

Urban Design

Planning Consultation Comments

RE: 25/P/01521

Site: Shortlands Farm, Guildford Road, Ash, Guildford, GU12 6DF

Proposal: Outline planning application with all matters except for the accesses from Guildford Road and Wyke Lane reserved, for subsequent approval for the demolition of the existing buildings and hardstanding and the erection of up to 200 residential dwellings including affordable housing and plots of self-build plots (Class C3); green and blue infrastructure and associated service and utility structures

Consultation Summary: Generally supportive of proposals however some concerns are raised regarding the lack of specificity in the parameter plans provided to provide a robust design framework (based on the positive vision presented) for future RMAs. Additionally, specific concerns are raised regarding the relationship of the development with Wyke Lane and the new urban edge(s) created by the development

Key policies and guidance:

- NPPF 2024
- Guildford Borough Council Residential Design Guide (2004)
- Guildford Borough Local Plan: strategy and sites 2015 – 2034 Policies; P2: Green Belt, P5: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, D1: Place shaping, D2: Climate change, sustainable design, construction and energy, D3: Historic environment, ID3: Sustainable transport for new developments, ID4: Green and blue infrastructure
- Guildford Borough Local Plan: Development Management Policies 2023 Policies; P11: Sustainable Surface Water Management, D4: Achieving High Quality Design and Respecting Local Distinctiveness, D5: Protection of Amenity and Provision of Amenity Space, D7: Public Realm, D14: Sustainable and Low Impact Development, D19: Listed Buildings, Policy ID5: Protecting Open Space, ID9: Achieving a Comprehensive Guildford Borough Cycle Network, ID10: Parking Standards for New Development
- GBC Green Belt Supplementary Planning Document (2023)
- GBC Parking Standards for New Development SPD (2023)
- Guildford Landscape Character: Assessment & Guidance, Volume 2: Rural-Urban Fringe Assessment (2007) Character Area E1: Tongham Rural-Urban Fringe Character Area

Application Background

- The site is not allocated in the current GBC Local Plan and is located within the designated Green Belt
- The site is noted to be proximal to significant development areas to the west, namely the site allocation A31: Land to the south and east of Ash and Tongham which has been partially delivered with additional applications / permissions in place. This allocation area is acknowledged to expand the eastern suburban fringe of Ash and abut Green Belt land



- Ash railway station is within half a mile of the site with good opportunities for sustainable links for both pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. Additionally, the site benefits from being close to numerous public open spaces such as Harpers Recreational Ground and Ash Playground which would be highly accessible by foot or other non-car means
- The public right of way (PROW) that crosses the site is lined by a number of trees protected by TPOs. In its current state it is a basic dirt track with no hardstanding, however the line of established trees provides a substantial visual buffer from Guildford Road to the area designated for residential development
- The site is not within a conservation area but is located close to a number of listed buildings, however from an urban design perspective these are relatively detached from the development site. Formal comment on the development's impact on the setting of these buildings should be sought from the Conservation Officer

General Comments

- The inclusion of 3D visualisations in the vision / design document is very positive and gives a clear indication of the quality of the main spaces in the development which is welcomed. Additional visuals would be beneficial to be provided which illustrate the proposed relationships with Guildford Road and Wyke Lane with specific emphasis on the entrance thresholds, however these are more likely to be handled in RMAs
- A good level of contextual analysis of neighbouring architectural character and materiality is demonstrated which is welcomed, and site drawings which include the neighbouring developments (both delivered and emerging) demonstrate a sound understanding of the contextual relationship between the application site and the wider context
- As a significant, positive public gesture of the development, consideration should be made to the implementation of the green / blue infrastructure proposed as this is felt to be a principal mitigator of harm this development may be seen to cause. Should outline planning permission be granted for this application, suggest imposing condition(s) that could control any phasing of works over the subsequent RMA(s) to ensure the green infrastructural elements are delivered in a way proportionate to the construction of new homes, i.e. ensuring these elements are not overlooked through subsequent reserved matters applications and / or build out phasing
- Should the case officer be minded to support this proposal it is imperative that in agreeing to an erosion of the area of defined Green Belt land that the resultant development is held to a higher standard of ambition in terms of place, architectural identity and quality in order to avoid the delivery of a generic and forgettable 'sprawl' of development as is regrettably typical of many contemporaneous fringe developments, as was the intention of the Green Belt to deter. In the information presented, this ambition does appear to be present in terms of the site arrangement which is welcomed

