

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Outline Application for up to Forty Self-Build Dwellings

Land at Summergrove, Whitehaven, Cumbria

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement is submitted in support of an outline application for residential development on land at Summergrove, Whitehaven. On the 24 March 2023 outline planning permission was granted for up thirty self-build dwellings (4/22/2237/001 refers) on the land immediately adjacent. This application is phase 2 to the application approved under 4/22/2237/001. It should be noted that both planning applications relate to the same field enclosures. Whilst a notional boundary has been created for planning purposes there are no physical boundaries between the application site and the application site of 4/22/2237/001. The development will be implemented as single development utilising one access and site infrastructure.

2.0 Site and Planning History

2.1 The site is current agricultural land located to the south of Summergrove Park, Whitehaven. Summergrove Park was developed in two phases as a self-build development. The initial phase was developed in the late 1980's and early 1990's with access from the Galemire to Summergrove Road. A further phase of development was undertaken in the late 1990's and early 2000's. This formed a self-build development extending Summergrove Park to the boundary of the application site.

2.2 The Summergrove Hall hostel and event centre is located to the west of Summergrove Park. It is understood that Summergrove Hall is now operated by UCLAN as student accommodation connected with courses delivered at West Cumberland Hospital and West

Lakes Science Park. The West Cumberland Hospital is the general hospital serving West Cumbria and is located to the west of the application site on the eastern fringe of Whitehaven.

2.3 The Westlakes Science and Technology Park is located immediately to the south and this predominantly and is a high-quality business park in individually landscaped plots. West Lakes Science Park provides significant high value employment primarily in science, technology, nuclear and professional services. The park is home to over 2,000 professionals employed in a range of sectors including nuclear, energy, research and development and professional services. The Park prides itself as an inspirational business environment.

2.4 The Science Park's green travel plan promotes sustainable travel and has invested in green travel infrastructure. This green infrastructure of public transport, cycling and walking will benefit the site and the wider area. The science park extends from the site southwards to its boundary with the A595. The Science Park has the benefit of safe and pleasant walking and cycling routes through the park and connecting with the national cycleway network.

2.5 Summergrove occupies a location to the east of Whitehaven and has easy connectivity to key public services in the eastern (predominantly Hensingham) areas of Whitehaven. This includes the West Cumberland Hospital, the town's secondary schools including Whitehaven Academy, St Benedict's School and Mayfield School. Sports facilities including Whitehaven Swimming Pool, Copeland Athletics Stadium, sports fields and 3G pitches at the St Benedict's/Mayfield School campus and Hensingham Rugby Club. In addition, there are a range of services including shops, filling station, public houses, primary schools and places of worship.

2.6 The site also has a strong connectivity to the town of Cleator Moor including employment locations at the Phoenix Centre and Leconfield Industrial Estate. Leconfield Industrial Estate is currently undergoing re-development to host an Industrial Solutions Hub as

a major component of the West Cumbria economy. Local services include primary schools, convenience shopping, healthcare, public houses and places of worship.

2.7 In April 2019 a full application for the erection of 194 dwellings with associated landscaping and infrastructure (419/2126/0F1) was submitted in respect of the whole of the land which now comprises the proposed housing land allocation HSU1. It is understood that this application was withdrawn prior to determination.

2.8 Outline planning application 4/22/2237/001 granted outline planning permission including access for 30 self-build dwellings. The planning permission is subject to conditions and a S106 Agreement to secure 10% of the dwellings as affordable homes. The S106 gives an alternative of the affordable homes being either offered as affordable homes for discounted sale (80% of the market value or homes for rent at a discount of 80% of the market rent). Notwithstanding, the applicant anticipates that the homes will be provided at discounted rent. Given the location of the site it is anticipated that this will provide high quality and flexible affordable accommodation for key workers employed in close proximity to the site.

2.9 Planning application 4/22/2237/001 contains a number of conditions which relate to the application site. These include:

- (i) Access – both phases of development will share the access point approved under planning application 4/22/2237/001 as a safe and convenient means of access to the site.
- (ii) Drainage – the sustainable surface water drainage includes retention ponds within the application site.
- (iii) The design code for the proposed development in common with planning application 4/22/2237/001.

3.0 The Proposal

3.1 This outline application has been formulated to create a high-quality landscaped site for tailored self-build development. 10% of the dwellings will be provided as affordable housing. These affordable units will reflect the affordable housing approved as part of application 4/22/2237/001. It is anticipated that these units will be Build to Rent homes to be provided at a discounted rent of 80% of the market rent.

