

## URBAN DESIGN CONSULTEE RESPONSE

**Erection of a residential development of 160 dwellings, including the conversion of the pumphouse building into residential dwellings, to provide 36 no one bedroom and 48 no two bedroom flats; 30 no two bedroom, 37 no three bedroom and 9 no four bedroom houses, along with associated estate roads and accesses onto Sturt Road, car parking, bin and cycle storage, local area of play and external landscaping following the demolition of all other buildings.**

**22-30 Sturt Road Frimley Green Camberley Surrey GU16 6HY**

**Ref. No: 20/1048/FFU | Revised proposals received 15 June 2021.**

### **Summary**

***The revised proposals received 15 June is considered to fully address previous urban design concerns raised during pre-application stage in 2020, and consequently in spring 2021. The current regeneration scheme is supported from an urban design perspective.***

### **1.0 Location**

The 3.5 ha site is situated in the Countryside beyond Green Belt, at the southern boundary of the Frimley Green settlement area, within just 400 m from the services and amenities offered at Frimley Green Local Centre. In terms of land use, the site is predominantly PDL and includes a vacant office block, large areas of hard standing, a scaffold yard as well as storage and distribution uses. The north-east corner provides a valuable green setting for the site with a natural character and associated landscape, ecological and visual amenity values. The regeneration of this major industrial site is welcome in principle from an urban design point of view. The development proposal retains a gap of 150 m between the settlements of Frimley Green and Mytchett. Opposite the site is Frimley Lodge Park, which offers generous open space, nature trails, woodland, and leisure facilities. Farnborough North Railway Station is located within 1.5 km and Farnborough Main Railway Station within 3.1 km.

### **2.0 Response to context**

The site is surrounded by railway lines to the north and the west, and a busy road, B3411, to the east, which create barrier effects. The scheme addresses these issues visually and physically, by the creation of a robust green framework based on the existing green structure and along existing and proposed infrastructure. It also provides a network of pedestrian routes which connects to Sturt Road and further afield to Frimley Green Local Centre and Frimley Lodge Park. Vehicle access is provided at two existing entrances to the site, at the northern and southern ends of the area, creating a main loop. Secondary streets are provided as well as shared surfaces in relation to the mews. A network of pedestrian paths is created throughout the scheme with good connections to Sturt Road and adjacent facilities. A new public footpath route is introduced along Sturt Road. Bus stops are found directly outside the development on both sides of Sturt Road.

The revised scheme demonstrates a positive and enhanced relationship to Sturt Road in terms of the transparent, green boundary along the Eastern side of the site, based on the retained valuable oak trees, additional tree planting in a flowing, organic pattern and generous grass verges which allow views into the site and provide a soft green character. The existing conifers along the boundary are to be removed which will remove the existing visual barrier and improve the character of the streetscene. Reinforced high quality landscaping in strategic locations will enhance the character of

Sturt Road and pays homage to the Grade II listed St. Andrews Church, a key landmark building and the adjacent historic Lychgate. Parts of the new development will provide attractive views of the adjacent lakes to the west and the north of the site and strengthen the visual contact with the rural context. For further comments regarding the proposed built elements and their relationship to the existing context, see *Design approach, character, scale, height, and massing*.

### **3.0 Revisions of the proposed scheme**

A virtual pre-application meeting was held in August 2020 regarding this major site, including urban design advice. The initially submitted scheme was not considered fully acceptable in terms of layout, scale, massing, or urban design, and has consequently undergone necessary revisions since the submission, following two further advisory meetings in spring 2021 to ensure that a high-quality scheme which maximises the benefits of the site, addresses challenges and creates a strong sense of place will be delivered. The amendments relate to the general layout, the definition and refinement of character areas, street characters, building character, massing, scale, setting, active frontages, place making, provision of amenity space, landscaping, and boundary treatment. The number of units remain unchanged since the submission, 160.

