

Land at Former Marchon site,
High Road,
Whitehaven



Planning Statement
September 2021



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Introduction

1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Persimmon Homes Limited and NPL in support of a Hybrid planning application for the Former Marchon Factory site, High Road, Whitehaven for the erection of approximately 550 residential units, Commercial space, access and associated infrastructure including public open space.
2. This Planning Statement provides an overview of the site, and an appraisal of how the proposed site accords with both local and national policy. This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with:
 - Planning Application Form
 - Planning Layout Rec C PL02
 - Masterplan FEA 05
 - Phase 1 Landscaping Plans L02 Rev A
 - Travel Plan
 - Transport Assessment
 - Location Plan
 - Copy of the EIA Screening Request
 - Heritage Impact Assessment CL12200
 - Archaeological Evaluation Report CL12387
 - Air Quality Report
 - Noise Impact Assessment
 - Housetype Plans
 - Tree Protection Plan & Report
 - Design & Access Statement
 - Ecological Report
 - LVIA
 - Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy
 - Design Code Compliance Statement
 - Boundary treatments plan
 - Building Heights Plan
 - Building Materials Plan
 - Parking Allocations Plan
 - Refuse Strategy Plan

3. A viability Statement will follow, which may then result in updated / addendums being produced and submitted to a number of the documents listed above.

Relevant Planning History

4. There is no relevant planning history in relation to planning applications submitted on the site since its active use as a factory ceased in 2005.

Site Description

5. The site is a mixture of brownfield and greenfield land on High Road, in the south east of Whitehaven. The site is approximately 70.5 acres in size. High Road forms the eastern boundary of the site and agricultural land to the west. Further fields border the north of the site and existing development lies along the eastern boundary.
6. The existing development surrounding the site is characterised by a range of housing developments both recent (Waters Edge, Story Homes c. 2013); an ongoing development site for Gleeson Homes adjacent to this; a self-build housing estate to the north; and the earlier housing development known as Woodhouse Estate to the east. Directly to the south of the site, the land is the subject of an ongoing application to Cumbria County Council (now called in) for an off shore Coal Mine. To the south of the site, but to the east of High Road, Story Homes are currently building out a housing site of up to 650 units, including the provision of a potential new Primary School.
7. The brownfield portion of the site is current vacant, forming part of the Former Marchon factory (also known as Rhodia). The industrial, chemical led history of the site started in 1943 when a company re-located from London to escape the Blitz. Previously the site had been a colliery. The site grew considerable between 1940 and 1968. In 1977 the site employed 2,250 people. From 1990 onwards, the site suffered growing pressure from environmental groups in relation to the standard of discharge being released directly into the sea and from overseas competition and cheap labour. The site was gradually cleared following its closure in 2005. Today extensive floor slabs remain on site, but nothing above ground level can be seen.
8. The greenfield portion of the site is current arable agricultural land which slopes down to the sea. The site sits on the south eastern edge of Whitehaven, the principle town in Copeland, approximately 1.6miles from

the Town Centre. The main road south (A595) connecting Whitehaven to Sellafield and the market town of Egremont is just over a mile from the site. It also links directly north to the A66. The site is well connected to a range of facilities, including pharmacies, pubs, churches, schools, hospitals, and public transport options.

9. The site is currently dissected by a number of public rights of way.

Application proposal

10. Permission is being sought for the detailed erection of 139 residential dwellings (C3) in the northern Phase 1, three vehicular accesses off High Road, public open space and ancillary infrastructure; and well as, Outline planning for wider residential development, retail / commercial development (E,a,b,c,e,f, F2(a) under the 2021 Use classes) and ancillary infrastructure.
11. Pedestrian connectivity is proposed to the wider coastal path at a number of points, as well and maintenance and improvement of the 'Wagon way', a historic footpath route running through the site.

Technical Summaries

Heritage

12. There are no listed buildings or conservations areas in the vicinity which would be affected in relation to their setting.
13. A desk top assessment exercise, geophysical survey and physical trench investigations were undertaken on the site. The latter surveys focused on the northern greenfield element of the site, given the lack of retained interest due to the recent industrial history on the former Marchon site itself.
14. Although the geophysical survey identified a crop mark in the southern field the subsequent extensive trial trench evaluation exercise was able to confirm the absence of any feature of interest in this area.

