

Planning Statement

Construction of 8 modular residential dwellings with associated hard
landscaping and infrastructure

Land to the west of 60-64 Lower Meadow, Harlow, Essex, CM18 7RE

Hill Partnerships

December 2023



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Issue Sheet

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This planning statement has been produced by Lanpro Services Limited on behalf of Hill Partnerships in support of an application for the construction of 8 modular residential dwellings with associated hard landscaping and infrastructure at Lower Meadow, Harlow, Essex.
- 1.1.2 Hill is an award-winning family owned and operated housebuilder with a strong track record of delivering high quality developments. Since 1999 Hill has gained an industry reputation for creating inclusive and sustainable communities that respond to their local context. Hill prides itself in building exceptional homes by bringing together contemporary design, sustainable materials and a sympathetic approach. Hill is also committed to reaching net zero carbon in its business operations and in the homes it builds by 2030.
- 1.1.3 As part of Hill's 2019 landmark 20th anniversary celebrations, it pledged to give something back to the communities in which it operates. Its pledge, known as Foundation 200 launched by Hill's CEO Andy Hill in 2020, will provide 200 modular homes for homeless people up to 2025. Since then, 74 homes have been committed to local authorities across the UK including in Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Essex, Hertfordshire and London.
- 1.1.4 The proposal seeks to provide self-contained single occupancy units that will provide high quality transitional accommodation for former rough sleepers. The Units comply with Part L regulations and feature a blue roof system as well as energy efficient heating and power. They have low carbon emission and running costs.
- 1.1.5 This planning application follows initial pre-application discussions with a Principal Planning Officer and Housing Regeneration & Development Manager at Harlow Borough Council, comprising a Teams meeting, and email correspondence on 21st April 2023, an extract of which is set out below.
- 1.1.6 The email pre-application response advised that *'The site is effectively unconstrained and there are no heritage assets or TPO trees in the vicinity. There is no recorded planning history either....Visually the site is well screened on all sides and I think we [Harlow Borough Council] would be keen to keep that vegetation or replace it otherwise the development may appear out of place in views from Commonsie Road. Neighbouring amenities don't look to be an issue, the buildings would be single storey and sited towards the west of the site which adjoins a car park. We will seek to protect the nearby trees regardless of them not being protected. That said, if the buildings are to go on existing hardstanding, roots are unlikely to be impacted'*.

1.2 Submission Documents

- 1.2.1 The following documents have been submitted to support this planning application and include:

- Planning Statement (this document)
- Completed application form and Ownership Certificate
- Covering letter
- Drainage Construction Details
- Illustrative Landscape Masterplan
- Outline Hard and Soft Proposals
- Plant Schedule and Outline Specification Notes

- Tree Protection Status Drawing
- Tre Survey/Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Lighting Specification
- Soil Investigation
- UXO Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment

2 Site Description and Proposal

2.1 The Site

- 2.1.1 The Site of the proposed development is located on land to the west of 60-64 Lower Meadow, Harlow, Essex. It was formerly garages but was cleared several years ago and has been vacant for over a decade.
- 2.1.2 The Site is located in the Stewards area of Harlow, approximately 3 kilometres south of the town centre. It benefits from proximity to a bus stop, located on Parnall Road approximately 250 metres north-west of the site. The number 2 bus, which operates from this stop provides a 20-minute frequency bus service running from 0700-2300hrs to Harlow town centre (with a journey time of approximately 13-15 minutes).
- 2.1.3 The Site benefits from its sustainable location and is well-related to shops, services, and facilities with a small supermarket/food store immediately west of the application site, and other facilities including a community centre, a Cooperative food shop and parks and green space within 2-3 minutes' walk from the site, providing future tenants with their daily needs within easy reach of the Site.

2.2 Designations

- 2.2.1 The Site is free from any constraints that would prevent the site coming forward from development, and the residential use is entirely consistent and appropriate with the surrounding residential area.
- 2.2.2 It is located within Flood Zone 1, at low risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. Environment Agency mapping also indicates that the location of the extension is at very low risk of flooding from surface water.
- 2.2.3 The Site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no heritage assets within the vicinity of the site.
- 2.2.4 There are no designated sites of ecological interest in proximity to the Site.