#### **3.1 Rev. - Character Areas**

The layout has been revised to address the need for clearly defined character areas and distinct road hierarchies especially in the north-eastern part of the scheme, including differentiated street sections, building patterns, scale, grain, building lines, hard and soft landscaping, and boundary treatment. A scheme of this scale requires a clear and strong hierarchy of different streetscapes to assist in the orientation and wayfinding and underpin distinct and logical character areas, created by built elements and materiality as well as a strategic and creative integration of buildings, open spaces, hard and soft landscaping. The character areas are the traditional cobbled Pump House mews, in contrast to larger flatted development blocks in parkland setting at the north-eastern entrance, inspired by the existing Sturt Road Arts and Craft character with traditional brickwork. At the southern and western end of the site the larger developments take a more rustic mill character of similar scale in parkland, in contrast to small scale traditional semi-detached dwellings and shorter terraces along smaller enclaves of tree lined streets.

##### **A. Sturt Road street scene**

The revised landscape design approach enhances and reinforces the existing character of Sturt Road and pays homage to the Grade II listed St. Andrews Church, a key landmark building in the area, the adjacent traditional Arts and Craft buildings to the north and the historic Lychgate.

The revised scheme now demonstrates a positive relationship to Sturt Road in terms of the transparent, green boundary along the Eastern side of the development, based on the retained valuable oak trees, additional tree planting in a flowing, organic pattern and generous grass verges which allows views into the site, where small scale mainly semidetached dwellings can be glimpsed behind hedges.

##### **B. Flatted development blocks in parkland**

Larger flatted development blocks in parkland settings with generous shared amenity areas, set well back from the street scene, characterise the northern and southern end of the site. Three further flatted blocks of modest scale all set in generous green spaces are provided in the northern part of

the scheme. Additional soft landscaping and irregular tree planting in the streetscene reinforces the verdant setting of these buildings in line with the Surrey Heath Residential Design Guide (SHRDG).

#### C. Semidetached buildings with front gardens and short terraces

Semidetached buildings with small front gardens, neat hedges and tree planting align the northern access into the site. Three further flatted blocks of modest scale set in parkland are provided in the northern part of the scheme. The southern entrance leads into a tighter terraced street scene with street trees and grass verges separating the car parking in front of the dwellings. The western boundary of the site is aligned by a short terrace at the southern end, followed by semi-detached dwellings and a few detached residential buildings closer to the Pump house. Short terraces finalise the western end of the development in contrast to the sweeping curved parkland and provide a visual stop from the south.

#### D. The Pump house area

The historic Pump House, an interesting and attractive, undesignated heritage asset, is being retained and converted into small flats at the heart of the scheme, providing a distinct character area. The revised small scale, traditional mews provides a tighter grain and a strong sense of place, supported by continuous terraced building with an unbroken roof line with a more intimate street section and cobbled details on the Northern side of the side of the Pump House creates a stronger sense of place, a traditional mews feel and a clearer distinction between different street types. The regeneration of the Pumphouse is much welcome, as it provides a direct link to the history of the site but also enriches the place with an engaging shared surface and new interesting place making with high quality landscaping and metalwork boundaries (details to be conditioned).

### 3.2 Rev. - Flatted block Nos. 1-20

The main entrance at the southern side of the building has been further emphasised architecturally in the building design to reinforce the importance as the main access point, whilst the northern entrance from the car park has been given a more discrete design.

The layout of open areas to the south of the block has been adjusted to create a verdant entrance with grass verges and distinct hedge planting to separate semi-public and shared residents' amenity space, and still contribute to a verdant entrance from Sturt Road. The bike storage has been relocated and the previous rear footpath at the north-eastern corner of the site has been omitted for safety reasons.

### 3.3 Rev. - Flatted block Nos. 97-115

The scale, height, and massing of the southern block was considered to have a detrimental effect on the small scale, rural character of the Sturt Road streetscene. Although not directly opposite the Grade II listed St Andrew's Church and Lynchgate, the War Memorial, the building design of the flatted block Nos. 97-115 has been revised to integrate more gracefully with the vernacular context and wider setting. The main entrance has been relocated to create an active frontage on the northern side of the building, to animate the public realm and increase safety.

### 3.4 Rev. - Plots 71-85

The building design has been redesigned in the same utilitarian mill ethos as the southern block, which creates a comfortable degree of coherence in the area as a whole. The massing has been reconfigured to a less bulky L-shape, the flat roof has been reduced and traditional gable features now face the adjacent mews development. The simplistic mill house character reflects the former industrial use of the site. The main entrance of the building has been repositioned to create an active frontage facing the main street. Refuse storage and bicycle storage have been relocated for more efficient layout and to create a stronger sense of place.

