



Planning Policy Department,
Canterbury City Council,
Council Offices,
Military Road,
Canterbury,
CT1 1YW

Our ref: MB/RD/30204

31st May 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

CANTERBURY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN TO 2040 REPRESENTATIONS IN RESPECT OF GREAT PETT FARMYARD, BRIDGE

Introduction

This representation has been prepared on behalf of Woodchurch Property (BK) Limited ('Woodchurch') in response to the Canterbury City Council Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) Consultation, which runs until 3rd June 2024. Canterbury City Council ('CCC') is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to set out a strategy for development across the district for the period to 2040 and has prepared the Draft Local Plan following feedback gained from the initial issues consultation in 2020, options consultation in 2021 and previous consultation in October 2022 on the Draft Local Plan to 2045.

The Draft Local Plan (subject to this representation) has been revised following feedback from previous consultations alongside relevant updates that have been made to the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'). The revisions include a reduction in the plan period (being to 2040, not 2044), reduction in the number of homes proposed across the plan period, removal of the new settlement at Cooting Farm, removal of the Eastern Movement Corridor, the proposed Canterbury Circulation Plan and a range of strategic sites to the east of Canterbury.

The Council's Local Development Scheme (published March 2024) sets out that following the consultation period for the Regulation 18 Local Plan, publication and consultation for the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan will take place between July 2024 – May 2025. It is anticipated that the Draft Local Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State and Independent Examination will take place between June 2025 – January 2026. Formal adoption of the new Local Plan will be between February and March 2026.

Woodchurch will be developing the site known as Great Pett Farmyard on behalf of the landowner, Cantleys, and are promoting it for residential allocation through the review of the existing Local Plan. The site is immediately available and has been included as a draft allocation for residential development under Policy R2. A planning application was submitted on behalf of Woodchurch in July 2023 for the residential development of the site (ref. CA/23/01371) and is pending determination. Woodchurch wish to limit their comments at this stage to the proposed development strategy for the district, the site allocation and pertinent development management policies.

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This letter has been uploaded to the online questionnaire, to supplement the answers given to the questions as requested by Canterbury City Council ('CCC'). This letter is structured to aid cross reference to the questionnaire and the draft Local Plan itself, with subheadings provided to indicate where comments are made in respect of specific policies.

The Site

The site comprises approximately 0.86 hectares of land which used to form part of the farmyard for Great Pett Farm. The site includes a series of agricultural buildings and hardstanding. Access to the site is by way of a driveway leading to Pett Hill, to the north east.

The site is located to the west of Bridge. It is situated outside of the existing Urban Area Boundary, to the west of the A2 and south of Station Road. Great Pett Farmhouse, directly to the north, is a Grade II listed building. The site is located within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and also falls within the Bourne Conservation Area.

The site has been included as a draft allocation under Policy R2 (Great Pett Farmyard) for residential development. The boundary of the draft site allocation is shown below:



Figure 1: Canterbury City Draft Local Plan – Great Pett Farmyard Concept Masterplan

The allocation is for the development of approximately 13 new dwellings, including a policy compliant level of affordable housing. The design and layout of any proposal should provide a high-quality built environment in line with emerging policy that is of a sensitive farmstead type character. An assessment of archaeological potential and mitigation on surrounding heritage assets has been required. The green and blue infrastructure for the site should further allow for sustainable drainage measures, provide a 20% biodiversity net gain, incorporate opportunities for landscape and biodiversity enhancements and conserve or enhance the PRoW network across the site.

A safe and convenient access and transport strategy is required that allows for a new and improved walking and cycling connection to Bridge, including via PRoW CB300.

Proposals

A full planning application was submitted in July 2023 for the development of the site comprising 13 dwellings together with access, landscape, parking, ancillary works and infrastructure following the demolition of existing agricultural buildings (ref. CA/23/01371) and is pending determination.

The proposal was prepared in broad accordance with the requirements of the draft allocation (formerly Draft Policy R6, now R2). The application has been subject to ongoing communication with the Case Officer at CCC whereby the Council are seeking for the quantum of development to be reduced on the site. The proposals are currently being reviewed and plans will be re-submitted following the end of the consultation period for the Draft Local Plan.

In view of the above, Woodchurch support the proposed allocation of the site for residential development but object to or have comments in relation to components of the draft policy. Our responses to the Council's online questionnaire have been provided below.

Policy SS1 – Environmental strategy for the district

Q3. Do you have any comments on this policy?

