

Notes from a pre-application meeting with Vistry Homes, Ashford Borough Council and Tenterden Town Council 7th November 2023

In attendance: Mark Davies (ABC), Paul Dadswell (Vistry), Andrew Watson (Savills), Laura Eacott (Savills), Philippa Robinson (Savills), Ben Baillie (Cooper Baillie Architects), William Neale (SEC Newgate), Claire Gilbert (TTC), Cllr. Jean Curteis (TTC), Cllr. Nikki Gooch (TTC), Cllr. Kayleigh Brunger-Randall (TTC), Siggie Nepp (Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group), John Crawford (Tenterden Climate Action Group), Cllr. Ken Mulholland (ABC), Cllr. Pam Smith (ABC), Cllr. Mike Hill (KCC).

Introduction

Andrew Watson opened the meeting and all attendees introduced themselves. Andrew reported that they were at the early stages in the layout and design of scheme and confirmed that Vistry are keen to engage with stakeholders.

Public Consultation Update

William Neale reported that the public consultation had taken place in St. Mildred's Church Hall, with over 130 people in attendance. The consultation was overall positive and useful feedback had been received. They will be looking to incorporate the comments into the next version of the masterplan for the site. They would soon be meeting with specific groups in Tenterden, e.g., Tenterden Community Land Trust and Tenterden Wildlife.

It was noted that the comments from the Town Council, Groups and individuals recently collated by the Town Council had been forwarded to ABC and Vistry and these will be reviewed.

Design presentation

A presentation was carried out by going through the Pre-application document which had been circulated to all parties. The following comments were noted.

1. The country park, sports facilities and main vehicle entrance had already been approved by the Planning Inspector.
2. The North Ridge does need to be treated sensitively for the area in order to ensure there is visual connection to Tenterden and views to St. Mildred's Church.
3. There are pedestrian connections to Appledore Road as well emergency vehicle access, and pedestrian access onto Woodchurch Road plus the original PROW.
4. They have resurveyed the area in relation to trees; some are in much better condition, but others are not. It is a unique site regarding trees; therefore, they have gone into more detail on the root protection areas and canopies to ensure building works will not damage them.
5. Ecology assessments have taken place.
6. Character assessments have been carried out with a number of iterations; looking at the potential of what the site can deliver; constraints and how these might work/not work. They are now starting to look at the detail of roads, footpaths, surface water, etc. There are existing ponds located within the site

and those are to remain untouched. Proposed ponds or swales are part of the calculations to mitigate surface water.

7. There are single storey bungalows within the development and 50% affordable homes across the site.
8. All public open space is overlooked by dwellings.
9. The development is in line with parameters of the outline approval.
10. There is a mix of properties with the main focus on 3 bedroomed properties.
11. Affordable housing is part of the fabric of the development.
12. They are looking at a more traditional vernacular within development. It was originally contemporary, but many local residents preferred the more traditional style.
13. Landscape design pockets of spaces are for different uses, i.e., play areas, with informal mown paths along development.
14. There is 94% compliance with garden regulations. This element is being reviewed with a view to achieving a greater level of compliance.
15. They need to comply with the 381 spaces for parking; there are 51 garages, but it is under review as to whether these are car ports or garages, accepting that garages would not count towards the parking provision as per KCC's guidance.
16. They are working to latest building regulations and many homes will have to comply with future homes standards for 'sustainable homes'. The site will not be on mains gas and will likely be heated (hot water and heating) via air source heat pumps to each property. The proposed houses are also Vistry's most energy efficient with greater cavities, better insulation and more sustainable fixtures and fittings to provide a highly sustainable form of development. Electric car charging points are included.

Member Feedback

1. Cllr. Mulholland asked whether the country park was pre-approved and queried the difference between the outline planning application and pre-application documentation. It was reported that this is a hybrid planning application, part of which is approved in detail and part for future determination, under the Reserved Matters process. The sports pitches were approved as a full planning application, subject to conditions, along with the access, the country park and the pavilion. The residential aspect had outline planning permission with all areas for determination under Reserved Matters.
2. Cllr. Brunger-Randall (KBR) commented on the affordable housing aspect. She was happy to see that bungalows are incorporated into the development however, none were affordable, and currently there are 13 residents who need one. On the Tenterden Housing Needs Survey, there are 46 Local needs for housing: 8x1 bed, 23x2 beds, 14x3 beds, 1x4 bed, but none require a 5-bed property. Ben Baillie (BB) reported that the affordable properties were a mix of 2,3 and 4 beds; there are no one-beds included in the design so far. KBR stated that there needs to be at least 8 properties that cater for single occupancy/couples, with a requirement for 4 bungalows. BB agreed to look at the Housing Needs requirements with ABC. KBR further reported that affordable housing needs to be rental, not shared ownership; Paul Dadswell reported that Section 106 states how the affordable housing will be split which Vistry are legally obliged to adhere to.
3. Cllr. Brunger-Randall reported that tree T315 English Oak was mentioned in the Appeal as it does have a protected root system; it does not appear to be

shown on the plans. It was reported that a full arboricultural survey will be submitted with the application and the veteran and ancient trees will all be protected along with the TPOs.

