

Agenda Item	<A8 December 2020 Committee Planning Regulatory Report>
Application Number	20/00614/FUL
Proposal	Erection of 4 dwellings, a block of 16 self-contained flats and a shared ancillary accommodation building for the residents over the age of 55, with associated access, internal roads and parking areas
Application site	Senior Cohousing, Land adjacent to Forge Lane, Halton
Applicant	Mr Coates
Agent	Mr Christopher Coates
Case Officer	Mr David Forshaw
Departure	No
Summary of Recommendation	Approval

1.0 Application Site and Setting

- 1.1 This 0.34 hectare site is located between Forge Lane and Mill Lane approximately 350 metres south of the centre of Halton. The site is currently unused and overgrown but was previously developed. The site was included as part of the wider Halton Mills mixed use employment led allocation in the last Local Plan. In the adopted Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD the site is allocated as part of the wider rural housing site.
- 1.2 Immediately to the west is land also forming part of the allocation. This is subject of planning application 20/00613/FUL for a 20 unit affordable housing scheme and included on this agenda for consideration by the Committee. To the north, across Forge Lane is a residential development under construction; to the east on the opposite side of Forge Lane are existing commercial premises and to the south on the opposite side of Mill Lane are existing houses facing the site.
- 1.3 Forge Lane, from which vehicular access and parking is to be gained is currently unadopted. The owner of the road and County Highways confirm the adoption process is underway. Adoption cannot be guaranteed but all works on Forge Lane will have to be agreed by the owner and carried out to County Highways' standards. The fact Forge Lane is privately owned is not a material consideration.
- 1.4 The site slopes down from north to south. It is level with Forge Lane at the northern boundary but the site does not fall as steeply as Forge Lane as the road turns south to where it meets Mill Lane. At its southern end the site sits approximately 2.5 metres above the level of Mill Lane.
- 1.5 Part of the site is within a mineral safeguarding area. A belt of protected trees on the site runs near the western boundary. Public footpaths FP1 and FP2 run along Mill Lane beyond the southern boundary. Parts of Mill Lane adjacent the site is within flood zone 2, which just extends slightly onto the site.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal is for a senior (residents must be over 55 years old) Co-Housing scheme comprising a total of 20 dwellings. Six of these (30%) will be affordable made up of four discounted market flats

(discounted to 70% of market value in perpetuity) and two affordable rented flats. There will be a terrace of four 2-bed 2 storey houses at the southern end of the site and 16 apartments in a 2 and 3 storey block fronting Forge Lane at the northern end. There will be 12 1-bed and 4 2-bed apartments. Between the blocks is a communal garden containing footpaths, bin stores and cycle stands. Also proposed is a single storey detached “common house” building providing communal laundry, socialising, kitchen and dining facilities for residents and a twin bed guest room with en-suite for visitors.

- 2.2 8 communal car parking spaces are proposed, each independently accessed directly from Forge Lane on the northern boundary. Vehicle access to the site is from Forge Lane to the north but will only be for bin collection, emergency and delivery vehicles. Additional pedestrian access is proposed from Forge Lane to the east and Mill Lane to the south.
- 2.3 Senior Cohousing is for residents who want to live as an active participant in a group of similar aged people who sign up to agreed values. Although residents have their own home, these homes are clustered around the common house and grounds with its shared space and amenities run by the residents. Future residents have been involved in the design stages of the project and are committed to living in this manner in Halton. They have set up a non-profit company to carry out this development.
- 2.4 The buildings will be constructed using the PassivHous principles to create almost zero carbon, energy efficient homes. Homes to this standard use 80% less energy for heating than Building Regulation compliant developments through minimising heat loss and optimising solar gain.