Policy SS1(5) states that development across the district will need to incorporate measures to deliver a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain in line with Policy DS21.

Woodchurch object to this section of the policy on the basis that there remains an absence of evidence in the Council's up to date evidence base to demonstrate why this level of net gain should be required on development sites of all sizes.

The latest evidence published to support the revised Draft Local Plan (published 2023 – 2024) includes a district wide Open Space Strategy (2023 – 2040), Riverside Strategy (2023-3028), Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy (2024) and Flood Risk Assessment (2024). The Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy provides a summary of ways in which the Council will seek to improve tree, woodland and hedgerow cover with the intention of enhancing biodiversity across the district. The Strategy makes reference to the Council's Draft Biodiversity Plan – Nature Recovery Strategy (2024) which is being prepared following the Council's declaration of a Biodiversity Emergency in October 2023. It is intended that this strategy will provide further evidence to support CCC's strategies and policies. However, in the absence of a published plan, it remains that no further evidence has been provided in the updated evidence base to support the Council's requirement for 20% and to demonstrate that this is viable on sites of different sizes.

It is noted that the Council did produce a Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Appraisal in 2020. The appraisal provides a high-level assessment of existing habitats and resources in the Council area and highlights key opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The assessment does not inform how to, or the level of, biodiversity improvements on a site-by-site basis.

The Environment Act brought in a statutory requirement of 10% on major application sites from February 2024 and minor sites from April 2024. If CCC wish to exceed the statutory

requirement for 10% BNG, this should be tested and justified for viability purposes. Any requirement should be proportionate to the scale of the development proposed, to ensure that development can be viable and fundamentally delivered.

The planning application that has been submitted for Great Pett Farm demonstrates a net gain of 43.20%. However, it is acknowledged that changes are required to the proposed plans to address comments raised by the Council with regard to number of dwellings and design. It is not anticipated that the level of BNG on site will reduce substantially when applying the changes; however, Woodchurch remain of the opinion that the level of BNG sought by the Council should be proportionate and should take into account both viability and deliverability of development.

Policy SS2 – Sustainable design strategy for the district

Q4. Do you have any comments on this policy?

Policy SS2(1) requires all new residential and commercial development to be designed to achieve net zero operational carbon emissions. In the previous representation it was noted that insufficient testing has taken place to ensure that new development can achieve net zero emissions whilst remaining viable.

A Climate Change Topic Paper (February 2024) has been added to the Council's evidence base following the 2022 consultation on the Draft Local Plan. The paper (Paragraph 4.8) confirms that an independent viability study for the Local Plan to 2040 (2022) has evaluated and factored in the costs of building new homes to net zero carbon and this has been shown to be viable and deliverable alongside other policy costs like affordable housing. The paper notes that the viability study was however conducted before the recent changes came into force relating to the requirements of new buildings – this includes the requirement gas boilers to no longer be the default source of heating and for air source heat pumps to be used from 2025.

The Future Homes Standard (FHS) is anticipated to launch in 2025. The technical consultation on the proposed specification of the FHS took place in Spring 2023, further consultation is to take place throughout 2024 followed by the adoption of the regulations in 2025. From 2025, compliance with the FHS will become mandatory and will ensure that new homes built from 2025 will produce 75-80% less carbon emissions than those constructed under current Building Regulations. In doing so, the FHS seeks to decarbonise new homes by improving heating, hot water systems and reducing heat waste.

Notwithstanding the above, it is noted that the FHS has yet to be adopted and significant concerns and risks were raised in the technical consultation relating to the impact of the increased costs of implementing the FHS on house prices and build costs. In turn, there is a chance that the full impact of achieving net zero could filter through into the viability and subsequent delivery of new schemes. It would therefore be prudent for the viability assessment to be re-run, including the scenario within which the FHS is implemented and taking into account any government funding to ensure that new development is able to achieve net carbon zero and remain viable.

Policy SS3 – Development Strategy for the District

Q5: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Policy SS3(4) identifies Bridge as a Rural Service Centre. The draft policy highlights that new development will be supported on suitable sites.

Woodchurch support the overall objectives of the draft policy wording, recognising that Bridge as a Rural Service Centre and that it provides a suitable location for additional and proportionate development in a sustainable way. It is considered that reference should be made to the development of additional housing on suitable and identified sites for completeness (such as the site in Policy R2).