Ecology

15. Policy DM25 of Local Policy states that all development proposals should protect the biodiversity value of land and buildings and minimise fragmentation of habitats and, as such, a preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out to assess the impact of the proposed development on

biodiversity. The comprehensive assessment has been informed by the following survey carried out at the appropriate times of year in 2019 and 2021:

- a. A desktop study and data search;
- b. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey including the search for invasive plant species;
- c. Surveys for relevant protected species namely badger, bat species and reptiles;
- d. Wintering bird surveys; and
- e. Breeding bird surveys.

16. The site has no statutory designation for nature conservation.

17. The site is not of importance for the qualifying bird species at the Solway Firth Special Protection Area (SPA) and the St. Bees Head Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located to the west of the site.

18. The potential for direct and indirect impacts of the proposals on the coastal designated sites and their features of special interest is discussed in the report and, in the presence of protective measures to be applied both during the construction period and during operation of the site as a residential development, the likelihood of adverse effects on the conservation objectives of the designated sites is reasonably discounted.

Trees

19. There are no trees worthy of retention on the site. Due to the exposed nature of the site, only limited shrubs existing in areas.

Landscape Visual Impact

20. Local Policy on the matter is covered by the following policies: DC18 Landscape and visual impact requires proposals for development to be compatible with the distinctive characteristics and features of Cumbria's landscapes; and ENV5 Protecting and Enhancing the Borough's Landscapes requires the Borough's landscapes to be protected and enhanced; and DM26 Landscaping requires new developments to consider landscape features and improvements.

21. The site has been assessed as having medium-low landscape sensitivity to the proposed development. It is well related to the edge of Whitehaven and housing in Kells and on High Road and Waters Edge. The Phase 1 area of the site would be located on an area of agricultural land subdivided by a footpath locally known as Wagon Way; to the west of the footpath is an arable field sloping gently to cliffs at the coastal edge; and to the east the land has a more urban fringe character and is close to housing on Waters Edge. Phase 2 would be located on the former Marchon Site.
22. Land to the west of Wagon Way is located in area identified for an extension of the St Bees Heritage Coast. The proposed boundary for the Heritage Coast follows the existing Wagon Way footpath as it is a definite boundary in the absence of any other equivalent feature on the ground to follow to the west closer to the cliffs. Not, it would appear in the evidence from any Landscape Visual Impact reasoning. Appreciation of the extension area landscape would primarily be by users of the England Coast Path, which connections are significantly improved to. There is a break in slope which runs north-south through two arable fields to the east of this path, including the field containing the site. The proposed development would be located to the east of this break on a relatively flat plateau and views of the proposed development would be limited to roof tops of homes on its western edge. Effects on the Heritage Coast extension area are judged to be slight and negative. In fact, the site will provide the opportunity for a 'joining' location for the Coast Path, with the provision of a carpark and interpretational boards along the length of the path, both about the specific history of this site, but also about the wider Landscape context. Almost directly north of the site, the Wagon Way ceases.

Flood Risk & Drainage

1. Policy ENV1 sets out an approach to ensure that new build development is not prejudiced by flood risk, by permitting new build on sites outside areas at risk of flooding and ensuring that new development does not contribute to increased surface water run-off through measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems.
2. Policy DM24 states where a proposed development is likely to be at risk from flooding or increases risk of flooding elsewhere, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be required to be submitted as part of the planning application. Development will not be permitted where it is found that there is an unacceptable risk of flooding or the development would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

3. As mentioned above, the application as submitted is accompanied by Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy documents which provides the basis for the development with regards to flood risk and the justification regarding meeting the above policy.
4. The site is designated as greenfield in terms of flood risk. There is a number of nearby surface water and foul water adopted services, also in places dissecting the site. There are also existing private surface water outfalls serving the previous uses of the site, discharging in to the sea. These can be utilised to serve the proposed site.
5. The site sits outside any designated Flood Zone. The site is considered low risk of flooding from fluvial, groundwater, surface water and overland flows.

