

Pre-application Meeting

Project Honeystreet Sawmills
Location County Hall, Trowbridge
Date 28.05.15

Attending

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| Peter Horton: Senior Planning Officer | PH |
| David King: Planning Officer | DK |
| John Dunford: Landowner | JD |
| Alex Oliver: Alton Barnes Parish Council Representative | AO |
| Chris Beaver: PlanningSphere (Planning Consultant) | CB |
| Isabel Allen: HAB Housing Design Director | IA |
| Tom Griffiths: HAB Housing Development Manager | TG |

Apologies / Councillor Paul Oatway (Ward Councillor)
Not attending

1. Background

- JD gave account of the history of the site from 1810 when Honeystreet began to grow around the Kennet and Avon Canal.
- The extent of the site and nature of industrial activities has varied over time with the site now occupying a reduced footprint.
- JD confirmed that following the last recession trading has been tough due to the location of the business and changing agricultural practices and customer base.
- The business has had to adapt to changing clientele, but is now becoming unviable and a buyer to purchase the business as a going concern cannot be found.
- JD confirmed that the business has been kept going for a number of years with just 7 long term employees, all of whom are approaching retirement age and beyond which the business will cease to operate.
- The Parish Council was approached by John and his agent three years ago to inform them of the intention to close the business and seek a redevelopment opportunity for a mixed-use scheme comprised of residential properties and an element retained employment space.
- The Parish Council confirmed that it wished to be kept informed and involved with the proposals for the site given its prominent brownfield location and historical significance to Honeystreet.
- JD intends to remain living in Honeystreet adjacent to the site.

2. HAB Involvement:

- HAB Housing became engaged in early 2015 to scope out and deliver a redevelopment opportunity for the site.

- HAB updated the Parish Council regarding its involvement and was invited to attend their January meeting.
- HAB was invited to attend the March village coffee morning to engage with the wider local community. HAB presented early scoping material and invited comments on the early design process.
- HAB explained its role as custom build developer.
- HAB explained that a number of their house types have been designed with downsizing older people in mind, something the company has found is particularly required in more rural locations due to lack of suitable available housing stock.

3. Proposals

- HAB explained that proposals are indicative at this stage and are to be informed by further consultation with the local community following the pre-application meeting.
- A mixed-use scheme is proposed, predominantly housing led and with an allowance for up to 40% affordable housing provided on site, depending on the outcome of the Housing Needs' Survey
- New employment space will be provided on site including a point of sale for firewood which is currently sold on site. Other occupants for the employment space are yet to be determined, but could include a children's nursery.
- There is a recognition that the scheme will need to be landscape-led owing to its position within the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- There is the opportunity to enhance the setting of the canal, but it is acknowledged that this will need to be explored with stakeholders.

4. Planning

- DK confirmed Wiltshire's default position is to defend the recently adopted Core Strategy, and that the preliminary proposals would be contrary to Core Policy 2.
- CB confirmed that there are local precedents for officers supporting new housing on redundant brownfield sites outside of settlement boundaries (see 15/00230/FUL)
- CB confirmed that the Core Strategy is silent on custom build, but that many local authorities are considering additional 'exception-type' policies in this regard.
- The applicant's agent has submitted a SHLAA form confirming that the site is available for development to inform the Site Allocations' DPD currently in progress.
- DK outlined the main differences between Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) – the role of NDPs is to set policies to control future development, whereas NDOs are generally reduced in scope and can control development for a specific site.
- NDOs are subject to independent examination and (upon being found sound) a local referendum to determine whether the

order is to be brought into force and form part of the Development Plan.

- DK confirmed that a statutory body (usually the Parish Council) will need to apply for the NDO and retain control. AO explained the Parish Council's likely concern regarding time and resource commitments given their previous involvement with the Honeystreet Village Design Statement and ongoing work regarding the proposed designation of a Conservation Area.
- DK explained the NDO/SEA process (see attached diagram) and the role he could play as part of the steering group assisting the preparation of the draft plan. Other members of a potential steering group must include a Parish Council representative and will likely include representatives from HAB and the Canals and Rivers' Trust, amongst others.
- A key aspect of the NDO scoping will be defining the area to be designated i.e. whether it's the parish as a whole, or just Honeystreet. DK confirmed that it would usually be the parish, but as long as there is a robust case (e.g. Honeystreet has its own Village Design Statement), then the NDO wouldn't necessarily need to include Alton Barnes/Alton Priors.
- DK confirmed that a proposed NDO would likely require an SEA due to the AONB landscape designation.
- Should the NDO fail to move forward at any point, the work carried out can be used to inform and support a planning application.
- DK stated that the approximate timeframe from scoping to adoption of an NDO is approximately 12 months – similar to the length of time to achieve an appeal decision following preparation and submission of a planning application. New regulations are expected to streamline the process.
- AO and TG confirmed that at its April meeting the Parish Council agreed to request Wiltshire Council undertake a Housing Needs' Survey to inform the provision of affordable housing on site. It is currently unclear whether the request has formally been made to Wiltshire Council.
- In conclusion, DK confirmed that it would be the Council's preference for the site to be promoted via an NDO process as this approach is encouraged under adopted Core Policy CP2. However, DK did acknowledge that the applicants could elect at any point in the process to promote the scheme through a conventional planning application but that such an approach would be higher risk in planning terms as it would involve making the case for development as an exception to development plan policy due to the location of the site outside a defined settlement boundary.

5.

Pre-application Feedback

- PH confirmed that he would forward all outstanding pre-application comments received to date.

6.

Way Forward

- HAB and AO confirmed that they would relay the discussion to the Parish Council for it to decide whether to pursue an NDO for the site.
- DK would likely be the appointed support planning policy officer to assist with the preparation of the NDO and has capacity to do.
- TG to speak to Claire Moore of New Housing Team regarding progress of Housing Needs' Assessment and associated timescales for the report.