It is noted that the settlement boundary of Bridge has been expanded, as shown in the Draft Policies Map, to include the site at Great Pett Farm (allocated under Policy R2). Woodchurch support the extension of the settlement boundary and the fact that this identifies the site as a sustainable and suitable location for future residential development.

Policy SS4 - Movement and transportation strategy for the district

Q6: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Policy SS4(6) states the new development should ensure easy and safe pedestrian and cycle connectivity is available. Woodchurch suggest that clarification is required over what constitutes new development and how such connections can be provided on sites of differing sizes. Smaller residential development may not be able to feasibly deliver the connectivity required by the new Local Plan. The policy should be re-worded to be proportionate to the scale of new development.

Policy R1 – Rural Service Centres

Q1: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Policy R1(1) states that within the settlement boundaries of the designated Rural Service Centres, including Bridge, new housing development will be supported where it is allocated for development. The policy also supports the redevelopment of previously developed land and / or minor development including infilling on appropriate sites.

Woodchurch support the policy wording, recognising that additional housing development should come forward in Rural Service Centres on suitable sites which include previously developed land or infill sites where sites have not been included as an allocation.

Policy R2 - Great Pett Farmyard

Q2: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Woodchurch strongly support the proposed site allocation, and the recognition that it is suitable for development. This allocation supports our own conclusions that the site presents an excellent opportunity to provide much needed housing adjacent to Bridge in a sustainable form. The fact that the site has gone through the Call for Sites process and has been included as a draft allocation in two versions of the Draft Local Plan publication demonstrates that it is considered by the Council to be an appropriate, suitable and sustainable location for residential development.

The policy remains subdivided into four separate parts, including Development Mix, Design and Layout, Landscape and Green Infrastructure, and Access and Transportation. Woodchurch object to various parts of the policy drafting (but not to the principle of the allocation), the reason for which has been provided in the text below.

Development Mix

The development mix required includes approximately 13 new dwellings, including affordable housing, accessible housing and an appropriate mix in line with Policies DS1 and DS2. Proportionate contributions should be made toward education, healthcare and community infrastructure. Open space should also be delivered in line with Policy DS24.

Woodchurch have submitted a planning application for the site that accords with the broad intentions of the draft policy, including 13 dwellings with 3 affordable units (comprising 2no. affordable rented units and 1no. First Home). The application was submitted in July 2023 and comments have been received from both statutory consultees and neighbouring occupiers from the consultation period.

A written response was received from the Council with their comments in October 2023 followed by a meeting between the design team and the Case Officer. In their initial response, the Council considered the number of dwellings proposed to be too high for a site of this size, resulting in a cramped form of development that would not represent a 'historic farmstead' style as per the requirements of the draft policy. The Council considered this to have a waterfall effect on the quantum and quality of soft landscape retained and proposed on site. CCC subsequently requested the number of units to be reduced and design and landscape approach revisited accordingly.

Woodchurch engaged with CCC during the application process, and revised layouts have been submitted in both December 2023 and January 2024. In doing so, and on direct request from the Council, the number of dwellings proposed on the site has been reduced from 13 to 9 with the intention of preventing the sense of 'overdevelopment' given by the Case Officer. Whilst the number of dwellings would not meet the requirements of the draft allocation, the Council confirmed that the reduction in dwelling numbers has allowed for the retention of additional space on site that has enabled the retention of more trees and provision of additional soft landscaping which CCC consider to be acceptable and more appropriate. The revised approach also allows for a more positive design approach that better aligns with the Kent Downs AONB Farmstead Guidance. On this basis, Woodchurch seek to prepare a revised application pack that includes a lower number of dwellings and subsequently respond to comments provided by the Council and other statutory consultees.

Taking this into account, Woodchurch seek that the policy wording is updated to allow for 9 dwellings instead of the 13 currently proposed. It is considered that this would be more suitable in design terms and will facilitate the ability for the scheme to meet other policy requirements in terms of design, open space and BNG.

Moreover, the wording of the draft policy has been amended slightly so that affordable housing provision should be delivered in line with Policy DS1 and DS2. Policy DS1 still requires 30% of affordable housing on sites of 10 dwellings or over 0.5 hectares. The policy has also been amended to allow for off-site commuted sums applicable to developments of 6-9 dwellings in the AONB. Should the policy wording for the allocation be updated, and number of dwellings required be reduced, it is not considered appropriate

for affordable housing to be delivered on site given the low number of units required and potential implications for Registered Providers in the take up and management of the units. The policy should therefore be re-worded to acknowledge that affordable housing can be delivered by way of a financial contribution in line with Policy DS1. The financial implication of the requirement needs to be considered against a small to medium-scale development proposal.