3.0 Site History

- 3.1 There is significant planning history for the wider former Halton Mills site. The following are relevant to this site:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
15/00510/OUT	Outline application for the erection of a nursing home and creation of a new vehicular access	Approved
14/00713/VLA	Variation of legal agreement on 00/00920/OUT and subsequent renewal consent 05/01432/OUT	Pending
07/00783/REM	Reserved Matters application for the erection of a managed workspace building, comprising 44 adaptable B1 work units/studios with associated cafe, lounge, meeting rooms, car parking and landscaped grounds	Approved
05/01432/OUT	Renewal of application 00/00920/OUT for proposed redevelopment including demolition of existing mill, erect houses, industrial units, construct new access and provision of associated open space and landscaping	Approved
05/00153/OUT	Renewal of outline permission for demolition of existing buildings, erection of industrial units (classes B1 and B2) and live/work units (classes C3 and B1), construction of new access, improve road and landscaping	Approved
04/01301/REM	Reserved Matters application for the erection of 47 houses and 27 apartments, associated access road and play area	Approved
04/01299/REM	Reserved Matters application for erection of two industrial buildings to replace existing accommodation at Town End Mill	Approved
01/01128/OUT	Outline application for demolition of existing buildings, erection of industrial units (Classes B1 and B2) and live/work units (Classes C3 and B1), construction of new access, improve road and landscaping	Allowed on appeal
00/00920/OUT	Outline application for proposed redevelopment including demolition of existing Mill, erection of houses, industrial units, construction of new access and provision of associated open space and landscaping	Approved

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and internal consultees:

Consultee	Response
County Highways	No objection to revised plans subject to conditions
LLFA	Details acceptable in principle. Standard drainage conditions required
United Utilities	No objection
Fire	Advice provided
Police	Advice provided
CSTEP	Wishes to have input to the final ESP when a contractor is appointed.
Strategic Housing	Supports the proposal
Tree Officer	Further details of overspill parking spaces and tree protection required
Public Realm	No off-site contribution for open space sought
Contaminated Land Officer	Further site investigation needed

4.2 A response from one member of the public has been received. This is from the owner of Forge Lane who states that he is working with County Highways to have the road adopted and it is hoped this will be complete by the end of the year. In the meantime, any works to the road must be agreed with him first and a condition is requested that no development can commence until the road is adopted.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 The key considerations in the assessment of this application are:

1. Principle of development
2. Layout and design
3. Impact on neighbours
4. Highways and parking
5. Flood risk and drainage
6. Ecology
7. Air quality
8. Minerals safeguarding

5.2 **Principle of Development** SPLA DPD Policies SP1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development, SP2: Lancaster District Settlement Hierarchy, H2: Housing Delivery in Rural Areas of the District; Development Management DPD Policies DM1: New residential development and meeting housing needs, DM2: Housing standards, DM3: Delivery of Affordable Housing and National Planning Policy Framework Sections 2, 5, 11, 12.

5.2.1 As the site is allocated for housing in the Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD the principle of its development is established.

5.2.2 Strategic Housing has written in support of the proposal, stating: *“This scheme has been supported by Lancaster City Council since its conception both financially through the ‘Community Housing Fund’ and physically through officer time and resources. The City Council was awarded just over £700,000 from the £163m Government Community Housing Fund in 2017 and this particular scheme was inspired to progress because of the money made available. Lancaster City Council provided an initial feasibility grant of £15,000 in 2018 to test out the viability of the scheme, and then in 2019 a further grant of £160,000 was awarded towards pre-development costs.*

Lancaster City Council is very supportive of community-based housing projects of this nature, especially when they include a 30% supply of affordable housing. The Council recognises the need for new affordable housing supply in the district and it is therefore a stated key strategic priority in both the emerging Homes Strategy and the recently approved Local Plan.

The Lancaster Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2018 identifies an annual imbalance of 376 affordable dwellings across Lancaster each year to 2027/28, including 19 per annum within

the Lancaster Fringes sub-area which includes Halton. Data from this and the Arc4 housing needs survey 2019 evidence the need for more affordable homes in Halton as well as a desire among the over 55s to live communally. The scheme proposed, through the Senior Co-Housing Ltd Allocation Policy, will ensure that 2 rental properties will be used to meet local need, prioritising households who live in and around Halton.”