Information Required

- While it is understood that the outline permission reserves all matters other than access, it is notable that the parameters plans provided are loose in nature and deemed insufficient to reliably secure strong urban design principals in subsequent reserved matters applications
- Additional / revised parameter plans are requested for this site to additionally define (but not limited to); locations of building frontages, bi-directional frontages, zonal building heights and locations of landmark buildings on the site
- At the scale of 200 homes, suggest that there is also a potential (in lieu of more detailed parameters plans) to establish an element of design coding across the site. At this scale it would be reasonable to expect this to include standards for typical street types (primary/secondary/tertiary) and high level architectural articulation measures which could include materials & tones / details / proportion principals etc. which should be related to the good quality contextual analysis already included
- In addition to the amended parameters plans suggested, site sections should be provided which include some specificity around zonal building heights (relative to measured topographic information) and boundary conditions, with these drawings extended to include pertinent information on the immediate built context (eave, ridge and threshold levels of neighbouring buildings to the east of the site on Wyke Lane for example). These drawings could be rudimentary in resolution (this being an outline application) but would support the parameters plans with regards to building heights. This is important on this site due to the existing level changes on the site of 8.5m+ from north to south and the proposal for 3 storey buildings. These should also be used to determine the visibility of these taller buildings in regard to the LVIA and long distance views from the south
- A typological zoning and / or tenure zoning plan should be provided to demonstrate the appropriate, tenure blind integration of affordable housing across the site in line with policy H2 of the GBC Local Plan. The locations of these affordable homes should be carefully considered and aim to minimise distance between any affordable flatted buildings and areas of public amenity play space

Site / Layout Principals & Boundary Conditions

- The site arrangement is generally positively organised and responds well to the existing east / west public right of way, allows a screened offset from Guildford Road and creates a central series of green spaces which have the potential to be of great public benefit
- With regards to the proposed housing density, based upon the developable area of 5.23Ha, the provision of c200 homes results in a contextually appropriate density of 38.2dph which is well balanced with the quantum of open space provision in the proposals
- The central parkland / green corridor has potential to be a very successful 'anchor' space in the proposals, with consideration to long range views of the Surrey Hills offering a high quality public asset. It is imperative that this area is delivered with homes oriented to provide a consistent, positive frontage onto it, which should be included on a parameters plan for example



- The development will provide a large quantity of family sized homes and so it is very encouraging to see the provision made for play across the site in both formal and informal arrangements which will allow for a mix of unsupervised and supervised play catering to a wide range of ages. Suggest this is more robustly secured at outline stage by way of inclusion into parameter or design coding to ensure these locations are included in any future applications and ensure safe, vehicle free and / or pedestrian focussed connectivity to homes. Additional opportunity for more informal landscaped play measures could also be incorporated / would naturally occur around the SUDs pond
- The relationship of the development to Wyke Lane is deemed to be poor, with rear gardens presented to the street instead of active frontages and points of access / pedestrian and vehicular porosity. Query why no frontages are proposed to Wyke Lane and why the development is not more explicit in intention to knit this otherwise disconnected residential enclave into the broader vision for the area.

It would be preferable for any new development in this location to meet Wyke Lane positively, with the opportunity to meaningfully integrate the development to the adjoining residents. If this development is to be seen as an extension of the urban fringe of Ash, it would be preferable for this extension to substantively integrate with the Wyke Lane estate and in doing so, connect the previously 'annexed' area from the centre of Ash and the connections to infrastructural hubs

- The integration of a levelling pond as part of the site wide sustainable drainage strategy is very positive, with the opportunity to make the pond and associated swales into strong ecological features. It is strongly encouraged that these are secured by way of high level design coding and parameter plans
- The general street forms shown on the illustrative masterplan employ perimeter arrangements of homes which are successful and appropriate to both the context and the proposed density of homes and housing typologies apparent across the site which is welcomed. Where homes meet the new countryside edge, suggest the parameter plans dictate the requirement for outwards facing frontages
- The pumping station is noted on the illustrated masterplan to be potentially detrimental to the well curated views across the SUDs pond. It would be preferable for the location of this to be controlled by parameter plan (or the character and obscuration by planting etc. to be determined by design coding) to minimise its visual impact in the landscape