Woodchurch would be happy to discuss any contributions toward early years, secondary and SEND education plus primary healthcare and other necessary off-site community infrastructure that would be fair and reasonable in association with the size of the site and proposed development with the Council during the application process. Any such contributions would of course need to meet the relevant tests.

Design and Layout

The draft policy requires any future development proposal to be of a high-quality and an appropriate density. It also requires proposals to provide a sensitive farmstead style of development with reference to the Kent Downs AONB Farmstead Guidance, in keeping with the local area. It is also required to assess Areas of Archaeological Potential and respond sensitively to local heritage assets.

Woodchurch raise no objections to this part of the policy and with reference to the application already submitted, are actively striving for the highest quality of design as possible. As noted above, on review of the proposals the Council have sought Woodchurch to reduce the number of dwellings on site from 13 to 9, to allow for a more sensitive form of development that takes into account the Farmstead Guidance and allows for additional open space and soft landscape. To enable Woodchurch to achieve the requirements of this part of the policy, it is sought for the required number of dwellings to be reduced accordingly.

The planning application is accompanied by an Archaeological Desk Based assessment and Heritage Statement that will assess the impact of the proposed development on archaeological and heritage assets. Based on work undertaken to date, it can be demonstrated that development of the type proposed in the draft policy can be delivered without posing any level of harm in this regard.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

The draft policy states that green and blue infrastructure for the site should provide sustainable urban drainage measures, deliver a 20% biodiversity net gain, provide habitats and ecological connectivity, conserve or enhance the PRoW network across the site and provide a substantial landscape buffer to the east, south and west of the site.

Woodchurch raise objections in relation to this section of the policy with regards to the delivery of 20% BNG, the enhancement of the PRoW network and the landscape buffer required.

As noted above, there remains an absence of sufficient justification or evidence as to why a 20% net gain is required on small to medium sized sites. The Environment Act brought in a requirement of a 10% net gain into law for major development in February 2024 and small-scale development in April 2024. No further assessment has been undertaken as

part of the Council's Evidence Base to justify that 20% is viable and deliverable on small to medium sized sites. If CCC still wish to exceed the Environment Act's requirement for 10% BNG, this needs to be justified and tested for viability. The percentage of net gain should subsequently be proportionate and achievable for the scale of the site. In this instance it is not considered fair or reasonable to be required without further evidence to support the requirement.

It is noted that the scheme as submitted demonstrates a 43.20% net gain; however, the BNG Assessment will need to be re-conducted on the basis of revised plans following comments received from the Council. As the Council are seeking for the quantum of development to reduce (and therefore an increase in open space / soft landscape), it is not anticipated that the level of BNG would reduce to below 20% as required by the policy. However, in the instance that it does, Woodchurch remain of the opinion that the percentage of net gain should be proportional to the scale of development and in this instance, it remains considered that the site should be required to deliver a minimum of 10% in accordance with legislation. Any increase over this baseline will be a benefit that weighs in favour of the development in planning terms.

The proposed development seeks to maintain the PRoW network; however, it remains considered that the wording of the policy should be improved as the PRoW already exists and the changes to the PRoW need to be reasonable and proportionate in comparison to the scale of the site and the proposed development which is not currently clear in the draft policy. The submitted scheme did not provide for any enhancements or changes to the PRoW network and no objections were received from KCC PRoW Services or Highways in this regard. Therefore, the policy wording should be re-worded so that the PRoW network is retained rather than enhanced.

With regards to the landscape buffer, Woodchurch still consider a 'substantial landscape buffer' to be vague and overly subjective. No explanation has been provided of how this could be achieved. The existing trees and vegetation in the submitted scheme have been retained as much as possible taking into consideration tree and ecology surveys that have taken place on the site. It is noted that the site is already characterised by built form within established boundaries. Therefore, the retention and enhancement as proposed (which does allow for the removal of some of the trees given their low quality and impact on visual amenity) is considered acceptable in view of the existing use of the site and proximity to Bridge to the north-east.

Access and Transportation

The draft policy requires an access and transport strategy that delivers safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle connections, including a new and improved walking and cycle connection to Bridge, including via PRoW CB300. Woodchurch raise objections to this section of the policy as drafted.