Design

6. Policy DM10 states the Council will expect high standard of design and the fostering of 'quality places' and development proposals will be required to respond positively to the character of the site and the immediate and wider setting and enhance local distinctiveness through an appropriately designed site. This includes the following steps:
 - a. Incorporate existing features of interest including local vernacular styles and materials;
 - b. Address vulnerability to and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; and,
 - c. Create and maintain reasonable standards of general amenity
7. The development at Marchon provides the opportunity to create a new, distinctive, high quality and sustainable neighbourhood set within a spectacular sea side landscape. The site will be fully accessible to the public, offering new residential housing and local centre.
8. A sensitive approach to development has been adopted, fitting in with the existing valuable structure of natural topography, features, landscape. The development will have strong sense of belonging to Marchon prompted by a clear hierarchy of memorable spaces, landscape features and buildings. The development will seek to provide much needed accessible, affordable market housing for new households and existing families. One of the key aims for the development is to support a sustainable and accessible town, stimulating economic growth while providing new social infrastructure.

9. A comprehensive Design and Access Statement has been produced that suitably explains the proposed design of the development as well as the process taken in greater detail. It is considered that the above principles have been taken into account in the design and layout of the proposed development, and fully meet the criteria listed in Policy DM10.

Highways

10. Policy DM12 requires housing development to provide a car parking provision in accordance with adopted residential parking standards. The current adopted standards are set out within the Cumbria Development Design Guide. These are just that, a guide. The guidance provides a suggested level of parking for housing development.
11. The proposed layout details each proposed residential dwelling will provide off-street car parking provision on private driveways with a minimum of two parking spaces per 2 & 3bed home and three spaces per 4 bed house. It is therefore considered that the proposals meet this element of Policy DM12.
12. Policy DM22 requires development proposals to be accessible to all users by providing convenient access into and through the site for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, access for emergency and service vehicles, meeting adopted car parking standards which reflect the needs of the Borough in its rural context.
13. The proposed development provides a safe, functional, permeable and inclusive access that does not give dominance to car use. The internal road network has been designed to encourage low vehicle speeds, thus creating a pedestrian and cycle friendly environment. The proposals contain a hierarchy of highways, with roadside footpaths, shared surfaces as well as separate footpath / cycleway connections.
14. The proposed spine road running through Phase 2 is wide enough to accommodate a bus route, should a service wish to divert through the site from High Road in the future. This is not considered necessary to make the site accessible by public transport.
15. The submitted Transport Assessment concludes that subject to minor and achievable off site highway improvements, there are no traffic or transportation grounds not to approve the application.

Noise

16. The dominant sources of existing noise and pollutants is road traffic noise. There are no prevailing vibration generating land uses adjacent or proximate to the Site, such as railway lines or industrial land-uses. Vibration is therefore not a material consideration with regard to the suitability of the site for residential use.
17. The report concluded that taking account of the measured prevailing noise levels, noise emissions from the mine to the south, based on the EIA information, should not adversely impact on the proposed residential development.
18. In relation to Construction traffic, the impacts of the site on existing adjacent neighbours is adequately controllable through the provision of a robust CEMP.
19. As for the new residential development of the site, for the majority of the Site noise is not a material decision to planning. For the eastern area of the Site proximate to High Road, residential development is likely to be acceptable from a noise perspective provided that a good acoustic design process is followed.
20. In relation to the adjacent proposed mine development. The neighbouring proposals deliver their own extensive landscaped buffer areas that are proposed to be mounded and planted, with the network of footpaths linking into these proposals.

Air Quality

21. The Air Quality Assessment carried out concludes that the main likely effects on local air quality during construction relate to dust. A range of measures to minimise or prevent dust would be implemented and it is considered that following mitigation, particularly through the construction phases, the effects from nuisance dust emissions would be **not significant**.

Ground Conditions

22. The site by the nature of its history will require significant remediation to bring forward residential development. A number of historic investigations

have taken place on the site, but not with the sole purpose of supporting a residential application that would satisfy the necessary bodies.

