

**Vistry Homes (Tenterden) Steering Committee**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Present:**

*Vistry Homes:* Paul Dadswell

*SEC Newgate:* William Neale

*Kent County Council:* Cllr. Mike Hill

*Ashford Borough Council:* Cllr. Ken Mulholland (Tenterden North Ward)

*Tenterden Town Council:* Cllr. Kayleigh Brunger-Randall & Claire Gilbert (Deputy Town Clerk)

*Tenterden Community Land Trust:* Mark Ellender

*Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, Tenterden & District Residents Association and Tenterden Wildlife:* Siggs Nepp

*Limes Land Protection Group:* Albert Poole

**1. Update from Vistry Homes**

William (Will) Neale reported that extensive consultations had taken place including presenting the draft master plan to members of the public. The focus now is on looking at the detail of the site following useful feedback from both the public and local groups. More specific local groups are now being consulted which include Tenterden Wildlife and Tenterden Community Land Trust.

Paul Dadswell reported that the style of housing will be the Bovis brand which is more upmarket and bespoke. Vistry (Kent) mainly deals with sites in Kent and East Sussex, with the main focus on Kent. The size of developments range from 100 to 1,000 dwellings and Vistry have partnered with other companies for delivery on some projects, i.e. Wates as a joint venture as is the case with his site Wates and Vistry own 50% each of the project.

**2. Tenterden Community Land Trust**

Will reported that he had met with Mark Ellender from the Tenterden Community Land Trust (TCLT). Mark had raised concerns that the development did not seem to contain affordable housing for locals. Mark reported that the TCLT is a Community Benefit Society with charitable status and because they have a shareholding, they are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority rather than Charity Commission. Mark reported that the TCLT were making progress on Limes Land and it presented an opportunity for local people to benefit from it. The proposal is that Vistry transfers the freehold of the lettable dwellings to the TCLT where 50% of the dwellings will be affordable. This equates to 71 affordable properties with one third available for rent. This would mean that around 24 houses would be transferred to TCLT and in turn they would have a partnership with a housing association that they would choose with Vistry. The association would take on a long lease of the site, with terms to be discussed, but it would be economically worthwhile. The housing association would manage the site and it would have a local policy where 50% would be in accordance with the TCLT's policy for housing local people and 50% through the Borough's usual allocation policy. During the lease, the housing association would be in

control and manage the tenancies; the TCLT would have a supporting role in the management.

Mark reported that the benefit of a housing association getting involved with the TCLT would be to build links with the local community and it does help with the management of the houses. It would also be that the right to buy would not apply so that the TCLT could guarantee the housing. A housing association had shown an interest to ABC in working with the TCLT; there is another association that will be approached who had been active in the area in the past and had dropped out of recent years, but could still be interested. It would be for Vistry to decide who to go for, but the TCLT would have an opinion. The next steps would be the formal selection process with ABC tying down the allocation policy and reaching a formal agreement.

Paul reported that he had met with Mark and agreed to liaise internally at Vistry regarding affordable housing and its delivery. In principle, there is no objection from Vistry regarding the affordable housing; they would provide the housing and transfer it to a registered provider (RP) or to the TCLT. Vistry would have to do the transfer to a registered provider through the Section 106 agreement, but the sticking point could be finding a provider to partner up with the TCLT. Larger RPs might see this process as a challenge, but Paul suggested it might be worth speaking to English Rural and Hersto. Paul stated that Vistry would sell the properties at a discounted price to the RP as standard practice. For the TCLT to become involved they would need to have partnered up with an RP and put in a competitive bid as per other RPs. Kieron O'Leary who is the Affordable Housing Manager in the Vistry Group would be involved in the process.

Albert Poole reported that the process seemed complicated to have several registered providers and felt legally it could be quite difficult to manage; Albert had assumed Vistry would have their own designated RP they would use. Albert also raised his concerns over the development and the potential for it to be a mismatch of housing. Paul reported that there was still scope for the TCLT to get involved; only Vistry will build the houses (no other builder), then these get transferred to an RP or the TCLT, so it is not too complicated. Mark also reassured Albert that the process is not too complicated and it's a model that has been used elsewhere, for example in Shepherdswell; their TCLT has a long lease with English Rural. The challenge is for TCLT to find an RP willing to partner up on TCLT's terms in the first instance.

### **3. Questions/Open Forum**

(a) Cllr. Mike Hill raised a query regarding the allocation policy of the affordable housing. Mike asked what guarantee we have that they will be allocated to Tenterden people. Mark stated that fundamentally, they will be relying on an agreement with ABC because they will have the allocation rights to the houses, but the reason why the agreement needs to be underpinned by the long lease arrangement is to make it enforceable for 50% of the houses. Allocation should be linked to people having a local Tenterden connection through family links or working in the parish. Paul stated that if the TCLT were on board, they are much more likely to secure

the allocation for local connections; the TCLT would have more say in this process than Vistry.