A transport assessment has been conducted and submitted alongside the application for the site which identifies that the existing connection to Bridge via Pett Hill is acceptable for use by both pedestrians and cyclists in view of the low level of traffic along the road and small scale of the development proposal. KCC Highways confirmed that the projected vehicle trip generations shown in the transport assessment were appropriate, being 7 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak time and 6 in the PM peak time. Therefore, the development (of 13-dwellings) would not have a severe impact on highway capacity.

Whilst comments were raised in relation to vehicle and cycle parking, KCC provided no objection to the use of Pett Hill (as proposed) to connect the site to Bridge for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Therefore, taking into account the lesser impact of a smaller scheme, the use of Pett Hill as a connection into Bridge should be acknowledged in the policy wording.

As noted above, PRoW CB300 has been maintained through the proposals as submitted, which provides direct access to Bridge. KCC Public Rights of Way & Access Service commented on the plans and provided informatives that require the PRoW to be kept clear and undisturbed. In view of the comments received from both KCC Highways and PRoW Service, alongside the requested reduction in size of the scheme from 13 to 9 units, it is not considered that any significant update to the PRoW network or the provision of additional connections to Bridge would be proportionate to the size of the development site or proposals. No identifiable need has been demonstrated through the Transport Assessment or statutory consultee comments that directly supports any substantial improvement and therefore the policy wording should be updated accordingly.

Policy DS2 - Housing Mix

Q2: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Policy DS2(1)(b) and (c) requires development proposals for 11 – 50 homes to be closely aligned with the Council's market housing requirements with a 5% buffer for each dwellings size unless site constraints, size and characteristics indicate that the requirements can't be achieved. For proposals of 10 or less houses, development should include a housing mix that reflects evidence of local housing needs. The policy further states that development proposals should accord with the Council's most up-to-date Housing Strategy. In addition, Policy DS2(3) provides housing mix for Affordable Housing, stating that proposals for up to 50 dwellings should provide an appropriate affordable housing mix for the size, type and location of development based on affordable mix requirements, local needs and Registered Providers Input.

Woodchurch consider the wording of the policy to be overly vague. Whilst the policy provides the advised housing mix for both market and affordable dwellings, it contradicts itself by later referring to the fact that smaller developments should reflect evidence of local housing needs and for affordable housing in particular, should be based on a Registered Providers input. It is noted that the market and affordable housing mixes are based on the Housing Needs Assessment (HNAA) (February 2024) that has been included in the Council's updated evidence base. The policy wording should be made more clear as to what housing mix should be applied to new development.

It is further noted that the policy refers to adherence to the Council's Housing Strategy. The current Housing Strategy (2018-23) is out of date and provides an action plan and key targets for monitoring based on information that supports the current Local Plan. The Housing Strategy should be updated prior to the adoption of the Local Plan to ensure that housing mix requirements are monitored and updated throughout the plan period.

Policy DS6 - Sustainable Design

Q6: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Draft Policy DS6(1)(a) requires new development to be designed to achieve a recognised calculated Net Zero operational carbon emissions in line with the Council's Sustainable Design Guidance SPD.

DS6(1)(b) requires payment via S106 contributions where development does not achieve net zero operational emissions. It is considered that this requirement is overly onerous and increases cost implications for new development. As shown previously, whilst the updated evidence base includes a Climate Change Topic Paper (2024) that provides a viability assessment to support the Council's draft policies, it is acknowledged in the paper itself that the viability assessment was prepared prior to recent changes that came into force for Building Regulations in terms of gas boilers etc. It has therefore not been demonstrated that the Council's sustainable design requirements are viable for developments of all sizes.

With the above in mind, it is not considered that this is fair or reasonable for smaller development that still meet the threshold for major applications. Therefore, the policy should be re-worded and a threshold approach applied for development of over 50 units to be more proportionate.

DS6(1)(c) requires proposals for major development to submit a whole-life carbon assessment. This is considered overly onerous for small to medium scale schemes that would still be classed as major development. It is recommended that the policy is re-worded and a threshold approach is considered to ensure that the assessment is required on development proposals of over 50 units where the carbon assessment would be more necessary and applicable.

There is a requirement under DS6(11) for proposals for residential and mixed-use development to deliver fibre to the premises (FTTP) and for all other development, they must achieve broadband connectivity in excess of 24mbps. It is for the applicant to provide robust evidence to demonstrate if this is not feasible. There are a number of areas in the Council boundary that will not be able to achieve the desired speeds, particularly in remote rural areas. An assessment of speeds and delivery potential should be prepared by the Council prior to submission of the new Draft Local Plan to ensure that the requirement is feasible. If not, the approach should be reviewed so that it is fair and reasonable on the basis of the location of the development.