3.2 The landscape infrastructure plan submitted with the proposal shows the access point from the public highway, indicative road layout, developable areas and structure landscaping. The landscape infrastructure creates a development which is fully integrated with the development approved under 4/22/2237/001.

3.3 The access road (as 4/22/2237/001) is laid out as a formal driveway with gentle curves following the northern boundary of the site. The areas around the access road will be fully landscaped with structure planting to the north of the access road and specimen trees to the south. The main area of the site would incorporate structure planting predominantly to the site boundaries to screen the development from external views and to provide a natural breaks. The structure planting would extend to create discrete developable areas within the site. The developable areas are indicated in white on the Landscape Infrastructure Plan. The proposed landscaping to the boundary will reinforce existing landscaping on the West Lakes Science Park site.

3.4 Two surface water attenuation ponds are required which were shown as part of 4/22/2237/001 to support the drainage strategy. The first attenuation pond is located at the front boundary of the site and will be fully landscaped. This will establish important structure planting consistent with the neighbouring structure boundary planting at West Lakes Science Park. The second attention pond is shown in the western corner of the site.

3.5 The site developer will provide the site infrastructure including the estate roads, services, drainage and surface water infrastructure. The site developer will also plant the structure planting and undertake the hard and soft landscaping works. The landscaped areas will be placed in a management company to secure its maintenance in perpetuity. The site developer will build and deliver the affordable housing. Technically this element of the scheme will not be self-build. This approach will ensure certainty and consistency of delivery for the affordable homes.

3.6 The Applicant is willing to accept a planning condition requiring the submission of a design code in the same form as the condition attached to planning permission 4/22/2237/001. Notwithstanding, it is the Applicants intention to limit development of the site to six house types which will be chosen from the portfolio of indicative house types. These house types range from two storey family housing to smaller bungalows to meet a variety of housing needs. The house types will be allocated to suitable plots to ensure a cogent form of development to create a high-quality environment.

3.7 The Applicant intends to restrict house designs and materials contractually. The development will follow a self-build developer lead group project approach. A developer will divide the site into individual plots and provide the servicing. Design advice will be provided which will to an extent restrict the house designs, particularly in relation to front and visible elevations. Self-builders will be given the chance to tailor the house designs to their individual needs particularly in relation to internal layouts and rear non-visible elevations. The self-builder will provide their own building contractors and manage the build personally. The site developer will impose controls in relation to the timescale of builds (this is likely to be limited to 12 months) and site management to avoid unsociable working.

4.0 Access and Highways

4.1 The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement. The purpose of the Transport Statement is to review the accessibility of the site by sustainable transport modes and to consider the impact of the generated traffic on the local road network. The Transport Statement considers the application both independently and as part of the combined site approved under planning application 4/22/2237/001. The site will utilise the new junction arrangement to be created onto the C4003 approved under application 4/22/2237/001 with the required visibility splays.

4.2 Internally an indicative site layout has been provided which compliments the landscaping scheme. These will be further detailed as part of any reserved matters submission for infrastructure. Furthermore, individual applications for dwellings will be required to meet the Cumbria Design Guide standards in relation to available onsite parking.

4.3 The Transport Statement concludes that although the site is rural in nature it is close to a number of local facilities capable of being accessed by walking, cycling and public transport. In addition, a range of public services and facilities can be reached within a 24 minute walk or a 10 minute cycle ride. Furthermore, residents can access the entirety of Egremont and Whitehaven via cycleways.

5.0 Planning Policy

5.1 The planning policies relevant to the proposed development are contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (NPPF) and the Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 (CLP). The emerging Copeland Local Plan 2017-2035 has now completed its examination in public. Outline planning application 4/22/2237/001 was approved during the course of the examination in public.

5.2 Policy ST1 of the CLP 2013-2028 sets the development principles which underpin the Borough's planning policies. The principles reflect the need to promote economic, social and environmental sustainability. The principle of promoting economic and social sustainability includes the need for development to create a residential offer which meets the needs and aspirations of the Borough's housing markets. Policy ST1 also encourages environmental sustainability and the creation and retention of quality places. This includes applying design standards, improving build quality and ensuring good standards of residential amenity.

