

# **PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING MATTERS RELATING TO DESIGN & ACCESS**

## **Planning Application for 23 Homes including Associated Infrastructure and Landscaping**

### **Land at, Harras Road, Harras Moor, Whitehaven**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This planning statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for twenty three dwellings including three affordable homes, associated infrastructure and landscaping on land at Harras Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria.

#### **2.0 The Site**

2.1 The site was previously agricultural land located on the northern side of Harras Road, Whitehaven. The site is now fenced from the open agricultural land to the north. There is some evidence preliminary site works and excavations on the site undertaken pursuant to the extant planning permissions.

2.2 The site frontage extends West to East along Harras Road. The extensive development of The Highlands housing estate is located immediately to the south of Harras Road. The Highlands estate effectively extends the entire southern length of the site and beyond. Development at Harras Moor fronting onto to Harras Road is located to the east. This takes the form of detached and semi-detached housing in a frontage arrangement in large plots extending in a northerly direction from Harras Road. The exception to this arrangement is the adjacent property Casa-Mia which is a large dwelling in a large plot orientated north to south. The extent of the frontage curtilage to Casa-Mia creates a substantial separation distance between Casa-Mia and the boundary to the application site.

2.3 Harras Road extends from its eastern junction with the Whitehaven Eastern bypass to its western junction with Victoria Road. The Whitehaven Eastern bypass was originally constructed to carry HGV traffic associated with opencast coal mining east of Whitehaven. The route carries traffic from its northern junction with the A595 trunk road to key employment and service locations in eastern and southern Whitehaven. At its western extremity Harras Road passes under the A595 before joining Victoria Road leading to Solway View and then towards Whitehaven town centre at Wellington Row.

2.4 Land adjoining the eastern junction of Harras Road with the Eastern Bypass has the benefit of planning permissions for 90 dwellings (outline planning permissions 4/16/2415/001 and 4/16/2416/001 and reserved matters approvals 4/21/2195/0R1 and 4/21/2196/0R1). The combined outline planning permissions on this site (“the Harras Dyke site”) originally granted approval for up to 110 dwellings. The subsequent reserved matters approval reduced the numbers to 90 dwellings.

### **3.0 Planning History**

3.1 On the 21 March 2019 outline planning permission (with some reserved matters) was for residential development consisting of nine serviced self-build plots (4/18/2347/001) was approved.

3.2 Individual reserved matters approvals were subsequently granted for detached dwellings on plots 1, 5, 6, 8 and 9 under planning references; 4/19/2170/0R1, 4/19/2305/0R1, 4/19/2364/0R1, 4/20/2024/0R1 and 4/20/2025/0R1.

3.3 These approvals related to large individually design self-build homes. The development approved under 4/18/2347/001 and subsequent reserved matters approval was formed mainly of frontage development with the exception of one plot adjacent to a field access road. The developable areas of the plot were formed by a cut and fill arrangement effectively stepping

down Harras Moor Road. This would involve significant civil engineering works to form retaining walls and associated structures between plots. The proposals created eight separate accesses onto Harras Road. The scheme did not provide for comprehensive landscape or boundary treatments and surface water management.

3.3 On 11 August 2021 reserved matters was approved for matters relating to appearance and landscaping for Plot 1 only and landscaping for boundaries of the entire site pursuant to the outline planning permission (4/21/2268/0R1). Conditions 4, 5, 6 and 8 from the outline application were discharged by consent 4/21/2263/DOC on the 21 September 2021. On the 17 January 2022 development was commenced in the form of a material operation to form the access thus securing the planning permission in perpetuity

3.4 A full application with the same description as this application was submitted in 2022 under planning reference 4/22/2135/0F1. The application was reported to Copeland Borough Council's Planning Panel for determination with an Officer recommendation to approve subject to a section 106 Planning Obligation to secure the delivery of affordable housing and appropriate planning conditions.

3.5 The Council refused planning permission for the following reason:

*“The proposed development will result in an increase in traffic and pedestrian movements onto Harras Road to the detriment of highway safety and will also result in severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network, with specific regard to capacity and congestion on the public highways known as Harras Road and the network surrounding St James’ C of E Junior School. Given the constraints of the public highways and junctions the impacts of the proposed development on highway safety and capacity and congestion cannot be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. The development is in conflict with the*

*requirements of Policies ST1 and T1 of the Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 and Paragraphs 110 and 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework”.*

3.6 This resubmission addresses the Council’s reason for refusal and provides additional information.

#### **4.0 The Proposal**

4.1 The proposal creates three distinct groups of dwellings, arranged in groups of 8, 7 and 8 dwellings respectively. This forms courtyards or cul-de-sacs served from three individual accesses with on-site turning for service and delivery vehicles and off-street car parking. The arrangement reduces risk of vehicles parking or manoeuvring on Harras Road in comparison to the extant consent. A field access is maintained to the land to the north.

