

07 February 2025

**For the Attention of Becky Matravers
Senior Development Officer – Major Projects**

Economy & Infrastructure
Solihull MBC
Council House
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B91 3QB

By email only: becky.matravers@solihull.gov.uk

Dear Ms Matravers

PL/2025/02987/PPRM 85 DWELLINGS OAK FARM, CATHERINE DE BARNES

The Parish Council makes the following observations and comments which lead us to object to the planning application as currently presented and seek its refusal. In broad terms we do not feel the applicant has taken sufficient notice of “Secure by Design” in particular regard to lighting and personal safety, Policy P15 of Solihull Local Plan 2013, the National Design Guide which sets out 10 features for achieving well designed spaces and NPPF chapter 12 “Achieving well designed and beautiful places” A Design and Access Statement has not been included in the application documents, although we acknowledge that Access principles have previously been approved at the outline stage .

We detail below our specific concerns.

General Layout

- 1) The development seems to be dominated by the circular main highway with unlit access streets and parking areas. Section 12 Para 136 of the NPPF Dec 2024 states” *Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.....*
- 2) No street scene has been provided for the views from Hampton Lane (HL) into the development which we believe to be a major omission. Hampton Lane is the main access into the village from the east. Currently views from the roundabout consists of high bushes and trees with one property #254 being set back off HL. The current layout indicates that some bushes will be removed from the eastern side of number #254 with 2properties being built virtually straight on the highway. And a further 2 slightly set back but again with entrances on to the highway. This proposal is totally unacceptable. There is no landscaping indicated on the Landscape Plan (LP) in this area and even if there was, we see no reason why the existing hedging and shrubbery (whose shadows are plainly visible on the LP in this area) should be removed and the layout for plots 82-85 re-

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configured or reduced in this area. Incidentally most drawing submitted with the outline planning application indicated there would be vegetation along the length of Hampton Lane.

- 3) The current layout and design of this development indicates that numerous dwellings open straight out on to the footpath with minimal area of front. Most homes throughout the village itself are designed with front gardens. Other than the block of maisonettes, certainly the homes in Bickenhill Lane and Hampton Lane adjacent to the canal bridge have such gardens. It is essential that this development doesn't create the feel of isolation but is a well-designed thought out extension to the current village which is not how we view it currently. The current layout creates potential issues when waste bins are placed on the pathways awaiting both before and after collection with the risk that they will end up on the highway.
- 4) We believe the positioning of the 3 storey properties facing the canal towpath lends itself to the canal side views expected in the centre of the canal area in Birmingham not a rural village.
- 5) We fail to understand the need for any 2.5/3 storey buildings on this development and the applicant has not given any indication why they are a necessary feature. In the event that these high storey homes are indeed necessary they should be placed within the development site not around the edges of it. The proposal to build them in red brick with red brick roofs exacerbates this situation
- 6) Most of the cul- de sac areas are devoid of any landscaping. - Landscape Plan
- 7) We believe that the current cul de sac principle has negative implication for personal safety, especially at night, bearing in mind the lack of lighting and poor views from the nearby dwellings. The current layout has poor pedestrian connectivity.
- 8) There appears to be no parking provision for visitor parking. The parking provision of 1 plot per dwelling does not allow for any visitor parking encouraging on street parking which should actively be discouraged. On street parking is also encouraged by virtue of the number of dwellings with car parking at the rear of the properties which mean vehicles will be parked out of the front entrance of the property particularly in inclement weather and the winter months. These areas are unlit.
- 9) Para 86 of the Nation Design Guide states *86 Well-designed parking is attractive, well landscaped and sensitively integrated into the built form so that it does not dominate the development or the street scene. It incorporates green infrastructure, including trees, to soften the visual impact of cars, help improve air quality and contribute to biodiversity. Its arrangement and positioning relative to buildings limit its impacts, whilst ensuring it is secure and overlooked.* We don't believe much of the parking on this development meets these recommendations.
- 10) There is no indication on any plans as to the internal/usable size of the garages but believe them to be 3mx6m. We have some doubts whether this width is sufficient for modern vehicles to use these whilst enabling the drivers to exit the vehicle without personal injury caused by twisting etc.
- 11) The design includes a number of what appear to be open alley ways which presumably have been necessary to allow waste bins to be taken to the front of the property. These areas provide dark spots and potential safety and ASB issues.

- 12) The brickwork bordering plots 13-20 will provide a stark bland visual environment
- 13) We note there are several bin collection points being proposed, but no drawing has been provided indicating what these areas look like. We feel BCP's are inappropriate for a development of this nature and the layout should be re- designed to avoid them.
- 14) We feel the affordable homes should be more thoroughly integrated into the site rather than sited in blocks as is currently proposed.
- 15) The play area being placed at the bottom right-hand side has potential safety implications. No lighting (small bollard?) is proposed either in this area or to the pedestrian footpath to the canal .