23. Updated investigations are therefore taking place on the site, with a view to developing a comprehensive remediation strategy that can be costed and fed into the viability statement for the site. This will determine the planning gain for the site as well as form part of the planning weight balance. This exercise is ongoing and may require an update to this document and others once complete.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy

24. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the overarching national planning policy document for England. The document provides a framework for the preparation of Local Plans and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
25. The NPPF states that there is a *'presumption in the favour of sustainable development'* and that *'sustainable development is pursued in a positive way.'* Similarly, Local Authorities should *'approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way.'* Moreover, *'decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.'* As will be outlined within this statement, the application site will provide a sustainable, residential development and therefore should be given permission without delay.
26. Chapter 5 of the NPPF focuses on the delivery of homes nationally outlining that *'to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, and the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without necessary delay.'*
27. The proposed development will significantly aid the local authorities delivery of the government's objective of increasing the supply of housing.
28. Highlighted within chapter 8 is the need for safe and healthy communities to be developed stating, *'significant development should be focused on locations*

which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.'

29. The application site is situated within the settlement boundary of Whitehaven. The site is well located for amenities and transport links. A bus stop is located adjacent on High Road which runs both south towards employment areas and north to the town centre and Railway station.
30. Chapter 11 of the NPPF sets out the requirement for Local Authorities to make effective use of land, it states, *'planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other users, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living.'*
31. The careful design of the proposed site will ensure that the land will be effectively utilised whilst maintaining a distinctive and well designed approach.
32. The NPPF states that planning policies and developments:
 - a. *'will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of development*
 - b. *Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*
 - c. *Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as decreased densities)*
 - d. *Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangements of streets, spaces building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming, and distinctive places to live, work and visit.*
 - e. *Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.'*

33. The layout and design of the development has been carefully considered in order to incorporate all of these features, as set out in the Design and Access Statement.
34. As is demonstrated above it is clear that the application site meets the relevant policies of the NPPF. As will be highlighted in this statement the proposed development will accord with all the relevant local in the adopted Core Strategy. Therefore, under para 11 of the NPPF *'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.'*

Copeland Local Planning Policy

35. The Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 – Core Strategy and Development Management Policies was adopted in December 2013. Policies within the Local Plan that are relevant to this planning application are reviewed below. Where these policies may be more relevant to the individual Technical Elements of the report, the policies have already been referenced in this report.
36. Policy ST1 of the core strategy sets out the fundamental principles that will achieve sustainable development. Amongst other things it seeks to ensure that development meets the needs and aspirations of the Boroughs housing markets and is focussed on previously developed land away from green field sites. This site is primarily located on previously developed land. The remediation of this will take considerable time and cost. Therefore it is proposed that the first phase will allow some early returns whilst the wider remediation is commenced. This fully accords with the principles of ST1. The site sits almost entirely within the emerging proposed allocation in the draft Local Plan. This document has reached Preferred Options Stage, with the evidence base currently being developed.
37. Policy ST2 sets a spatial development strategy whereby development should be guided to the Principal settlement and other centres accordingly. This site is located on the edge of Whitehaven and therefore benefits from the services and facilities therein. It fully accords with this policy.
38. Policy SS1 seeks to improve the housing offer of the borough. This involves allocating a variety of sites to meet the requirements of the unique challenges and opportunities of the local area, and those builders and developers that operate within it.

39. The site, despite its industrial past, is located within a well established residential led area. The proposed residential development will have minimal impact on local amenity and widen the borough's housing stock in this location.
40. Policy SS2 seeks to achieve sustainable housing growth by focusing new housing development in accessible areas. It will allocate (under subsequent development plan documents) sufficient land for new housing development; and optimise development densities it will allocate this at a baseline of 230 dwellings per year and will seek densities of over 30 dwellings per hectare.
41. The proposed development in this application in terms of both areas of land is considered compliant with the above. The land is in an accessible location given the edge of Whitehaven, does not intrude on the amenity of the limited existing directly adjacent homes, as well as being at an appropriate density in the context of its surroundings. The site also offers the unique ability to delivery significant public open space which will benefit both new and existing residents.
42. Policy SS3 requires housing development proposals to demonstrate how the proposal helps to deliver a range and choice of good quality and affordable homes for everyone. The aim of the policy is to create a more balanced mix of housing types and tenure within that market area (consistent with maintaining the viability of the development). As already alluded to, this development comes with the benefit of the redevelopment of a long vacant site. This, although the extent is unknown at present, will significantly impact the ability of the site to deliver additional affordable units into the market. A full viability assessment will be provided to support this position, as well as provide additional evidence for the proposed phase 1 development, i.e. extension on to the green field portion of the site. This approach is allowed for in Policy SS3 and is considered to be fully compliant. The extent of the provision of affordable homes will depend on the final results of the viability assessment.
43. The development proposes a varied and complementary mix of open market houses including 2, 3, 4 and 5-bedrooms with variations in number of bedrooms and plot sizes in each. Private amenity space within each residential curtilage is commensurate to the size of each dwelling and the character of the area. The development will therefore meet a range of housing needs and aspirations.