5.3 Policy ST2 of the CLP 2013-2028 provided settlement boundaries and a settlement hierarchy. The development strategy broadly focusses the larger scale development on the settlement of Whitehaven with more moderate levels of development towards the smaller towns of Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom and appropriately scaled development in local centres. This site is located outside the settlement boundaries defined by the spatial development strategy and occupies a relatively unique location adjoining development which relates to Hensingham and the northeast Whitehaven areas of Summergrove. Notwithstanding its relationship to Whitehaven the location is approximately equal distance between the principal settlement of Whitehaven and the town of Cleator Moor with relationships to satellite villages such as Keekle and Moor Row. It also immediately adjoins the Borough's major employment locations in the form of the Westlakes Science and Technology Park.

5.4 It is understood that the Council accepts that those parts of Policy ST3 which refer to settlement boundaries are out of date and can be given limited weight in decision making. This is reflected in the emerging local plan which has highlighted that extensions to boundaries will be required to meet identified housing needs.

5.5 The draft Local Plan 2017-2035 has completed its preferred options consultation. The application site together with the adjoining land has been shown as proposed housing allocation HSU1.

5.6 The emerging Local Plan includes Summergrove within the settlement hierarchy as a rural village. Policy PD 2021 applies a settlement boundary which includes the application site. This reflects the character of Summergrove including its population and services. The inclusion of Summergrove within the settlement hierarchy reflects the fact that the location is suitable for appropriately scaled sustainable development. The inclusion of Summergrove within the settlement boundary and the proposed HSU1 allocation reflects the Local Plan Evidence Base and Sustainability Appraisal.

5.7 The approval of outline planning application 4/22/2237/001 in effect triggered the housing allocation HSU1. Given that the boundary between the application site and the site approved under 4/22/2237/001 is notional, there is a logic in planning and landscaping terms that the balance of the site is developed. The development of both sites will create a more comprehensive development and will give context particularly to the site frontage and the landscaping of the site. The proposal will also create connectivity between existing development at Summergrove Park, the development and West Lakes Science Park.

5.8 The NPPF provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 (d) provides that where there are no development plan policies, or the development plan policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, local authorities should grant planning permission unless:

(i) the application of the policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or

(ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed the policies in this framework is taken as a whole.

5.9 The site does not form part of a protected area, neither is it as asset of particular importance in the manner considered by the NPPF. Accordingly, paragraph 11 (d) (1) does not apply. It is therefore necessary to consider whether any adverse impacts of development would significantly outweigh the benefits.

5.10 Policy SS3 of the CLP 2013-2028 requires applications for housing development to demonstrate how the proposal helps to deliver a range of choice of good quality and affordable homes for everyone. Proposals are assessed on their individual needs and requirements of individual housing markets as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 1. This includes promoting a balanced mix of house types and tenures within that market area consistent with the evidence based on the SHMA. It is anticipated that this site will deliver a mix of approximately six house types which will meet needs identified in the local housing market including high quality family housing and bungalows. Paragraph 62 of the NPPF makes particular reference for Local Planning Authority's to make provision for people wishing to commission or build their own homes. This proposal will provide an opportunity for individuals to build their own home. The structure of the proposal has been formulated to ensure that the opportunity for self-build and custom housing can be incorporated in such a way that allows a high-quality development. This includes continuity of design, landscaping and services, post completion site maintenance and management and the opportunity to access expert developer guidance and advice. It is the developers aspiration that the site will become the model for self-build sites within the borough. The site will give an opportunity for persons on the Council's self-build register an opportunity to purchase plots.

5.11 New housing brings economic benefits particularly during the construction period. Furthermore, due to the self-build element there is an opportunity for individuals to gain experience and skills. This proposal complies with paragraph 65. The site has potential to attract families living and working within the borough who may otherwise choose to live outside the borough and commute. This is particularly relevant in relation to high wage earners employed at the Westlakes Science and Technology Park or Sellafield plant. The proposed dwellings will provide a level of support and improve the vitality of the local community, services and businesses.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 In the context of both national and local planning policy this site represents a sustainable and appropriate location for new homes. The presumption in favour of granting planning permission for sustainable development contained in paragraph 11 is met. The site is suitable for housing development and has been assessed as part of the development plan making process. Following these assessments and consultation the site has been allocated for housing in the emerging Development Plan. Furthermore, the adjoining land benefits from outline planning permission and, together with the application site, will deliver a single high-quality development.

6.2 The comprehensive landscaping scheme, design controls and site access help mitigate any adverse effects. Furthermore, the proposal creates an opportunity to allow people to build their own home to reflect a housing need identified both nationally and locally. The site will also make a positive contribution to affordable housing in the area. The developers intention to provide infrastructure, landscaping and long-term site management will secure a high quality development.