2.3 Relevant Planning History

- 2.3.1 There is no recorded planning history on the site.

2.4 The Proposal

- 2.4.1 This planning application proposes the construction of 8 modular residential dwellings with associated hard landscaping and infrastructure.
- 2.4.2 It is accompanied by several supporting documents which provide details on the design, lighting, landscaping, drainage and other details.
- 2.4.3 The Units fully comply with Part L regulations and feature a blue roof system as well as energy efficient heating and power, and have low carbon and low running costs.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Decision Making

3.1.1 Under Section 38 of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ('The 2004 Act'), the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the approved development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This chapter identifies the national and local planning policies that provide the framework within which any planning application will be made.

3.2 National Planning Policy

3.2.1 National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was originally published in March 2012. The NPPF has since undergone consultation and subsequently revised submissions have been published in July 2018, February 2019, July 2021, and most recently in December 2023. This provides a framework within which regional and local policy is set.

3.2.2 The NPPF sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, identifying that sustainable development consists of economic, social and environmental roles.

3.2.3 The second bullet point of paragraph 8 outlines that part of the social objective of sustainable development is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.

3.2.4 Paragraph 11 advises that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-making this means approving development which accords with the local development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant policies of the policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

- The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusal; or
- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

3.2.5 Chapter 8 sets out that the planning system should play a role to play in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Local Authorities should plan positively for the provision of community facilities and ensure that services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable for the benefit of the community.

3.2.6 Paragraph 99 of Chapter 8 states that:

It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.*

3.3 Local Planning Policy

3.3.1 The local development plan for the Site consists of:

- Harlow Local Plan, and
- Essex Minerals Local Plan.

3.3.2 The Harlow Local Plan was adopted in December 2020.

Harlow Local Plan

3.3.3 The following policies in the Harlow Local Plan are relevant to this application:

- Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy HS1: Housing Delivery
- Policy PL1: Design Principles for Development
- Policy PL2: Amenity Principles for Development
- Policy PL3: Sustainable Design, Construction and Energy Usage
- Policy PL7: Trees and Hedgerows
- Policy PL8: Green Infrastructure and Landscaping
- Policy PL9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets
- Policy PL11: Water Quality, Water Management, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Policy H2: Residential Development
- Policy H5: Accessible and Adaptable Housing
- Policy L4: Health and Wellbeing
- Policy In1: Development and Sustainable Modes of Travel

3.3.4 The Essex Minerals Local Plan does not contain policies relevant to this application.

4 Key Planning Considerations

4.1 The Principle of Development and Need

4.1.1 The principle of development, the construction of 8 modular residential dwellings is considered acceptable and this has been confirmed in informal pre-application discussions with a Principal Planning Officer. The site is located in an established residential area and the proposal would represent an efficient and effective use of a brownfield site that has been vacant for several years.

4.2 Design, Access and Layout

4.2.1 The proposal has been designed to reflect and respect the orientation of the site and is compliant with the relevant policies of the Harlow Local Plan. The proposed 8 new modular homes would be accessed through terraces at the front of the properties on the eastern side. A gravel path is proposed to the rear of the properties to provide easy access for maintenance as well as providing a safe fire escape route,

4.2.2 Each dwelling will be provided with its own private terrace with timber batten fencing along the frontage and privacy screens along with raised planting between terraces.

4.2.3 A 1.2 metre path providing access to the front of each dwelling will be provided paved with concrete flag paving.

4.2.4 Cycle and bin stores will be provided along the site's northern boundary.

4.3 Residential Amenity

4.3.1 The closest residential dwelling (number 64 Lower Meadow) is located approximately 15 metres from the closest of the proposed new modular residential dwellings. The boundary between the Site and the garden of the dwellings is marked by fences. These existing houses' rear elevations are orientated southwards, whereas the proposed new dwellings are orientated north-eastwards. There would be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby properties nor by nearby properties on the proposed new dwellings.

4.3.2 Areas of species-rich lawn including spring flowering bulbs providing communal amenity space for the residents will be provided.

4.4 Arboriculture

4.4.1 The accompanying Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Preliminary Arboricultural Method Statement & Tree Protection Plan. The report recommends that in the event of the grant of planning permission, 'a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement & Tree Protection Plan should be provided'.

