

CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL – CALL FOR SITES JUNE 2020

Land at Shalloak Road, Sturry.

CONTENTS:

1. Overview
2. The SHLAA site's characteristics
3. Physical and Technical Constraints
4. Ecological and Environmental Constrains
5. Conclusions

APPENDICES:

- A. O.S Plan of site outlined in red at 1:1250 scale
- B. Extract from adopted Local Plan
- C. Transport briefing Note
- D. Public Rights of Way Plan
- E. Transportation & Access Report
- F. Plan of Public Rights of Way
- G. Gas Main HSE development table
- H. Ecology 2017 report
- I. Ecology June 2020 briefing note
- J. Constraints plan
- K. Landscape appraisal
- L. Suggested layout plan for 30 dwellings.
- M. Suggested unit mix plan

1. Overview

This submission by Mulberry Estates (Bridge) Limited is a response to the City Council's Call for Sites published in February 2020. The Council will consider all sites submitted through the SHLAA process as set out in the NPPF. Mulberry is an experienced site promoter and developer and has a contractual arrangement with the landowners.

The site lies midway along Shalloak Road on its eastern side and amounts to 2.44 Ha. It has frontage to Shalloak Road and abuts land allocated for residential development in the adopted Local Plan, lying between Broad Oak Road and Shalloak Road, in the parish of Sturry. This submission asks that the site be considered suitable for residential development for 30 dwellings. This would include affordable housing at the Council's appropriate percentage rate.

In accordance with the City Council's helpful notes of guidance, Mulberry has commissioned the examination of all known constraints to residential development and the relevant consultant's reports are appended. These constraints fall into two categories:

1. Physical and Technical constraints and
2. Ecological and Environmental constraints

These all conclude that constraints are either insignificant or that a development of the site can be undertaken in a way to avoid undue harm to matters of acknowledged importance.

The conclusion is that this site is suitable, available and deliverable for residential development., within the proposed plan period.

2. The site and its characteristics

An O.S. based plan identifying the land with a red boundary is attached as **Appendix A**. The site is roughly rectangular and measures 2.44 Hectares. Mulberry Estates (Bridge) Limited has a secured interest in the land, which is privately owned.

The site lies on the eastern side of Shalloak Road to which it has frontage and from which there is an established vehicular access. To the north, the site is bounded by Dengrove Park, a long established 'Park Homes' residential caravan and mobile home development. Dengrove Park is separated from the site by a vehicular access and Public right of Way serving both the SHLAA site and 4 dwellings. At its eastern end lies a boarded-up and unoccupied bungalow, 12 Shalloak Road as an inset within the site. At its western end towards Shalloak Road, are a pair of semi-detached bungalows numbers 14 and 16. These too are boarded up and unoccupied. A large contemporary bungalow number 18 lies midway along the site's northern boundary and this is occupied.

To the south lies the collection of buildings comprising Broad Oak Lodge including 2 dwellings, numbers 8 and 10 Shalloak Road. On the western side of Shalloak Road lies a recently constructed mobile home park currently occupied by 8 mobile homes. The site is thus surrounded by existing and proposed development, apart from a small section of woodland at its eastern end.

The land lies on the edge of the Broad Oak plateau above the river Stour valley. It slopes gently towards the south, is currently down to pasture and is used for the grazing of horses. It is divided into five paddocks, each with a temporary field shelter with all being accessed from the established Shalloak Road access and roadway. Most of the site boundaries comprise mature hedgerows including many trees and shrubs, effectively concealing the site visually from the surrounding landscape.

Land further to the north abutting Shalloak Road forms part of the SP3 Strategic Housing allocation (Broad Oak) in the adopted Local Plan. Immediately to the south of the site lies the remainder of the SP3 Strategic Housing allocation (Sturry). This site is one of the few remaining undeveloped parcels of land within the Sturry-Broad Oak approved strategic development allocation (**Appendix B**) and represents a logical 'rounding-off' to established and enduring physical boundaries.

3. Physical and technical Constraints

(i) Access and sustainability

A Transport Consultant's Report is attached at **Appendix C**

The site is served by a long-established vehicular access off the eastern side of Shalloak Road. This also serves the dwellings 12, 14, 16 and 18 Shalloak Road. Shalloak Road is a busy rural route and at the point of access is narrow, without verges or footways and with mature hedgerows on both sides. As a result, visibility for emerging vehicles is restricted. Without any safe verge or refuges, pedestrians must use the carriageway. Use of this access to serve additional dwellings would therefore be inappropriate.