- (b) Cllr. Kayleigh Brunger-Randall asked what sort of dwellings will be built - will it be a mix to cover the age ranges and circumstances, i.e. bungalows, smaller houses, etc. Mark reported that the TCLT's research showed the need for 2 and 3 bed houses. It was stated that in the Housing Needs Survey about the elderly and there is a desire for a number of elderly to downsize into bungalow accommodation.

Paul reported that Vistry would provide a mix of housing, but not flats as these are not considered suitable on this site. There are bungalows in the proposals which would be more suitable for those downsizing. Bungalows would probably be market price or shared ownership, but not rental. Mainly 2 and 3 bed properties have been allocated for the rental side.

Cllr. Ken Mulholland asked whether there will be any visual difference in the housing styles across the development given the mix of builds. Paul reported that the style and finish would be the same across the site as per best practice and requirements for affordable housing to be 'tenure blind'.

- (c) Paul reported on the timescales for the revised master plan. The licence is in place with Natural England to trap newts and reptiles via ecological fencing; there will be no trapping in the park area as it will not be being built upon. Trapping usually starts around the middle of March and trapping will continue for 60 days plus 5 clear days. The timeframe depends on how many newts are trapped during that period. The fencing will be erected towards the end of February/beginning of March. Paul stated that no physical works to the site will take place until the trapping has finished, so work might not start until around mid-May/June. Archaeological works cannot take place either until the newts have been trapped.

More research needs to be carried out regarding the contaminated areas on site; waste had been dumped which needs to be looked at. The research could take place prior to trapping, but this needs to be checked; the specification for the works is being drawn up.

Paul reported that the actual site works will start in June/July for the sports pitches and pavilion and these works will last a year. Once works are finished and the facilities open, the residential build can start. Paul stated that they would not be fencing off the whole site to trap the newts, it will be carried out in two stages - park first, then residential area.

Regarding the Reserved Matters planning application, revisions were being made and Paul hopes to share the documentation towards end of February. After that, Vistry are hoping to submit in March. The pre-application process with ABC had taken place and it is hoped that at the next Steering Committee meeting, there can be a run through of the next draft.

Kayleigh requested that public updates are provided as works take place on site so that residents know what is going on. It would be helpful to see timescales published online and at the site including when the fencing is going up for newt trapping, so they know to keep off the area. Paul stated that the Steering Committee meetings are to keep us all informed and we can disseminate this information. They will also look into how else to share the information, including emailing to those who took part in the consultation process and left their contact details; updating their website and share the information with local groups as well.

Albert reiterated the importance of plans being shared with residents so that they know what will take place in what order and update with times when possible. Paul stated that Vistry do currently have a plan but its constantly changing for different reasons. There is still much to do before work on the residential section starts, but at the moment they do have a broad build programme. Paul was happy to build up a time plan for the pitches, etc and share this. The Reserved Matters application will cover the strategy for managing water, electricity supply etc. A substation will be required to power the pavilion, so there will be a minor amendment to the plans to include one near the pavilion to serve the site. There may be a need for a second substation, but they were unsure at the moment.

- (d) The question was asked as to whether there was any intent to issue responses to any of the questions posed at previous meetings and consultations. Paul stated that he would not necessarily respond to every single question posed as this was a huge task. However, he would look through the responses, note them down and incorporate where they can in the design and revisions to the layout. Paul stated that he would be happy to speak to Albert separately to run through his list of questions.
- (e) Mike stated that he was looking forward to seeing the latest master plan and appreciated the opportunity to provide our input before submission. Mike suggested holding a site visit so that the plans could more easily be explained. It was agreed that a site meeting could be held at the end of February /early March which would be followed by a meeting. Paul and Will agreed to look at dates and circulate these to the Committee; the site visit would take place during daylight hours.
- (f) Siggie Nepp suggested that when communicating with the public on works taking place on site, that it might be an idea for physical signage to go up at the beginning and end of both public footpath entrances to keep people up to date on what is being done and why Vistry are doing it. It might also be worth asking people to treat the ecology areas with respect during the trapping months.
- (g) Ken requested that consideration is given to the privacy and screening for the residents along the Woodchurch Road during the build. Paul reported that they would be looking to screen via planting rather than boarding. There will also be a green band around the site to protect it during the build, but they would look at having a buffer between the build site and permitter to provide a buffer to all residents backing onto the site.

(h) Albert requested clarification on where the newt trapping would take place. Paul confirmed it would be the old football pitch area and the area to the left of the basin as well and the path up through the site of the road.