44. It is therefore clear that the proposals wholly accord with the policies set out in the Copeland Local Plan.
45. Policy SS5 sets out the Council's position in relation to the provision and access to open space and green infrastructure. This aims to protect against the loss of designated open space, set the minimum open space standards for new development and promote the establishment, improvement and protection of green infrastructure.
46. The proposed development provides public open space significantly in excess of any standard. This is primarily focussed around the edges of the development for better links to wider green networks as well as ecological management and landscape impact. A green wedge will bring the coastal path connection into the heart of the development and provide for a potential gateway access feature for the wider community.

Proposed Housing Allocations

47. The Former Marchon Site North is identified as a housing allocation in the Preferred Options Consultation Document (ref: HWH5). Draft Policy H5PO identifies the site as having capacity for around 532 dwellings. The site is assessed in the 2020 SHLAA as site ref: Ww014, which identifies the site as being deliverable within 5 years. The proposals support this allocation, but are inconsistent in the extent of the phase 1 area.
48. The Former Marchon Chemical Works site is identified as a Key Regeneration Site in Table 14 of the Preferred Options Draft.

Statement of Community involvement.

49. A public consultation drop in event was held in February 2019. Members and officers were invited from 2pm to view plans and discuss the site with the applicant and advisors. Neighbours and members of the public were invited from 3pm to 7pm. A notice in the local paper as well as a leaflet drop around the local homes informed residents of the necessary details.
50. Copies of the leaflet and information boards displayed at the event can be found in the appendices.
51. The event was well attended by the local public with over 50 people coming along and c. 40 feedback forms / emails received. Feedback was generally

more supportive from the occupiers of properties that were built when the factory was operational compared to those built since its demolition. The redevelopment of the former factory was generally seen as positive, albeit more caution was exercised over the development on the greenfield portion.

52. Many people currently utilised the footpaths on the site on a regular basis, and as such, saw their maintenance and additional connections as a positive. General concerns were linked mainly to local highway capacity and safety and the capacity of local facilities such as schools and doctors surgeries.

Planning Judgement / Conclusion

53. Previously (May 2017) the Council has accepted an inability to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. This was subsequently upheld by an inspector the following year. Since these statements and decisions the Councils Core Strategy, setting the housing targets for the area have become more than 5 years old, and the Council have not been tested at appeal in relation to their supply situation. It is not clear therefore whether the Council continue to advise that their housing policies thereby remain out of date.
54. The NPPF is clear in its aims and objectives, significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. As previously noted, this site is located within the Whitehaven settlement boundary, providing a suitable site for development. This position is supported by the proposed allocation of the land for residential development. The site will benefit from the town's full range of services whilst offering easy private and public transport links to Egremont/Cleator Moor/Sellafield, which are the other main settlements in the borough, and the main employment site as well its associated supply chain at West Cumbria business park.
55. The NPPF requires the need to balance any harm caused by a proposed development to the benefits. The contribution to the supply of housing would be significant in terms of overall numbers. The site delivers other significant benefits in relation to the provision of extensive green infrastructure and connections to wider green links. The sustainability of the site is not in question given the settlement boundary location and previous/proposed allocation, and previously developed nature. It is therefore considered that the principle of development is in accordance with national policy on the supply of housing.

56. The proposed development is deliverable in the short term so will positively contribute to meeting the District's 5 year land supply. It represents an opportunity to further build on the development in this area and re-use a significant brownfield site.
57. The contribution to the supply of housing will be significant. The sustainability of the site is not in question given the settlement boundary location and proposed allocation, and previously developed nature. It is therefore considered that the principle of development is in accordance with national and local policy on the supply of housing.
58. The site complies with the relevant Local Plan & National Planning Policies regarding housing delivery. It is demonstrated that there are no constraints to residential development on the site within any of the red edge of this application. The development has been carefully located and design to support its surroundings and should be approved without delay.