council (and associated main planning issues), this letter provides updated commentary on the up-to-date planning policy position relevant to the consideration and determination of the application.

Updated Submission Pack

The following revised and additional documents are provided to update and supplement the submitted application.

- Updated **Illustrative Framework Masterplan** (Turley Design, 3001 Rev M);
- Updated **Design and Access Statement** (Turley Design, Rev B December 2022);
- **Highway Consultation Response** (NRP Doc 7909CR01 Rev 1.1, December 2022), including as Appendix C an updated Southern Access Drawing (where Access is a matter for approval as part of this Outline planning application):
 - Drawing 7909-SK02 Rev 2.0 - PROPOSED SOUTHERN ACCESS;
- Updated **Flood Risk Assessment** (Clarkebond Doc B05313-CLK-XX-XX-RP-FH-1001 P5, February 2023);
- Updated **Drainage Strategy**:
 - Sheet 1 - Clarkebond Drawing B05313 EN-505 P05;
 - Sheet 2 - Clarkebond Drawing B05313 EN-506 P04;
- **Landscape Addendum** (EDP – Feb 2023, Ref edp6190_r009a);
- **Landscape Strategy** (EDP – Feb 2023, Drawing edp6190_d026a);
- **Heritage Addendum** (EDP – Feb 2023, Ref edp6190_r008a);
- **Addendum to Ecological Appraisal** (EDP – Feb 2023, Ref edp6190_r010a);
- Updated **Biodiversity Net Gain Calculations** (EDP – Feb 2023, Ref edp6190_r006c);

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Layout and Design

Although this application is made in Outline (with only Access for approval), updates to the layout and design of the proposed development as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan have been made in response to various stakeholder comments and the outcome of the Design Review undertaken in 2022. Updates have also been made in response to the constructive and comprehensive comments made by the South Gloucestershire Urban Design Officer. The comments made and scheme response following the Design Review process, and on reflection of the SGC Officer comments made, are summarised from Page 46 in the updated DAS, where there has been further consideration in respect of:

- Site drainage strategy – where this has been reviewed and rationalised alongside revisions to the Green Infrastructure on site;
- Landscape and POS provision – where the distribution of key formal play spaces has been amended, and there have been improvements made in respect of overall landscape strategy;
- Transport and connectivity, including street design, parking and pedestrian connections (including an additional PROW connection to the north of the site);
- Character and heritage issues – including the development of the contextual analysis and character areas within the scheme proposals, where the updated DAS now contains defined character areas including explanation of proposed materials use and visual style. Bloor Homes would welcome the LPAs consideration of a planning condition which clearly references the submitted DAS to provide certainty and visual clarity about the design of development in future Reserved Matters applications.

Transport and Access

In response to comments received from South Gloucestershire Council as the Local Highway Authority a further response document has been prepared by NRP on behalf of the applicant. This covers matters associated with access to existing facilities, including safe routes to schools, public transport, highways impact assessment and associated mitigation measures and travel planning.

An updated Southern Access Drawing is included as Appendix C to the NRP Report. The changes and improvements comprise:

- (i) The introduction of a zebra crossing on the northern side of the southern access which will provide a direct walking route into the new proposed shop, as well as acting as an additional measure to help maintain the 30mph speed limit on Sodbury Road.
- (ii) New village entrance gateway and road surfacing, which will assist in notifying drivers to the change of environment and re-enforcing the 30mph speed limit; and
- (iii) A new southbound bus stop is proposed south of Gullwel Drive which will reduce the distance residents of the new development and those in the surrounding area must travel to use the bus service.

Overall, it remains the conclusion that the site is accessible by sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and bus. The improvements identified and proposed further enhance both the sites accessibility and sustainability credentials. The updates include potential for an additional PROW link to the North of the proposed development (allowing for possible diversion of existing route where it currently passes through an active farmyard), as well as other potential improvements on the existing highway network reflecting the recommendations of the submitted Walking, Cycling & Horse-Riding Assessment, at Appendix B of the NRP report. These improvements are provided alongside an existing good network of existing footways linking the site to the surrounding area and a range of local facilities are within acceptable walking and cycling distances. Junction modelling shows that the level of traffic associated with the proposed development will not adversely affect the safe operation of the surrounding highway network. Overall, the proposed development accords with national and

local transport policy and there is now no transport or highway reason why planning permission should not be granted.

Flood Risk and Drainage

No specific concerns or objections were received from statutory consultees in respect of flood risk or drainage matters following the planning application submission; however, the FRA and associated drainage strategy have been updated to reflect the updates to and evolution of the scheme, including responding to comments made by the Design Review Panel, including adjustments to the extent and configuration of drainage features within the site to align with revisions within the proposed development area (additional swales) and green infrastructure areas.

Landscape

A Landscape Addendum has been prepared and submitted which reflects the updated scheme details and responds to comments made by South Gloucestershire's Landscape Officer dated 6th April 2022, as well as the input of the Design Review Panel.

The revisions to the layout are considered to be positive in terms of incorporating a greater extent of tree planting within POS than was previously the case (particularly along the southern and western boundaries, and creating POS areas that are more diverse and better integrated with proposed development blocks). It also considered that the updated scheme creates a more appropriate green transitional edge to the wider landscape to the west through provision of greater mitigation planting as demonstrated within the accompanying Landscape Strategy.

Overall, the conclusions set out at Section 8 of the LVA, in relation to effects upon landscape character and visual amenity as a result of the scheme's development are considered to remain valid, with any landscape and visual effects resulting from the addition of the proposed scheme continuing to be localised in extent and contained within a c.700m radius of the site.