4.2 The dwellings will be orientated along the access roads predominantly running south to north. This allows the development to respect the contours of the site and make more efficient use of the site area. The relationship of the proposed buildings to the site are demonstrated on the cross-sectional drawings and the streetscapes. Whilst the number of dwellings has increased the careful attention to design, form and massing has reduced the overall visual impact of the development.

4.3 The first group of eight dwellings is located between the eastern boundary of the site and the proposed field access. The group contains a mixture of house types including four detached bungalows (three bed; two differing designs) and two pairs of semi-detached bungalows (two bed). This gives a variety of house types and sizes to meet a range of house needs. The houses on plots 6,7 and 8 are allocated as the affordable housing units and will be of identical design and finish to the open market homes.

4.4 A landscape belt is proposed immediately to the west of the first group of dwelling described above. This has the effect of reducing the overhaul height and bulk of development

on the higher part of the site. This section of the site is individually landscaped with indigenous planting to the eastern and western boundaries.

4.5 The second group of seven dwellings is a mix of single-story units, dwellings with rooms in the roof space and two storey units. The northern boundary extends approximately 15m beyond the rear boundary approved under 4/18/2347/001. This group is individually landscaped with comprehensive landscaping to the site frontage and eastern boundary. The western boundary adjoins a landscape strip of tree planting which will divide the second and third group of dwellings. This is to soften the impact of the development which will both enhance the scheme from views outside the site and separate the mass of the development.

4.6 The third group of eight dwellings occupy the lower western area of the site. This group also comprises of a mix of single storey, dwellings with room in the roof space and two storey units. The single storey units are aligned along the western boundary of the site to reduce visual impact.

4.7 An area beyond the western boundary of the main housing site is proposed solely as a landscape area. This area will include some underground service infrastructure but will be predominantly be laid to grass with individual tree planting. This will enhance the appearance of the development travelling from the west along Harras Moor.

4.8 The proposal includes a scheme of traffic calming measures on Harras Road in a broadly similar manner to that on the extant scheme for 9 dwellings. This scheme is shown on drawing C001 Rev. PO2 (Visibility Splays and Traffic Calming Measures). The speed reducing measures include the installation of three speed tables. The speed tables in conjunction with the visibility splays will ensure a safe means of egress and access to the development. The traffic calming scheme also has an additional public benefit insofar as it will reduce traffic speeds and therefore improve highway safety for all road users.

## **5.0 Landscape and Visual Impact**

5.1 The entirety of the site and the proposed development has been assessed by a landscape architect. A Landscape Layout accompanies the application together with a comprehensive schedule of planting with a variety of species both specimen species to enhance development within plot boundaries and the development itself. The Landscape Layout introduces indigenous species to create hedgerows and planting bands around the perimeter of the site and landscape planting zones. This enhances both the appearance of the development and the biodiversity of the site.

5.2 The development makes more efficient use of the site than the previously approved scheme it also introduces substantial areas of landscaping and retains a relatively low density. The continuous hard and soft landscaping to the front boundary will create a level of continuity which represents a significant improvement in comparison to the extant scheme.

5.3 The proposal has been subject to a Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA). The LVA concludes that the visual effect of the proposal would be similar or slightly less adverse than the extant scheme. The LVA concludes that the proposal is acceptable in terms of visual impact and settlement character.

## **6.0 Affordable Housing**

6.1 The application is a major development and paragraph 65 of the NPPF expects at least 10% of the total number of homes to be available for affordable home ownership. These are homes made available for sale at a price no greater than 80% of the market value.

6.2 As an alternative the Applicant proposes to provide three Build to Rent homes. In line with Annex 2 of the NPPF these homes would be let on the following basis:

- (a) let at an affordable rent at least 20% below local market rents;

(b) be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control.

6.3 The Build to Rent homes will form an integral part of the development and will be identical in design to the open market homes. The proposal would offer high quality affordable housing which will contribute positively to the mix of tenure and overall choice of housing.

6.4 The affordable housing would be secured in perpetuity by a planning obligation to require that the properties remained let at an affordable rent or sold as affordable home ownership.

## **7.0 Planning Policy**

7.1 The planning policies relevant to the proposal are contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (NPPF) and the Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028. It should also be noted that the emerging Copeland Local Plan 2017-2035 has recently completed its Examination in Public.

7.2 The outline planning permission granted in 2019 reflected the fact that elements of the development plan are out of date and that the site represented a sustainable form of development consistent with the NPPF. The site is located outside but immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary for Whitehaven. Whitehaven is the borough's Principal Settlement in the context of development plan settlement hierarchy. As the Principal Settlement Whitehaven is expected to meet a significant proportion of the borough's housing needs.