Instead, a new vehicular and pedestrian access to the site can be secured via the adjoining development site to the south, as indicated on the suggested development diagram (**Appendix L**). This would enable access to this site from Shalloak road to be permanently closed, leaving just a private driveway serving the four existing dwellings. This would result in a considerable improvement to highway safety on this stretch of Shalloak Road.

The assessment shows that development of the site for 30 dwellings would add a negligible number of trips to the proposed new and improved local network included within the overall Sturry-Broad Oak development when compared to the overall traffic at these junctions and will not have severe impact. It should be noted that these two junctions are new and designed to high capacity and as such will not suffer from pre-existing queues and delays.

Furthermore, the Transport Assessment (TA) and the TA Addendum reports for the land at Sturry development show that both junctions will operate, in the forecast year, with sufficient spare capacity and with no queues and minimal delays at both the peak hours.

To summarise, it is evident that the proposed site, when considered alongside the allocated Land at Sturry Development, is in a highly sustainable location providing choices to adopt sustainable alternatives to car travel in the form of walking, cycling and public transport. Additionally, availability of several facilities and services within walking and cycling distances makes these travel modes desirable.

The initial review concludes that a safe and suitable site access can be established for all road users and that there are potentials for provide additional pedestrian access locations linking with surrounding footpaths. Moreover, the trips generated from the development will result in no severe impact on the road network in capacity and congestion terms nor on highway safety.

- **Access to the site is not a development constraint**

(ii) Public Rights of Way

The access roadway serving the site is also a public right of way, ref: CB52 as shown in **Appendix D**. This is a well-used footpath linking Shalloak Road with a north-south footpath ref: CB60, running through Den Grove Wood, lying to the east of the site. The use of the site for residential development would have no adverse impact on path CB52 and with the elimination of existing site traffic, use of the path would become safer for pedestrians.

- **Public Rights of Way are not a development constraint**

(iii) Gas Main

A Southern Gas Networks pipeline crosses the site east-west towards its northern end. The landowner easement agreement provides for the main to be diverted or reinforced to allow development to proceed unconstrained (subject to conditions). However, we have assumed for now that the gas main remains unchanged and have produced a plan (**Appendix L**) for development to comply with all safety-zone requirements. This has the effect of reducing the site's capacity from approximately 50, to 30 dwellings. The position of the gas line with its easement and restrictions implications are shown in the formal response from HSE consultation by the infrastructure consultant are attached **Appendices E & F**.

It will be seen that without diversion or reinforcement, development is not permitted within the red lined easement area, but it is permitted within the outer zones, albeit restricted by density. The HSE Guidance allows for the residential development of up to 30 units at a density of less than 40 per Ha, based on the totality of the numbers across the development site.

The land excluded for development can, however, be used for soft landscaping such as grassland and shrubs, including pathways. The suggested layout plan takes fully into account, these restrictions. The excluded land can also be used to provide a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) along with areas of habitat for important wildlife species and protection from development pressure to the Den Grove woodland at the eastern edge of the site. This is all clearly demonstrated in the accompanying layout plan.

- **The High-Pressure Gas main is not a development constraint**

(iv) Drinking Water, Wastewater, Gas, Telecoms and Electricity

The developers will access all services from the adjoining allocated development site.

- **Availability of services is not a constraint to development**

4. Ecological and Environmental Constraints

(i) Ecology

A full Assessment was undertaken during 2015-2017 for both this land and the adjoining allocated site. The 2017 report for this is attached **Appendix H**. An updated report (June 2020) has been undertaken and this too is included as **Appendix I**.

This site has always been included in the extensive and on-going environmental assessments undertaken for the adjoining Sturry-Broad Oak residential development allocation and associated planning applications since 2015. This comprehensive work has been the subject of consultations and advice with both Natural England and KCC Ecology.

The site has been re-visited during May and June 2020, in connection with this SHLAA submission. It has been noted that the influence of heavy grazing is now reflected in the condition of the grassland and hedgerow adjacent Shalloak Road; the margins to the north, east and south are otherwise similar to that which was found in 2016. Ecological constraints therefore remain relatively consistent with the previous scenario.