Heritage

A Heritage Addendum has been provided to reflect the updated scheme details and respond to comments made during the determination process. In summary the revised scheme retains and builds on provisions previously proposed as design mitigation measures for heritage impacts. In this regard, the following is proposed:

- An area of open space along the western side of the site providing an offset from views south from the Wickwar Conservation Area (WCA) and from the Grade II* Frith Farmhouse to the west;
- Planting along the northern site boundary, now extended along the north-west edge of housing to act as a screen against views south from the WCA;
- Retention of existing hedgerows and provision of open space along these corridors within the site;
- Allotments proposed in the north-eastern part of the site to allow views to the Grade II listed building South Farm and reflect its present countryside setting; and
- The opportunity for a view to the tower of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Wickwar which will be available along the primary road in the northern parcel of the site as a place-making measure. A framed view to the tower will be available as the primary road runs through the gap in the hedgerow.

Ecology and Biodiversity

An addendum to the submitted Ecological Appraisal has been provided which reflects the updated scheme details and responds to various comments made on behalf of the LPA and other stakeholders. Overall, and consistent with the conclusions of the originally submitted Ecological Appraisal it is demonstrated that the proposed development is capable of compliance with relevant planning policy for the conservation of the natural environment at all levels, subject to implementation of those mitigation and enhancement measures that are proposed, including measures to secure a net gain in on-site biodiversity.

To reflect the updated scheme details (illustrative masterplan and landscape strategy) now submitted updated Biodiversity Net Gain calculations have been provided to quantify how the proposed development could secure on-site net gain as part of the proposed development. Although subject to future detailed design the current calculations show that a c.35% gain will be possible in respect of habitats, and a c.50% gain will be possible in respect of hedgerows. This net gain in on-site biodiversity would be a significant benefit associated with the proposed development.

Energy and Sustainable Construction

The comments of the Environmental Policy and Design Team are noted and the Applicant proposes 100% coverage of EV charging points on the site, and PV on all viable (southerly facing) plots. The Applicant is considering feasibility of low carbon heating on site and would welcome discussion in due course on potential planning conditions to secure schemes for renewable technologies.

Planning Policy Update

The Core Strategy was adopted in 2013, with a housing requirement is for a minimum of 28,355 homes to be delivered over the plan period 2006-2027 (with a residual requirement on adoption in 2013 of 22,545). This housing requirement was based on information that predates the NPPF, and is clearly no longer up to date.

Policy CS5 sets out the spatial strategy in the Core Strategy and seeks to concentrate housing development within the north and east fringes of Bristol. Outside these areas, development is mainly directed to Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Thornbury to improve the self-containment of the settlements and strengthen their vitality.

Policy CS34 indicates that the settlement boundaries around rural settlements should be maintained unless they are reviewed through Neighbourhood Plans, the *Policies, Sites and Places Development Plan Document* (the PSP DPD) or a replacement local plan.

It is acknowledged that the proposals are in conflict with parts of the development plan by virtue of the site's location outside of the settlement boundary; where Policy CS5 limits development.

However, in the recently issued appeal decision at North West Thornbury (Barwood), as well as that at Badminton Road, Old Sodbury (decision made January 2023), the respective Inspectors agreed that the housing requirement in the CS and the settlement boundaries that depend on it, are not compliant with the Framework and are out-of-date, this is regardless of the five-year housing land supply position (para 12 of the North West Thornbury decision letter refers). In respect of decision making this means that the proposed development may in the open countryside (i.e. outside of a defined settlement boundary and in conflict with policy CS5) is of 'limited weight'.

The Council also cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of land for housing. The Barwood Inspector considered the supply position to be just 4.77 years, which is a current shortfall of circa 339 homes.

The NPPF is clear that applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where the policies most relevant to the determination of an application are out of date permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against policies in the Framework taken as a whole or where specific policies indicate that development should be restricted (the "tilted balance").

The Core Strategy is over five years old, and has not been reviewed, in direct conflict with paragraph 33 of the NPPF which requires reviews to be completed no later than five years from adoption. The overall housing strategy of plan has failed to deliver at the pace needed and looks to be on course to fail overall with respect to delivering the minimum housing requirement in the plan period. The Council has no immediate remedy for the lack of housing delivery to date or the lack of an up-to-date plan. Work on the JCS, and the SDS, has been abandoned and the Local Plan Review is delayed.

It is clear that the “tilted balance” should be engaged when it comes to determining applications in South Gloucestershire and specifically at the application site. Unless the benefits of proposals can be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by harms (identified at footnote 7 to the NPPF) then applications for sustainable development should be approved. The application proposals will deliver a number of substantial benefits and there are limited harms, accordingly it is the applicants position that planning permission should be granted.

This site in particular controlled by Bloor Homes, should be considered deliverable in the short term were outline planning permission to be granted. The constructive discussions on design during this application with SGC and the DRP, reflected in the commitments to design character and quality in the updated DAS can also assist in certainty around delivery and speed through latter RM. In addition to housing (including affordable housing) the proposed development includes land for a shop, which will improve the sustainability of the village of Wickwar as a whole, providing wider benefits. Initial enquiries with prospective operators of the shop site have revealed strong interest in a convenience store of this scale in this location.

Summary and Conclusion

We look forward to receiving acknowledgement of this further submission and confirming timescales for any re-consultation and subsequent determination. Should there be any queries, or any matter require clarification then please do not hesitate to contact us and we would be happy to provide further information or meet as required to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Ross

Director

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