



LAND SOUTH OF ARTHUR BAKER PLAYING FIELD, CHARING

WRITTEN STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF POLICY CHAR1

**Planning Statement
on behalf of Exors of Mr. G Winter**

HPPC Ref: 30309

Date: June 2010



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement sets out our case in support of Ashford's proposed policy CHAR 1, Land South of Arthur Baker Playing Field, in response to the inspector's questions for discussion at the forthcoming examination:

6.1 Are the housing sites CHAR 1 and CHAR 2, HAM1, and HAM2 the most sustainable locations for development in these villages, including consideration of village form and wildlife?

6.2 Do they represent the best strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives?

- 1.2 Section 2 of the statement will describe the site and its surroundings. Section 3 provides a summary of the Site Allocation policy for site CHAR 1. Section 4 comments on the Landscape and Ecology Appraisal prepared by Lloyd Bore. Section 5 provides a response to the comments of Kent Wildlife Trust. Section 6 sets out our response to Hillreed Homes commentary on the sustainability and suitability of site CHAR 1. Section 7 sets out our summary.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The site is located at the eastern entrance to the village of Charing along the A20. The site is adjoined by the Arthur Baker Playing Field to the north-east. The playing field is the key recreational area for the village and hosts Charing's sports and social club. To the north-west the site adjoins existing built development at The Moat which is a residential area. The site also adjoins a narrow section of the Conservation Area between The Moat and the A20. To the south-west of the site is a ribbon of residential development on the far side of the A20. To the south-east of the site is open countryside. The east of the site is a wooded area. An aerial photograph of the site is included below:

Aerial photograph



2.2 The proposed allocation site is currently used for the grazing of sheep and has an area of 2.25 hectares. The land is divided into three different fields with post and wire fencing. The site is relatively flat but there is a slight drop in level between the A20 and the site. An additional 1.8 hectares of land the east of the site is in the same ownership.

2.3 In terms of highways and accessibility the site is accessible on foot, by public transport and car. There is a bus stop to the south of the site. A path runs along the south side of the land on both sides of the road. The site is located 530m from the railway station and it is within 400m of the shops in the High Street. There is a good site frontage to the A20 suitable for vehicular access. The speed limit on the A20 to the south of the site is 40mph.

3 SUMMARY OF SITE ALLOCATION POLICY FOR SITE CHAR 1

3.1 The Policy CHAR1 states that an indicative capacity for the site is 35 units. The following criteria must be satisfied:

a) provide a vehicular, pedestrian and cycle link from the A20 through the site to the adjoining Arthur Baker playing fields;

b) provide footpath and cycleway links to the playing fields;

c) be designed to include a built-up frontage to the A20 (and provide footpath and cycle links along the frontage);

d) provide a landscaped edge to the development along the south eastern edge of the site;

e) include a mix of dwelling types and sizes as required by Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy; and,

f) provide affordable housing as required by Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy.

g) provide play equipment on the adjacent playing field in accordance with 'saved' policy LE7 of the Borough Local Plan 2000 or, any subsequent SPD superseding that policy;

h) provide a financial contribution towards the maintenance of the adjacent playing field, including play equipment, in accordance with 'saved' policy LE9 of the Borough Local Plan 2000, or any subsequent SPD superseding that policy; and,

i) provide a financial contribution towards the provision of a new or upgraded pavilion at the Arthur Baker playing field.

3.2 On behalf of the land owner it is confirmed that these conditions are acceptable. The development will provide benefits to the community through improved access to Arthur Baker Playing Field, the provision of affordable housing and the provision of financial contributions to the maintenance and upgrading of facilities at the playing field.

3.3 This proposal will facilitate the provision of a clear development boundary to the village on its eastern side in the form of landscaping along the south-eastern edge of the site. The landscaped area will have added ecological benefits as identified in the Lloyd Bore statement attached as **Appendix A** to this statement.

3.4 The supporting text to this policy sets out a brief description of the general location of the site and how the development of the site should be laid out. Paragraph 6.45 identifies that dwellings should

face the A20 mirroring the form of development on the opposite side of the road and the provision of a significant landscaped strip as part of the development represents an opportunity to provide a definitive edge to this part of the village.

- 3.5 Paragraph 6.46 identifies that the site should provide an active built frontage to the playing fields and proposals should reflect guidance in the Charing Parish Design Statement.

- 3.6 Paragraphs 6.47 – 6.49 describe the required access arrangements for the site and what financial contributions will be necessary.

- 3.7 We support the proposed policy wording for CHAR 1. Lloyd Bore has prepared a Landscape Strategy plan enclosed as Appendix 2 to Appendix A. The plan incorporates the recommendations set out in the policy.