- 5.2.3 Policy DM3 requires 30% of units to be affordable on brownfield sites in the rural east area which is met by the 6 affordable units being proposed. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in principle.
- 5.3 **Layout and Design** DMDPD DM29: Key design principles; DM30: sustainable design; NPPF section 12
- 5.3.1 Layout and design: The layout and design has been informed through consultation with future residents from the local area. Locating the residential buildings at the northern and southern boundaries maximises provision of the vehicle free central shared garden areas and location of the single storey common house shared facility. The design has been developed with the Council's planning service through two levels of pre-application engagement. The submitted Design and Access Statement states the design is a specific response to the site, adopting a modern approach which would not detract from the Halton Conservation Area. A modern design was also necessary to meet the required sustainable standards.
- 5.3.2 House Terrace: The two storey terrace of four houses at the southern end of the site faces inward, presenting rear elevations and gardens to Mill Lane. During pre-app discussions outward facing dwellings were suggested to provide an active frontage to Mill Lane. However, the block of 4 terraced houses will be situated approximately 3m above the level of Mill Lane which limits the effect of providing frontage development. Furthermore, the resident led design proposes them inward facing to realise the key design factor of Cohousing to have the front doors of the new houses facing the shared central gardens and common house to encourage social interaction. Additional landscape planting will be added to the steep bank down to Mill Lane to help soften the rear elevations and garden areas visible from Mill Lane. The terrace will be constructed of grey/black roof tiles, stone coloured buff brick, with the addition of grey/green horizontal woodgrain boarding on the front elevation and painted timber fenestration.
- 5.3.3 Apartment Block: The apartment block is mainly 3 storey stepping down to two storey wings at right angles at either end. The Forge Lane elevation includes front doors to all flats with the upper floors served by covered walkways which presents an active frontage. In the centre of the block will be an enclosed lift and staircase projecting furthest forward towards the road clad in grey/green vertical timber boarding. This will be set back approximately 5.5m from the back of pavement and will be screened from long views to the west by the existing protected tree belt. The rear elevation contains patio doors for the ground floor flats and balconies to upper floors. Materials match the house terrace of grey/black roof, buff brick and grey/green timber boarding.
- 5.3.4 Common House: This will be a single storey pitched roof building with the appearance of a residential bungalow constructed of buff brick under a grey tiled roof. It will be sited near the eastern boundary with the rear elevation facing Forge Lane. The embankment down to Forge Lane will be landscaped with additional planting.
- 5.3.5 Of the 20 units, 16 will exceed National Described Space Standards and all the units will have access to an additional 110m² of communal facilities in the common house including laundry and a guest bedroom. The 1 bed flats are National Described Space Standards plus 4.5%, the 2 bed flats meet National Described Space Standards and the 2 bed houses are National Described Space Standards plus 10%. In all, the layout and design is acceptable and meets the requirements of policies DM29 and 30.
- 5.4 **Impact on Neighbours** DMDPD Policy DM 29; Key Design Principles
- 5.4.1 There are existing houses on the opposite side of Mill Lane south of the site. These will be at a 2.8m lower floor level than the proposed terrace of 4 houses. The window to window separation will be 26.7m which complies with DM29 requirements. To further mitigate the impact of the new dwellings being at a higher level, additional planting will be provided on the embankment sloping down to Mill Lane which will filter views of them.

- 5.4.2 The proposed development to the west, also reported on this agenda under application 20/00613/FUL, has two storey dwellings backing onto this site but separated by the protected trees. That development layout provides all houses with west/east facing aspects which will not result in mutual overlooking with this proposed development which has north/south facing aspects.
- 5.4.3 To the north of Forge Lane opposite the proposed apartment block a housing site is under construction by Story Homes. The nearest dwellings on that development will be gables facing this site with no direct facing habitable room windows. Furthermore, those gables will be approximately 27m from the apartment block.
- 5.4.4 To the east of the site on the opposite side of Forge Lane are commercial premises. All interface distances will be met and the development will have no adverse impact on any existing or proposed dwellings.
- 5.5 **Highways and Parking** DMDPD Policy DM 62: Vehicle Parking Provision
- 5.5.1 The site is in a sustainable location about 0.5km from the River Lune Cycleway (accessed via Mill Lane and the bridge over the river) and a frequent bus service that serves the village. Pedestrian links will be possible through the Story Homes site linking the site to the community centre and further bus stops on High Road. Communal space for 47 cycles will be provided, which is in compliance with the adopted standards.
- 5.5.2 As residents will be over 55, the applicant considers 75% will be retired and entitled to free bus travel. The applicant intends to restrict the amount of car use and car parking to promote sustainable travel. A similar model has been successful at Forgebank (the co-housing development further east) supported by car sharing and a car club. The proposed level of car parking reflects this intended control and provides for 8 spaces which will be split into 4 for residents' private vehicles; 2 for car club vehicles and 2 for visitors. Two electric vehicle charging points will be provided. Other residents will not be allowed to keep a car on the public highway within 2km the site and this will be enforced through the lease. However, this cannot be enforced through any planning mechanism so at the request of County Highways an additional area of overspill parking for 4 vehicles has been identified. This area will only be provided if the need arises and can be conditioned. These spaces are close to the protected trees but with the use of appropriate construction techniques and permeable surfacing the trees should be adequately protected. On the basis of the car club/sharing initiatives, cycle storage provision, sustainable location and ability to provide overspill parking County Highways has no objections. Use of car club/sharing initiatives will be secured through the s106.
- 5.6 **Ecology** (DMDPD Policy DM44 The Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity)
- 5.6.1 The site primarily consists of rank neutral grassland which has formed on the disturbed ground in recent years. The applicant's ecology report does not highlight presence of any protected species or habitats. Rabbits are present and although common receive some protection. Therefore, they should be responsibly cleared from the site prior to commencement of development. No development should take place during the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive) unless the absence of breeding birds is proven. Ecological enhancement measures can be dealt with by conditions.
- 5.7 **Flood Risk and Drainage** (DMDPD Policies DM33 Development and Flood Risk, DM34 Surface Water Run-off and Sustainable Drainage and DM35 Water Supply and Waste Water)
- 5.7.1 The site is at a very low risk of flooding and no formal flood risk assessment is required. An indicative draft drainage plan has been submitted with the application. The drainage options depend on further information to be gained on the existing systems and ground investigation. Surface water discharge route and rates will need to be agreed. Foul water will be discharged into the existing sewer network in Mill Lane. United Utilities and the LLFA have no objections to the principle of the strategy. Relevant conditions will require submission of final solutions for approval prior to commencement of development.
- 5.8 **Air Quality** (DMPD Policy 31: Air Quality Management and Pollution)
- 5.8.1 The applicant's air quality assessment states with mitigation measures during construction the