7.3 Notwithstanding any variation which may exist between the council's stated housing land supply position between 2019 and the date of this application, the presumption in favour of sustainable development provided by paragraph 11 of the NPPF continues to apply. The site has the benefit of an extant planning permission there are no planning policy reasons that would indicate that this site would not be considered as sustainable if considered on the basis of the 2018 application. Even in the context of the Principal Settlement itself the site is

considered sustainable in terms of its location close to public services and employment centres in comparison to other locations within the town.

7.4 This proposal is considered to represent a more sustainable form of development than the scheme approved under 4/18/2347/001 in respect of the following:

- (a) the increased number of dwellings makes more efficient use the site.
- (b) it contains a wider mix of house types to meet local needs.
- (c) it provides affordable housing.
- (d) the enhanced landscaping scheme both improves the visual appearance of the development and will contribute towards biodiversity.
- (e) the site incorporates a higher standard of design.

7.5 The proposal complies with the Strategic Development Management Policies contained in the Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 and is considered a significant improvement in the context of the following policies:

- (i) Policy DM10 – Achieving quality of place
- (ii) Policy DM11 – Sustainable development standards
- (iii) Policy DM12 – Standards of new Residential Developments
- (iv) Policy DM26 – Landscaping

7.6 Whilst the site is moderately larger than the scheme approved under 4/18/2347/001 this contributes positively to its sustainability. A significant part of the extended site will be devoted solely to landscaping whilst the extension which is subject to a level of development encourages the more efficient use of land.



7.7 The policies specifically referred to in the Notice of Refusal of Consent will be dealt with separately in this Statement.

## **8.0 Access and Highways**

8.1 The application is supported by an Access Appraisal and a letter prepared by a Highway Engineer and Transport Consultant addressing the reasons for refusal.

8.2 Harras Road is subject to a 30mph speed limit the Speed Survey which accompanies the Access Appraisal shows results for the eighty-fifth percentile as exceeding the limit both for the eastern and westerly sections. In order to achieve the required highway visibility at the site junctions it is necessary to reduce traffic speeds. The proposed development includes the scheme of highway improvements with speed tables to reduce vehicle speeds on Harras Road. This scheme is shown on drawing C001 Rev. PO2 (Visibility Splays and Traffic Calming Measures). The Traffic Calming Measures help secure a safe means of access to the development. The Local Highway Authority (LHA), in response to application 4/22/2135/0F1 confirmed these arrangements to be a safe means of access.

8.3 The proposed Traffic Calming Measures will have the additional benefit of reducing traffic speeds on Harras Road and improving highway safety to the benefit of all road users including motorists, pedestrians and cyclists. This is a significant public benefit which should be afforded appropriate weight as a material planning consideration.

8.4 The proposal will create an arrangement of three groups of dwellings off Harras Road together with a field access. This reduces the number of accesses onto Harras Road in comparison to the approved scheme. The replacement of domestic driveways with a junction arrangements designed to Cumbria Design Guide (CDDG) standards is considered to represent a material improvement. Furthermore, the cul-de-sac arrangements allow vehicles to be

parked clear of Harras Road in plot boundaries compliant with CDDG. This will discourage roadside parking on Harras Road.

8.5 Notwithstanding the above, Harras Road has a good safety record. The LHA confirm there has been only one injury accident reported in the vicinity during the last 5 year period (July 2017). This involved a car travelling east under-taking a cyclist causing the cyclist to collide with the off side of the car.

8.6 A pedestrian footway runs along the southern side of Harras Road. This extends from the eastern junction to a point immediately before Harras Road passes under the A595. In the easterly direction the footpath provides safe and convenient pedestrian access towards the Red Lonning and Hensingham areas of the Whitehaven. These areas include key local services including the town's secondary schools (St Benedict's School Campus and Whitehaven Academy), sports facilities and local services.

8.7 The footpath in the westerly direction extends down Harras Road towards Whitehaven town centre. In the vicinity of the application site the footpath provides safe and convenient walking access with links into the neighbours Highlands development. At its western extreme the footpath is constraint by a high wall associated with the A595 viaduct. At this point the footpath reduces in width and a lamp post partially obstructs the footway. There is no footpath through the "Harras Road arch" of the A595 viaduct temporarily requiring pedestrians to walk in the carriageway before re-joining the footway on the western side of the arch. Due to the width of the arch and its orientation traffic speeds through the arch are considered to be very low. Drivers are obliged to check the arch is clear before proceeding. An alternative, yet slightly less convenient route (but safer option) is for pedestrians to use the "Victoria Road arch" (via Albert Terrace) which has the benefit of a defined footway.