Housing Styles and Design

- 16) In general, the design of the houses is bland, and featureless. Many are flat fronted with no real profiling features other than a flat door cover. Features included on the front of the Rowan and Mulberry types could be replicated on other dwelling types. The Daisy has no rear window. The Rowan, Gardenia, Bellflower, Foxglove, Foxglove SP and Clover types could have side/additional windows where siting allows, thus avoiding large expanses of bland brickwork. The inclusion of false chimneys would add to the character of the homes. Most of the current dwellings in the village have a selection of protruding garages, chimneys, protruding porches, bay windows etc and suggest that the current designs/styles result in development which falls well short of the requirements detailed in NPPF Dec 24 Para 12 Achieving Well Designed Places or the recommendations set out in the National Design Guide.
- 17) As mentioned earlier, many properties are designed so that the front door exits directly onto the pathway- with virtually no front gardens to speak of. This generates a poor visual experience throughout the development and does not give due consideration, in our view, to NPPF para 12.
- 18) We cannot see any specific evidence to indicate that any consideration has been paid to bullet points 2 and 3 of Policy HOU1 of our adopted Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2028
 - smaller properties suitable for those seeking to downsize; and,
 - properties suitable for the elderly, located close to key facilities and designed to current national recommendations
- 19) Several of the street scenes are misleading in specific regard to the positioning of many of the trees in the various scenes.

Street scene A-A: There is no tree between plots 7 and 8. It's in front of 6

Street scene B-B: There are no trees behind plots 67 and 71

Street scene C-C: There is no tree behind plots 21, There are no trees planned between plots 15-16, no trees planned behind plots 17-18, or behind plot 5.

We believe street scenes should directly reflect the true appearance of the street concerned otherwise what is the point of it.
- 20) We suggest the development was too dense, too redbrick, and its design reflected an 'urban' rather than a 'rural village' style. We have a concern about the extent of boundary **brick** walls.
- 21) All the housing types appear, from the various housing type plans, to have the same front door and window styles. No windows have opening top lights for instance, which when

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combined with different styles of front door would help create variety in appearance, bringing character into the development.

Climate Change

- 22) Other than EV points there seems to be no mention of measures that are included in the development concerning the move to carbon reduction in accordance with Policy P9 of the Solihull Local Plan 2013. We were verbally advised by a representative of Cala Homes that each property will be fitted with a heat pump but couldn't trace confirmation of this from the documents provided with the application. If there are to be heat pumps installed in the dwellings where will these be situated? Will they have any visible implications? Has any other consideration been given to other measures aiming to achieve net zero in line with the policy referred to earlier (Solar panels/solar tiles).

Landscaping and Tree Planting

- 23) We note from Para.9.1 of the POS soft and hard landscaping document that the contractor is only required to maintain all areas of new planting for 12 months after completion of the site. There appears to be no mention of what arrangements have been made to maintain the landscape features of the site on an ongoing basis.
- 24) As mentioned earlier in clause 1, all new streets should be tree lined, unless there is an overwhelming situation which prevents this which we don't feel exists here. The current proposals for tree planting on the new streets (basically 1 circular street) is inadequate as is planting in some of the small entries into the parking areas.
- 25) We see there is an intention to plant some semi mature trees with 3 varying sizes of trunk girths. We believe it is important for this development, with the amount of mature vegetation being retained, should benefit from new mature tree planting to use trees of the girth 400-450mm where species types allow to achieve a mature style development at the earliest opportunity.
- 26) As mentioned earlier in this response, the Hampton Lane Street scene directly to the east of #254 is unacceptable as it stands with the current vegetation being removed and homes built up to the frontage bordering HL. The Landscape Plan clearly shows shadows of the existing vegetation which should be retained with siting of the homes being pushed back further into the site area. The current proposal is not acceptable and not in keeping with the current street scene in that locality. A diagram of the proposed street scene as currently configured has not been provided with the application which is a significant omission
- 27) We were unable to ascertain the biodiversity position- however in discussion with the applicant we understand this the application as it stands does not meet the required standards and a financial contribution will be necessary, based on the pre - development site we find this disappointing and feel that the site itself should provide a sufficient BNG to satisfy current regulations.

Future Maintenance

- 28) We understand that the LA is only aiming to adopt the main circular highway and that all other infrastructure, accesses, landscaping etc is to be managed by a third-party

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management company by residents contributions. This give us some concern over the future maintenance of the substantial part of the development including the parking access surfaces, any future lighting that may be deemed necessary following the consultation, emptying of the two litter bins on the site etc. etc. Any contract with a Management Company should include stringent maintenance and response to event conditions to minimise any degradation in the environmental conditions on the development.

Boundary Treatments

29) At a meeting with the Cala representative, we suggested the site was still too dense, too redbrick, and its design reflected an 'urban' rather than a 'rural village' style. We asked for the missing street scene to be provided. We expressed concern about the extent of boundary brick walls. Cala said that modern developments and SMBC preferred these to wooden fences for public facing boundaries.

Summary

30) Based on the above, we believe there are sufficient grounds for us to request the application be **refused**. We believe it fails to comply with Chapter 12 of the NPPF Dec 24, Policies P9 and P15 of the Solihull |Local Plan 2013, Policy HOU1 of the Hampton in Arden Neighbourhood Plan 2017-28 or taken sufficient account of "Secured by Design" and the "National Design Guide".

Yours sincerely



JULIE BARNES
Clerk & Financial Officer
HAMPTON IN ARDEN PARISH COUNCIL