4. Cllr. Hill reported that he was looking forward to seeing the detailed plan of what is protected from a KCC perspective. Cllr. Hill was interested to know what standard the Sports fields will be built to, given that the area is particularly boggy. Paul Dadswell reported that the main sports pitch will be built to Sports England standards. All other pitches will be standard size and design. All pitches will be turf and will have appropriate drainage systems installed. Although the pitches have been approved, they will need to work on the planning conditions around drainage; some of the pitches also encroach on root protection systems so there needs to be less intrusive works as agreed as part of the hybrid application, but with the final details to be approved via condition.
5. Siggie Nepp asked a question regarding the country park; in accordance with the Countryside Act, a country park should be 10ha, but approved country park is only 8.66ha. Siggie was keen to know how this would be resolved. Paul Dadswell reported that the country park cannot be increased in size as it is approved in detail, but if the name of the country park is causing confusion and upset, Vistry are happy to refer to it as a local park or community park. It should be noted that the name country park was fixed through the full planning permission. It was agreed that Vistry would consider the comments regarding the naming of the country park.
6. Siggie requested that as the proposals are developed for the country park, that the public and local groups are consulted on the design. Vistry stated that all comments are taken into account to help inform the detail. No plans are fixed yet, but Vistry will come back when they are ready to present the designs. Siggie noted that there would be a 10-year management strategy in place. It was reported that Section 106 requires a marketing strategy and management strategy as well as significant S106 payments towards management; Vistry are currently talking to different providers on who may take this on, so it is still early days. This will then be submitted to ABC for approval.
7. Siggie reported that the housing density is higher than the surrounding areas; if the context was taken into account, it would be more like 102 dwellings on the site. Paul Dadswell reported that the density was approved for the outline application and deemed acceptable, therefore, up to 141 was approved at the Appeal; they are not looking to increase the number of properties further, indeed more units cannot be delivered in line with the existing consent. Paul stated that there is a market mix and affordable mix to be looked at. Ben Baillie explained that although the density of the proposed scheme is higher than the surrounding area, this is mainly due to the incorporation of smaller two and three-bed dwellings, compared to the larger existing dwellings. Whilst there is a mathematical increase in density, how it's delivered with vegetation and landscape and open space, will not feel that high as part of the streetscene.
8. Siggie asked a question regarding the allocation for self-build plots and whether they meet the 6% threshold? It was reported that these have not been identified yet but confirmed that the requirement which is included in the S106 will be met.
9. Siggie reported that a TPO tree was being removed on Appledore Road and asked whether it was possible to replace that tree along Appledore Road given its significance. It was reported that Vistry Homes can plant a replacement tree within the red line boundary of the development and a payment will be

made to KCC to mitigate the loss, but Vistry have no say on where this money is spent. Siggie asked for a formal request to go into KCC for the replacement tree to be sited on the Appledore Road.

10. Siggie asked about the Dark Skies Policy for the development and whether it has been considered. It was reported that Vistry are conscious about light projection from buildings and street lighting, where this would be appropriate and placement. Throughout the Northern and Eastern areas, they are trying to utilise private drives rather than adoptable roads which will give them much more say on how this is managed but the intention is for the development to be inherently dark for ecological reasons (bats) as well as to comply with the dark skies policy.
11. A question was raised regarding the drainage and sewerage on the site. These come under planning conditions so will be discharged as they are covered.
12. Siggie reported that in the design of houses and materials used, it was stated that plastic boarding will be installed. This would not be a sustainable option or vernacular, so it is hoped that this would be timber. Vistry agreed to follow this up however, since the Grenfell fire, fire retardant timbers have dissipated. Grained cladding will provide a much longer maintenance free ability for the occupants. This will all be reviewed; they still have quite a way to go with the architectural design.
13. John Crawford reported on the country park name in that it was presented to the Planning Inspector as a country park and it does not state in the Appeal that it was just a country park in name only, rather than complying with the Countryside Act.
14. John commented on the country park and football pitch with regard to design and implementation which is outstanding. He particularly noted that the sustainability of the pavilion has not been mentioned. Vistry reported that there are many conditions listed for the approval of the country park and sports provision; the finer details of the landscaping of the park, materials for the pavilion, etc. are all part of these conditions and will be submitted at the appropriate time. The public are not necessarily consulted on discharge of conditions, however, Vistry are happy to inform the Town Council when they are submitted so that parties can be consulted.
15. Paul Dadswell reported that there will be no gas supply to the new properties; it will be the most efficient housing types Vistry provide, built under the Bovis brand, and the most sustainable development delivered to date.
16. John Crawford asked about the country park management and whether the management company chosen would be registered with Companies House. John also asked who decides on the criteria. It was reported that Vistry would put parties forward for consideration, however, ABC and possibly KCC would have to sign this off in accordance with the S106.
17. John queried the size of the gardens for each property as on the plans, they look extremely small which could be an issue around privacy, hanging out washing, etc.; large gardens at the front of the properties were not really functional. Vistry reported that they were reviewing this as the plans progress.
18. John asked about the 50% affordable homes and how do Vistry and ABC go about drawing up a short list of accredited affordable home providers that have experience in home delivery. Paul reported that they work with different providers on sites; they will go out to registered RPs and then they would be submitted to ABC for approval and managed through Section 106.
19. It was stated that the traffic calming scheme on Appledore Road will affect residents around the town as well as farmers and it would be preferable if a

public consultation took place. Vistry believed that the traffic calming was approved in the planning detail but will double check. If this has not been fixed, discussions could take place, however if it was approved, they would not be looking to change it. Vistry were not aware of the approved one-way system at East Hill/Golden Square; KCC to send over the information.