Architectural Design / Massing

- It is noted that some flatted buildings would likely be required in the development which would presumably be located in the area noted to be '*up to 3 storey*' on the submitted '*Heights Parameter Plan*'. As defined in the '*Local Character Study*' provided, 2 storey buildings are predominant in the surrounding area, suggesting the addition of 3 storey buildings being contextually aberrant. Justification is required over this parameter with regards to the sectional relationship and visibility of 3 storey buildings in this location (in reference to the LVIA baseline assessment provided) with additional clarification required to define whether this would be '*up to 3 storey flat roofed buildings*' or if it would more likely be '*up to 3 storey buildings plus roof*'. Either of these situations are not necessarily unacceptable from an urban design perspective, however greater explanation, parameters plans and high level coding would be expected to better justify the intention at outline stage



Overlay of Illustrative Masterplan and Height Parameter Plan, Note the dark orange area denotes a zone for buildings 'up to 3 storey'

- Assuming flatted blocks would be located in this '3 storey area' area they would be well situated to access the substantial areas of public amenity to the north of the PROW as well as the central green spaces which is positive
- A study around the use of and locations of minor landmark buildings should be explored at key junctions within the site (internal crossroads, end of streets etc), however at OPA stage these studies could be limited to ensuring bi-directional buildings that use both the building form and fenestration to address the corners in a positive manner are included and positioned on parameter plans

Access & Movement

- The proposed single vehicular access point from Guildford Road leads to a loop road through the site for vehicular movement. This solution is considered the baseline of acceptability in urban design terms



for legibility and movement, instead a greater level of porosity would be expected of a development of this type to more successfully integrate with the context. As mentioned, the proposals present an inactive rear boundary fence to Wyke Lane and do not improve means for pedestrian and vehicular porosity from Wyke Lane, with the emergency access shown from Wyke Road included for emergency during flooding rather than a way to connect the development better into the Wyke Road area which is felt to be shortsighted in terms of positive placemaking and should be more actively addressed

- The technical resolution of the single access point is understood to be technically acceptable, however it is felt that significant improvements can be made to provide a more pedestrian and bicycle focussed junction. Query why robust cycle infrastructure or a raised pedestrian focused table has not been incorporated into this junction design?
- It is understood that the PROW suffers from seasonal flooding issues. Query if improvements to the public right of way will be made to ensure its usability year round? Could conditions be made at outline consent to ensure these are included?
- The intention for connection to the PROW is good, however there is scope for additional connections to be made to this route to encourage a safe and welcoming pedestrian / cycle route to the centre of Ash and the principal public transport hub. It is important that adequate passive surveillance is attributed to the PROW to encourage its continued use with facing active frontages as is present in the completed new development to the west of the application site (16/P/01679). Suggest this is controlled by parameter planning and / or design coding

Sustainability

- The use of an attenuation basin and the potential integration of a natural swale network (rather than a piped system) is welcomed. Suggest these have the potential to be valuable ecological enhancements to the streetscape and that there should be an inclusion for these made in parameter / design coding for principal streets for example

Summary

- The general vision of the central green space is successful and the proportion of open space to development is positive and supported
- The development area principles are supported, with the designated development being located behind the existing screening trees lining the PROW welcomed
- Heights proposed for the 3 storey flatted area require further justification and / or more detailed parameters (relative to topographical information) to be fully supported
- Additional information should be provided by way of more detailed parameter plans (or high level design coding) to define important urban design parameters supporting the positive vision for the development presented



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- Concerns are raised around the relationship to Wyke Lane. A positive frontage to the street would be expected to allow the development to 'knit in' to the greater context with additional potential points of egress from Wyke Lane to create a greater movement network from east to west
- Thank you for consulting me on this project and I would be happy to review any future revisions

Thank you,

Senior Urban Design Officer
Guildford Borough Council

Date: 30/01/2026