8.8 The Council's reasons for refusal state that the development; "will result in an increase in traffic and pedestrian movements which would result in severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network". The development will result in a relatively low increase in localised traffic. The estimated AM and PM peak hour trip rates are 14 vehicle movements in the AM peak hour and 13 in the PM peak hour. At peak times this equates to less than 1 vehicle movement every 4 minutes. These rates would be significantly lower outside peak hour. The current traffic flows on Harras Road are contained in the Access Appraisal. There is no evidence that Harras Road currently experiences congestion or capacity issues. The estimated vehicle movements created by the development would not material affect capacity issues on Harras Road.

8.9 In addition to the above, at the date of approving the extant approval of 9 dwellings in 2019 the Harras Dyke site had permission in outline for up to 110 dwellings. This gave a cumulative total of 119 dwellings approved on or adjacent to Harras Road. The revised scheme of 90 dwellings at Harras Dyke plus the proposed 23 dwellings on the application site gives a revised total of 113 dwellings. A net reduction of 6 dwellings. There is no known material change in circumstances which would account for the Council's radical change in the assessment of the impact of the proposed developments.

8.10 The reason for refusal makes specific reference to capacity and congestion on the road network surrounding St James' C of E School. The school is approximately 750 metres west of the application site on Wellington Row. Wellington Row in the vicinity of the school is subject to parking restrictions in the form of double yellow lines and "zig-zags". It is reasonable to assume that at school drop off and pick up there is a level of on-street parking which causes some very localised and temporary congestion. It is highly unlikely that the development will contribute materially to this issue.

8.11 Traffic from the development site has a variety of route choices when exiting the site. Only traffic travelling directly to Whitehaven town centre will use Wellington Row or the network in the vicinity of the school. The route choices include:

- a) Left turn east onto the eastern bypass (avoiding Wellington Row) for traffic travelling to Whitehaven secondary schools, major employment locations including Sellafield, West Lakes Science Park, West Cumberland Hospital, Hensingham and Sneckyeat Business Parks, north to Workington and Lillyhall via the Moresby Hall junction, Cleator Moor, Egremont and all routes south.
- b) Turn right and accessing the A595 at the Sunnyhill junction for routes south (West Lakes, Egremont and Sellafield) and north to Workington, A66 routes east and A595/A596 routes north).
- c) Turn right and travel through the “Harras Road arch” down Wellington Row to the town centre and specifically the western town centre.

8.12 The above demonstrates that the relatively low traffic flows generated the proposed development would be diluted by the route choices of residents directed by their employment and social needs. The proposals are safe, sustainable and would not lead to any significant residual or cumulative impact on the highway network. The proposal is compliant with the policies contained in the NPPF and Development Plan.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

9.1 This proposal relates to a site which has the benefit of an extant planning permission. The Council’s 2019 determination of the extant planning permission the correctly assessed the site as being a sustainable and appropriate location for residential development. This revised scheme will deliver an enhanced scheme with a range of wider planning benefits including:

- More efficient use of the site and the delivery of a broad range of house types to meet local needs.
- Delivery of an element of affordable housing above the minimum 10% requirement.
- Improved design and comprehensive landscaping,
- A reduction in the visual and landscape impact through siting, landscaping and design.
- The implementation of Traffic Calming on Harras Road.
- A comprehensive development scheme for the management of surface water.

9.2 The Council's reason for refusal as set out in the Notice of Refusal of Consent dated 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 are unjustified and without any reasonable basis in fact. Based on the number, size and character of the proposed dwellings the traffic and pedestrian movements can be estimated with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Similarly, current traffic flows and accident data demonstrates the level of use and safety of Harras Road. There is no evidence to suggest it is unsafe or has or is likely to exceeded capacity due to the development.

9.3 The issues the Council refers to St James' C of E Junior School as non-specific and remote from the site. Due to the relatively limited increase in traffic generated by the site and the likely route choices taken by traffic entering and exiting the site it is considered highly unlikely that any impact would be beyond negligible. The assessment that the scheme would result in severe residual cumulative impacts on the highway network is not credible. There is no reasonable justification for a refusal on the grounds stated in the Notice of Refusal.

9.4 The proposal represents a sustainable form of development which represents a material improvement in comparison to the fallback position of the extant scheme. The proposal is compliant with the policies contained in the NPPF and the Development Plan. Any minor adverse impacts are satisfactorily mitigated or can be satisfactorily mitigate by planning conditions. The planning conditions recommended by Council Officers in connection with the

determination of planning application 4/2135/0F1 are considered to be reasonable and acceptable. The Applicant agrees to enter into a section 106 Planning Obligation Agreement to secure the affordable housing.