The Draft Plan still blanketly places a number of onerous requirements upon 'major development', which by definition captures small to medium sized sites. These sites will be disproportionately burdened, which is likely to have a direct impact either in terms of deliverability, or in forcing smaller sites to pursue schemes that fall below the major development threshold, which in turn will have a direct impact on the delivery of affordable housing. A more proportionate approach to development management policy is therefore required.

Policy DS16: Air Quality

Q16: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Policy DS16(1) states that proposals for major development in the district will be required to undertake an emissions mitigation assessment and cost calculation in line with the Council's air quality guidance to demonstrate that the development will be air quality neutral and not lead to a net increase in emissions.

Once more, it is not considered that this requirement is fair or reasonable for medium sized sites. The approach should be proportionate, and not incur unnecessary additional costs to medium sites of up to 50 new homes that could render new development unviable. Other policies in the Local Plan (such as Policy DS6(5)) apply a threshold approach to the number of new homes. This approach should be consistent throughout the Local Plan to ensure that medium size sites do not have to undergo unreasonable additional costs with regards to the scale of development. A more proportionate approach to development management policy is therefore required.

Policy DS21: Supporting biodiversity recovery

Q20: Do you have any comments on this policy?

Draft Policy DS21(1) requires all major development to be accompanied by a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. It is not considered that this is reasonable or proportionate for small to medium schemes that would still constitute major development. Other policies in the Local Plan (such as parts of Policy DM6) apply a threshold approach. This approach should be consistent throughout the Local Plan to ensure that small to medium sites do not have to undergo unreasonable additional costs with regards to the scale of development.

Draft Policy DS21(3) states that development across the district will need to incorporate measures to deliver a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain.

Woodchurch object to this section of the policy. As shown in Section 3.1, there is currently an absence of evidence in the Council's evidence base to demonstrate why this level of net gain should be required in development sites of all sizes. The updated evidence base includes a range of documents relating to the Council's open space strategy, trees, woodland and hedgerows and flooding. It is understood that the Council are in the process of preparing a Biodiversity Plan (2024) which will support the Council's policies and strategies relating to biodiversity net gain. However, the plan has not been published and no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that 20% is achievable or viable across sites of all sizes.

As noted previously, the application that has been submitted for the site demonstrates a net gain of 43.20% which exceeds the requirements of the draft policy. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that amendments are required to the development proposals that might have an impact on the level of BNG achievable on site. Whilst not anticipated for BNG to fall far below the current level, Woodchurch remain of the opinion that the level of BNG sought through the policy should be proportionate to the scale of development and take into account viability and deliverability of development.

The Environment Act brought a statutory requirement of a 10% net gain for new development into legislation, for major development in February 2024 and minor development in April 2024. If CCC wish to exceed the Environment Act's requirement for 10% BNG, this would need to be tested and justified for viability. Any requirement should be proportionate to the scale of development proposed, to ensure that development can be viable and fundamentally delivered.

Conclusion

This representation has been made on behalf of Woodchurch Property (BK) Limited in respect of the Canterbury City Council's Draft Local Plan to 2040. The representation shows that we support the general direction of the Local Plan and welcome CCC's decision to allocate the site for residential development. However, it is considered that a number of the district-wide policies and strategic policies are overly onerous for small to medium sites of over 10 units that would still class as major development. The assessments required for major development are not proportionate depending on the number of dwellings proposed, and could risk the viability and deliverability of new development, and/or the delivery of affordable housing. A plan-wide threshold approach should be applied to the draft policies to ensure that requirements are reasonable and more proportionate to the scale of new development.

It is sought that the draft allocation for the site (Policy R2) is re-worded to allow for a smaller scheme of up to 9 units to be delivered alongside associated changes to affordable housing requirements and infrastructure improvements. It is considered that a smaller scheme will be more suited to the site and allow for a sensitive and high-quality proposal to be taken forward that is better able to respond to other requirements in the Draft Local Plan.

Woodchurch are committed to working with CCC to ensure that the ultimate allocation within the submission version of the Local Plan is deliverable and represents the optimum development solution for the site.

I trust the above is sufficient, but please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RD', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rosie Dennis
Associate

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