20. Cllr. Brunger-Randall stated that no self-builds are included in the Housing Needs Survey. Paul Dadswell advised that regardless of this Vistry have a requirement to provide self-builds through the S106.
21. Cllr. Brunger-Randall raised her concerns regarding the traffic calming measures on Appledore Road; wide load caravans and combine harvesters use the road and that should be taken into consideration. Vistry stated that in Condition 37 this was all part of the construction therefore approved already, including the single lanes within KCC's standards. Paul agreed to circulate the construction information.
22. It was requested that a works schedule is provided to keep everyone, including the public, informed. Paul confirmed that this would be contained in the construction management plan when submitted. Vistry will also keep the Town Council updated regarding any works on site.
23. A query was raised regarding allotments and would there be any allocated. It was reported that there is a contribution in the S106 towards allotments, but no allotments would be on site.
24. Cllr. Curteis raised her concerns over the one access road for the whole of the site and suggested that the playing fields should have a separate access. She also enquired as to whether the sports fields are for daytime use only or for evenings as well. Paul confirmed that the sports pitches would be daytime use only and no flood lights would be installed as per the planning conditions attached to the consent. The actual hours of use will be part of submission to ABC on use of the pitches. The one access is fixed as part of the approved plans by the Planning Inspector. Mark Davies reported that there was originally a second access to the site, but there was too much impact on the trees in that location, therefore it was refused. However, the new application showed just one access which was approved by the Planning Inspector and therefore as access is approved in detail no additional access' can be provided.
25. Cllr. Smith reported that there seemed to be little consideration for the residents in situ on the opposite side of Appledore Road to the development. Residents are worried about their vehicle access with the calming measures in place as this would cause congestion and impede access to their properties. Cllr. Smith asked whether there could be any appeals on this. Paul reported that if the measures impeded access for residents, KCC would not have approved them. Paul agreed to circulate the most up to date Appledore Road traffic calming plans to ensure people were looking at the correct versions.
26. Cllr. Mulholland queried whether the existing ponds will be undisturbed and whether the large crater may become a deep pond. Vistry reported that they would not be routing water through the existing ponds; these will remain and be fenced off during development. New ponds will be created for drainage. No work will take place for quite some time until country park area has been delivered and this is a long way down the line. The translocation exercise would be taking place mid-March 2024 until mid-May on the Eastern half once the planning conditions are met. The crater on the plans will be levelled off to create usable open space and will not be built on.

27. Siggie Nepp queried the distribution of funds from the Section 106 contributions. Vistry reported that they would pay S106 funds to KCC/ABC as per the S106 but had no influence over where these are spent.
28. Siggie asked if there was any way of tackling the issue with the name of the country park at this stage. Mark Davies reported that it was a park area and was countryside open space; it never came up at the Appeal and the full planning permission was granted as a benefit on balance. Paul reported that maybe it was poor use of name, but it could be rebadged.
29. John Crawford asked what facilities would be included in the country park as there currently does not seem to be a design. Paul reported that landscaping is yet to be approved, but the park will not be a formal park; more of a rural park/orchard with planting. Paul stated that he would be happy to circulate the broad plan including orchard, etc. or people could wait until the discharge of condition is submitted and details could be circulated then.
30. John asked how the net loss and gain are going to be measured in reality to prove it has been achieved. Paul reported that they have a requirement to provide the net gain which will need to be evidenced through reports submitted with the RMA. The exercise is more for the ecological and wildlife area, but not for the sports provision.
31. John understood that Wates and Vistry had set up a joint business for the development, as stated on Companies House, and questioned how this would work. Paul reported that Wates are a silent partner who are funding the development. Vistry do the build and then sell the properties; Wates take half the costs and also half of the profits. All applications to ABC are now through Vistry. Any recourse once the development is built would go back to Vistry including any off-site issues with neighbours. Paul agreed to send an example of another Vistry/Wates JV site so that interested parties can see how that worked and what is being delivered.
32. John requested that dialogue is set up with the Tenterden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for Policies and also the Tenterden Climate Action Group. Paul reported that it would make sense for this to happen with the PR Company rather than ABC.

Moving forward, Vistry were happy to look at being part of a Steering Group with all stakeholders to keep the dialogue open and everyone updated. Meetings could take place on monthly basis (to be confirmed). Membership from the Town Council's side would need to be approved as membership might be different from that chosen for the pre-application meeting. It is important that ABC and KCC are also present.

Paul Dadswell agreed to take away all the information from the meeting and that submitted in advance to aid any reworking of proposals for presentation at a later date.