### 3.5 Rev. - Placemaking

The scheme has been reinforced to contribute to local distinctiveness and to create a robust framework of useful places for all residents and visitors alike. A scheme of this scale requires a clear and strong hierarchy of different streetscapes to assist in the orientation and to create distinct and logical character areas. Character is determined by a strategic and creative integration of buildings, spaces, hard and soft landscaping as well as buildings and materiality and is an important part of the overall vision of the site.

The Residential Design Guide SPD 2017 sets out the requirements for residential development ensuring that developments contribute towards making distinctive, sustainable and attractive places in the Borough. A scheme of this scale must provide a variety of appropriate spaces for future residents to pause, enjoy and rest for a moment during the evening walk etc., and cater for all ages and abilities.

The public realm around Flats Nos. 60-62 and Nos. 42-59 has been redesigned to create a more coherent and useful shared amenity space, which is strongly supported.

A shared amenity space has been introduced to the north of the block Nos. 21-31.

The streetscape has been enhanced with informal place making in the northern part of the site, with a small place to meet, stop, chat or rest, characterised by softer lines, hedge planting to the rear and a circular design, providing seating in the shade of the tree s/o No. 138.

A small seating area has also been added to the west of Nos. 97-115 together with some steppingstones for smaller children's informal play.

The plot layout and hedge alignment has been revised at the site entrance of No. 123 leading south to 116, as have site boundaries at No. 158.

The unit types for Plots 150 and 147 have been reviewed, which are now to be 'side entry' plots to better address the corner and create a stronger building line in the streetscene at the northern entry.

### 3.6 Rev. - Impact on historic context

The Pump House, an undesignated but interesting and attractive heritage asset, is being retained and converted into small flats at the heart of the scheme. The scheme now provides a well-designed setting with a cobbled mews and other high quality hard landscaping on the Northern side of the pump house, creating a stronger sense of place and a clearer distinction between different types of

streets and street-widths, in line with Policy DM17 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

The revised building design of the Nos. 97-115 is considered to integrate well with the wider context including the War Memorial and the wider setting of the Grade II listed St Andrew's Church.

#### **4.0 Design approach, character, scale, height, and massing**

Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 requires that development should respect and enhance the local, natural, or historic character of the environment paying regard to scale, materials, massing, bulk, and density. Surrounding areas represent a density of up to 40 dph. Existing commercial buildings on site are up to 3 commercial stories high, equivalent to 4-4.5 residential stories.

The proposal includes the provision of 160 dwellings within a mix of houses and flats, ranging from two to 4.5 storeys in height. The initially proposed layout of the site has been fundamentally redesigned, following pre-application advice. Revisions also includes building height. The massing of several buildings has been reduced in line with other revisions of the building design, for example Nos. 71-85 and Nos. 97-115. The scale, height and massing are now considered acceptable from an urban design point of view.

#### **5.0 Materials and detailing**

The proposed traditional building materials, orange-red brickwork and reddish-brown hanging tiles are typical for Surrey Heath and are supported in principle. The proposed vertical wooden cladding of the mill buildings is also supported from an urban design point of view. A material schedule and samples of all external building materials should be conditioned, as should the erection of on-site sample panels of proposed brickwork before any works commence.

A positive result also depends on high quality detailing of the building design, such as proper recesses around windows and doors, high quality fenestration and doors with appropriate detailing in line with Surrey Heath Residential Design Guide (SHRDG) SPD. Consequently, these principal design details, as well as porches, balconies and dormers should be conditioned.

#### **6.0 Impact on residential amenity**

Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 states that development will be acceptable which provides sufficient private and public amenity space and respects the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring property and uses. The Residential Design Guide SPD 2017 sets out the further requirements for residential development in meeting the needs of future occupiers and minimising any impacts on existing residents.

The proposed layout provides rear gardens to the houses and separation distances between dwellings which would appear to meet minimum standards as set out in the Council's Residential Design Guide SPD 2017. The scheme is considered to provide useful, attractive communal green space for all flatted accommodation of the development.