impacts from dust are considered to not be significant. Annual background concentrations of pollution are expected to be below their respective objectives and therefore the location is suitable for residential use. Finally, due to the travel initiatives to be used, including electric vehicle charging points, road traffic emissions are not likely to have a significant impact on local air quality.

5.9 Mineral Safeguarding (Minerals and Waste Local Plan Policy M2; NPPF paragraphs 205-206)

5.9.1 Having had full regard to the requirements of these policies, it is considered that given the lack of housing land supply across the District there is an overriding need for the development which outweighs the need to avoid sterilisation of the mineral resource. In any case it is considered that pursuing extraction of the minerals as part of the development would not be appropriate in this location given the proximity to residential properties.

6.0 Conclusion and Planning Balance

6.1 This is a highly sustainable and innovative proposal which will meet a specific identified local need through both the market and affordable housing. It complies with development plan policies and there are no objections raised to any element of the scheme. It can be carried out without adverse impact if appropriate mitigation measures are secured through conditions and a s106 legal agreement.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission Consent **BE GRANTED** subject to completion of a s106 agreement securing the following:

- 30% affordable housing provision
- Residents must be 55 years of age or older
- Provision of a Management Company to manage and maintain open space, landscaping and other land and infrastructure that would not be adopted by public bodies.
- Provision of residents’ car club and car sharing initiatives

and the following conditions:

Condition no.	Description	Type
1	3 year timescale	Standard
2	Approved plans	Standard
3	Surface water drainage details	Pre-commencement
4	Foul drainage system	Pre-commencement
5	Site access details and provision	Pre commencement
6	Contaminated Land	Pre-commencement
7	Arboricultural Implications Assessment, including Tree Protection Measures	Pre-commencement
8	Employment Skills Plan	Pre-commencement
9	Submission of additional car parking details (with associated tree information)	Pre-commencement (of these specific works)
10	Material samples, including boundary treatments	Above ground
11	Landscaping details	Above ground
12	Surface water management and maintenance	Pre-occupation
13	Provision and protection of visibility splays	Pre-occupation
14	Construction and details of management and maintenance of private roads	Pre-occupation
15	Details and provision of cycle stores	Pre-occupation
16	Details and provision of electric vehicle charging points	Pre-occupation
17	Provision of bin stores	Pre-occupation
18	Ecological mitigation measures	Ongoing compliance
19	Approved floor levels	Ongoing compliance
20	Bird breeding season	Ongoing compliance
21	Separate drainage system	Ongoing compliance

22	National Described Space Standards and M4(2) Accessibility Standards	Ongoing compliance
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Article 35. Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

In accordance with the above legislation, Lancaster City Council has made the recommendation in a positive and proactive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development, working proactively with the applicant to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The recommendation has been made having had regard to the impact of development, and in particular to the relevant policies contained in the Development Plan, as presented in full in the officer report, and to all relevant material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance.

Background Papers

None