The summary of this updated work is as follows:

1. Constraints planning (**Appendix J**) has led to the adoption of a 15m buffer from the ancient woodland, in line with government standing advice. In addition, allowance has been made for retention and enhancement of the existing boundary trees and hedgerows, along with a grassland buffer zone, applying the recommendations of KCC Ecology (17 August 2017) for wide hedgerow buffer zones.
2. This allows for habitat connections to be retained, and potentially strengthened, between the ancient woodland sites of Den Grove Wood to the east and Lynne Wood to the west, with concomitant benefits arising for associated woodland fauna such as dormice, foraging/commuting bats, and for breeding birds.
3. As is typical for this part of Kent, populations of reptiles are present at the overgrown margins of the site, and there is scope for these animals to be retained largely *in situ* as part of any development, accommodated within the grassland buffer zones described above.
4. Furthermore, it is envisaged that these buffer zones, along with other formal and informal areas of public open space, would together have the potential to offer recreational opportunities adequate to absorb the immediate needs of the proposed development, ensuring that development proposals do not give rise to increased recreational pressures on nearby sites of international importance, including the Stodmarsh SPA/SAC/Ramsar, Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA/Ramsar, and Swale SPA/Ramsar Sites.
5. None of the above represents significant constraints to the future residential development of the site, and indeed, consideration of all these matters at an early stage of site masterplanning, would allow for all protected species mitigation to be met within the site itself. Furthermore, with appropriately targeted planting and habitat management, the redevelopment has good scope to deliver biodiversity net gain (National Planning Policy Framework, para 175).

■ **Ecological concerns are not a significant constraint to residential development.**

(ii) Landscape

A landscape appraisal has been undertaken and this is attached at **Appendix K**. It's summary and conclusions are below:

1. The initial landscape appraisal of the land indicates that the Site is capable of accommodating housing development with limited or minimal impacts on landscape character and views. See attached plans within the report (0401/LSK1-Preliminary Landscape Appraisal / Constraints Plan, and 0416/LSK2 – Landscape Opportunities Plan).
- 2.

3. The appraisal indicates that the central, southern and eastern parts of the Site are most appropriate to develop for housing to minimise landscape and visual impacts. These parts of the site are relatively well contained and enclosed and would relate well to the future housing development to the south. Whilst perceived in some views, the development would be seen in the context of proposed future development and as a logical extension to the urban area when seen from the wider surrounding area minimising the change perceived.
4. The initial appraisal also indicates that the northern parts and western edge of the Site are the most sensitive parts of the Site, as the introduction of housing development here would be adjoining areas of open countryside or low height development and the development would be evident in views albeit they are local views, mainly from adjoining footpath, and longer distance views towards the Site to the south and south west.
5. Notwithstanding the above it is considered that careful consideration would need to be given to the density, scale and type of development within the northern and western parts of the Site to form a transition (lower density housing) between the development and open countryside areas to the west and mobile home park to the north.
6. It is also considered important that the existing hedgerow and trees along the western, eastern and southern boundaries of the Site are retained and buffer of open space be provided to set back the housing from these boundaries in order to minimize the impact of the proposed houses on the trees, especially Den Grove Wood (ancient woodland) and on views towards the site.
7. In addition, the creation of an open 'greenway' or area of open space through the central / northern parts of the Site also provides an opportunity to incorporate a 'green corridor / green infrastructure' within the Site, provide a belt of tree planting screening development within the northern parts of the Site as well as providing an east to west link, connectivity and internal green space within the development.

The landscape appraisal concludes that that the Site is capable of accommodating housing development with limited or minimal impacts on landscape character and views. The suggested layout for just 30 dwellings on the site (Appendix C) incorporates all recommendations and represents a suitable incorporation of opportunities whilst acknowledging the constraints.

- **Landscape impacts are not a significant constraint to development**

5. Conclusions

- This submission shows how a full range of assessments of the land at Shalloak Road have been undertaken, in accordance with the relevant Planning Policy Guidance as well as the terms set out in the City Council's very helpful 'Call for Sites' advice. All known constraints have been assessed by appropriately qualified and experienced experts in their field and their reports are included for verification by the City Council.
- Having regard to the findings and recommendations of all reports, Mulberry's Architects and Planners have plotted a potential housing layout. This is shown at **Appendix L**, which demonstrates how the site can accommodate 30 dwellings having regard to all constraints. Should Mulberry elect to have the Gas Pipe strengthened or diverted, it would be possible to achieve up to 50 dwellings on this site.

- In addition, **Appendix M**, shows how a mix of housing types and sizes including the provision of affordable housing, at the Council's current policy rate of 30%. This approach would achieve a good level of social cohesion in accordance with the Local Plan's housing development objectives.
- Accordingly, the land is suitable, available and achievable for housing over the plan period.

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