

Our Reference: P765

26 March 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Land east of Station Road, Blunham, Bedfordshire

Following the cancellation of Blunham Parish Council meeting, due to be held on 31st March, please find the Site Location Plan and Proposed Layout for the above site enclosed and a summary of the proposals, key considerations and benefits below for your comments.

The applicant, in partnership with Hightown Housing Association, regards community engagement as important, which is why we're keen to learn from you the views that you might have of this development proposal. Any comments will be considered as part of the development process and we encourage you to work with us to deliver a scheme that may be enjoyed by the wider community of Blunham.

The Site

The site, approximately 1.2 hectares, is situated east of Station Road in the village of Blunham (**Appendix 1; Location Plan**). The northern, western and eastern boundaries are well landscaped with hedgerows and trees and all sit in close proximity of existing residential units. An area of unused land exists to the south between Blunham Court and the development site, this is in the applicant's ownership but is not proposed for development.

The Proposals

The scheme for the site proposes residential development comprising 25no. affordable homes alongside additional Public Open Space for the village (**Appendix 2; Proposed Layout**).

Key Considerations

The key considerations in respect of this application relate primarily to the delivery of housing in Central Bedfordshire and Blunham. More specifically affordable homes for which there is an identified need. Additional key considerations include the proposals provision of usable Public Open Space (POS) and the protection of surrounding heritage assets through various mitigation methods.

Benefits of the scheme

The proposed development comprises entirely affordable housing making a valuable contribution in meeting the need for this type of housing in both Blunham and Central Bedfordshire district. The Neighbourhood Plan recognises there is need to provide affordable housing for the people of Blunham and notes this as one of its key aims. The affordable housing provided will incorporate a mix of both shared ownership starter homes and rented homes to be provided by Hightown Housing Association. The proposed development can aid in the delivery of this providing a significant injection of a mix affordable units that will be available to local people.

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A large proportion of the site is proposed as POS for existing and future residents. This provides access to the site for use as a recreational area for residents, which it does not currently provide as privately-owned enclosed land, allowing it to be a functional part of the village that can be enjoyed. The area proposed would provide an area for a range of recreational activities such as exercise, dog walking and play. The proposed POS will be locally protected as a view via this application.

The proposals also make great efforts to ensure the maintenance of existing trees on the site. As such, the proposed layout weaves round the existing trees, utilising the present clearing on the north eastern part of the site. The large cluster of trees situated on the north western area of the site is proposed to be retained, as are the existing trees and hedgerows that currently line the site boundaries. The retention of these trees ensures substantial screening from the surrounding residential dwellings, minimises impact on the streetscene of Station Road, and mitigates impacts on surrounding heritage assets and biodiversity.

The proposals also make great effort to minimise the developments impacts on heritage assets such as Blunham Court and the Conservation Area within which it sits. The inclusion of only a proportion of the site for residential development goes a long way in achieving this. The POS to the south maintains views to the east whilst the retention of trees provides extensive screening and sense of place benefits for future and existing residents.

Additionally, the applicant is committed to delivering a sustainable development that responds to and enhances the biodiversity within the site. The proposals inclusion of POS will allow for biodiversity enhancements alongside the retention of existing trees and the proposed dwellings are to be sustainable by design.

Furthermore, the proposals put forward provide a well-designed, high-quality and affordable development that will make a valuable contribution to the overall attractiveness of the village. The design has been developed with the surrounding area and features of the site in mind and endeavours to protect both heritage and biodiversity assets on and surrounding the site.

Conclusion

I trust that the accompanying documents are sufficient in allowing you to provide comments on the proposed development of this site. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss the proposals further in the future, should the opportunity arise. In the meantime, we look forward to receiving your initial comments and views.

Yours faithfully,

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