4.4.2 It is proposed that existing trees along the site's south-western boundary will be retained.

4.4.3 It states that 'Tree surgery should be completed as detailed in the Schedule of Trees. Where this has been identified for reasons other than to permit development, this work should be completed within the advised timescales irrespective of any development proposals'.

4.4.4 It concludes by stating that 'The tree works proposed as part of this Survey are recommended to mitigate any identified problems that may be caused by trees in close proximity to the proposed development'.

4.5 Transport/Highway Access

4.5.1 The principal vehicular access is proposed from Lower Meadow and adopted highway reaches directly to the site. In addition, it is proposed that a separate pedestrian and cycle access will

be provided on to Commonside Road to enable residents to access nearby shops, services, and facilities including the nearby bus stop.

4.6 Flood Risk and Drainage

- 4.6.1 The Flood Risk Assessment that accompanies this application concludes that the Site is not at risk of flooding and is therefore suitable for development. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and the *'proposed development will not increase the vulnerability of users from 'More vulnerable'*. The Flood Risk Assessment therefore concludes that *'this development proposal and location will have passed the Sequential Test and the Exception Test is not required'*.
- 4.6.2 The Flood Risk Assessment states that the *'Site is not considered to be at risk from pluvial /fluvial, groundwater, drainage flooding or flooding from reservoirs'*, and *'Surface water runoff for the proposed development will utilise Sustainable Drainage System techniques to treat the low level of potential pollution indices from the dwelling roofs and the external landscaped areas so as to improve water quality discharging to existing sewers'*.
- 4.6.3 It advises that *'The proposed drainage attenuation features can accommodate all storm events up to 1.0% AEP (+40% for climate change) with no above-ground flooding'*, and advises that *'The attenuation provision is also capable of storing a 3.3% AEP storm event volume and a subsequent 10% AEP event volume within a 24hr period'*.
- 4.6.4 It advises that *'The on-site foul drainage will not be offered for adoption and will remain private'* and *'The new TW [Thames Water] sewer constructed within Lower Meadow will be subject to a S104 and S106 agreement'*.
- 4.6.5 It concludes that *'Flood risk is therefore determined to be adequately mitigated with no associated flood risk to the development or adjacent land off site meeting national and local planning policies /guidance'*.

4.7 Biodiversity and Ecology

- 4.7.1 The supporting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal states that *'The proposed development will not adversely affect statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites'* and that *'None of the habitats that occur within the proposed boundary and considered to have high ecological importance'*.
- 4.7.2 It states that *'The findings of the habitat survey and protected species survey confirm that the boundary habitats associated with the site have the potential to support hedgehogs, foraging bats (albeit limited), and foraging and nesting birds'*. It continues by stating that *'Opportunities exist for the provision of ecological enhancements in the form of external bird boxes and the incorporation of hedgehog holes into potential fencing and locally sourced native plant species, or those of known wildlife benefit, into the landscape strategy'*.
- 4.7.3 The report includes by stating that *'Provided the recommendations within this report [the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal] are followed and the mitigation hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation, compensation, and enhancement is implemented throughout the detailed design process, potential negative effects from development on important ecological features will be negligible'*.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1.1 This proposal is for the construction of 8 modular residential dwellings with associated hard landscaping and infrastructure. It represents an entirely appropriate and efficient use on a brownfield site that has been vacant for many years following the demolition of garages over a decade ago.
- 5.1.2 The planning application follows initial pre-application discussions in which the Principal Planning Officer did not raise any significant objections to the proposed development, which will provide significant social benefits, providing accommodation for former homeless people.
- 5.1.3 The proposal seeks to provide self-contained single occupancy units that will provide high quality transitional accommodation for former rough sleepers. The Units comply with Part L regulations and feature a blue roof system as well as energy efficient heating and power. They have low carbon emission and running costs.
- 5.1.4 The proposal has also carefully considered access, ecology, landscape design, and arboriculture, and the scheme represents a carefully consider high-quality design.
- 5.1.5 There are clear public benefits to this application, and it is supported by the policies set out in the Harlow Local Plan. It is therefore respectfully requested that permission should be granted for this planning application.