4 LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY APPRAISAL PREPARED BY LLOYD BORE

- 4.1 Lloyd Bore has prepared a Landscape and Ecology Appraisal for site CHAR 1. This appraisal is included as Appendix A to this statement.
- 4.2 Section 4 of the Appraisal assesses the current views, vegetation and ecology of the site. It is concluded that the site is largely enclosed by developed land and structural landscape. Therefore, any potentially sensitive distant or local views towards the site which are not already mitigated by the existing landscape features can be addressed through reinforcement of the boundary planting.
- 4.3 In terms of ecology it is identified that the main body of the site is grazed and is likely to be of less ecological interest than the margins but as a matter of course the possible presences of protected species will be addressed as part of the planning design process.
- 4.4 Section 5 of their report identifies the landscape and development opportunities afforded by the development of the site.
- 4.5 Paragraph 5.3 notes that the layout of the new development will create a stronger sense of arrival at / departure from the village, allow for the creation of an extensive reconstructive landscape and biodiversity enhancement to the south east.
- 4.6 Paragraph 5.6 notes the following ways that the established landscape and ecology resources can be enhanced:
- *Creating a new area of woodland on the site's eastern boundary, to the south west of the Alder Woods, offering a variety of habitats complementary to the Alder Woods species composition. This could allow public access from the new development and linkages to the access network to the north. This area could also include permanent and seasonal ponds, areas of open glades, bird and bat boxes and natural hibernacula for reptiles.*
 - *Creating an attractive green zone between the A20 and the new development, retaining existing vegetation of value and supplementing these with new native species planting. This would create a green corridor between Alder Woods and the newly planted landscape zone to the east and north east, linking across the A20 frontage, and joining the existing mature woodland area to the south west of The Moat. This design approach would allow for the proposed new houses along Ashford Road to be set back from the frontage, protecting the amenity of existing and future*

residents.

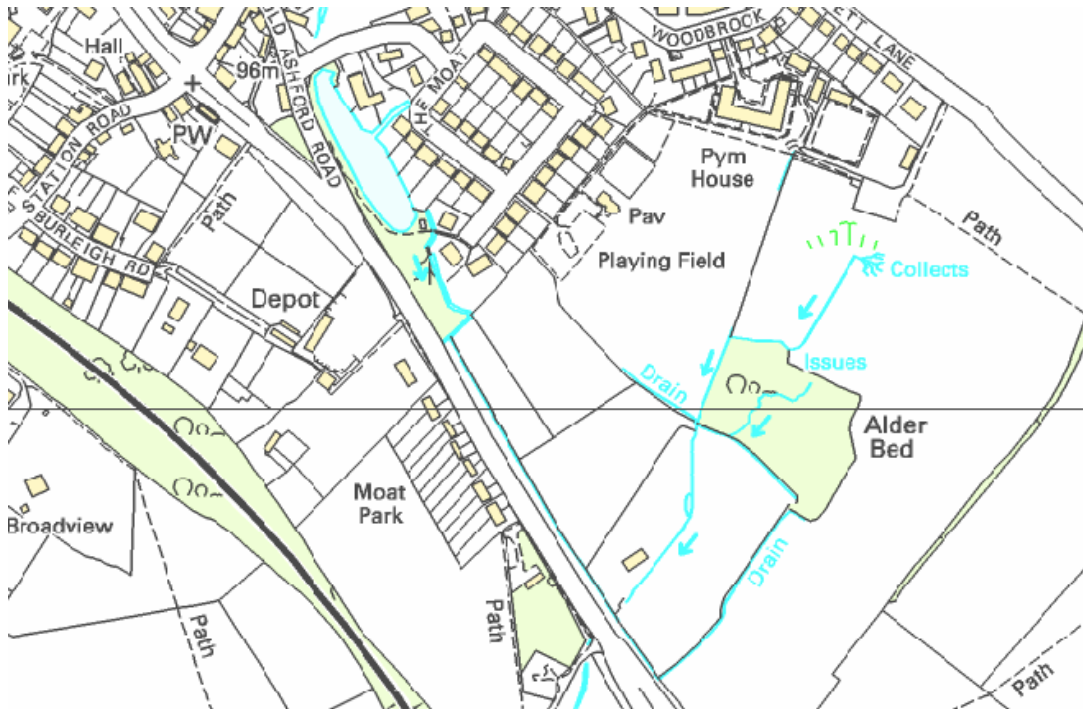
- *Improving the quality of the tree line along the southern boundary of the playing field. This should not be designed as a solid screen of tree planting, but as a permeable feature behind which the elevations of new houses would be visible. Species selected for this treeline should be long-lived native species, preferably moving away from current the ash / cherry combination. Retention and reinforcement of this line of trees would also perpetuate the mitigating effect it has on more distant views to the north.*
- *Protecting the amenity of existing residents by inclusion of zones of new planting on key boundaries.*
- *Creating a new water body or bodies, or seasonal ponds to take surface water run-off from roofs and hard surfaces. These would provide attenuation after periods of heavy rainfall, could be managed as attractive landscape features in their own right, and could also offer excellent wildlife habitat.*

4.7 The conclusion to the report states that the site CHAR 1 presents a good opportunity to accommodate new development of high quality, which could bring significant landscape and ecological benefits to the village.

5 RESPONSE TO KENT WILDLIFE TRUST COMMENTS

- 5.1 Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) have raised a concern in relation to the proposed allocation of site CHAR 1. Their key point is the development could potentially impact on the Fen Local Wildlife Site if there was a change in hydrology and recreational pressure.
- 5.2 With regards to Hydrology Ashford Borough Council have commented in their Response to Matter 6 paragraph 11 that, 'As the water is flowing from north to south, the development of CHAR1 is considered unlikely to be a problem to the water table of the Alder Beds.' It is also identified in paragraph 12 that, 'Development on CHAR 1 need not interfere with the current flow of water by either drawing water away from the wildlife site or by causing excess water to run onto it'. The plan referred to by Ashford Borough Council is included below.

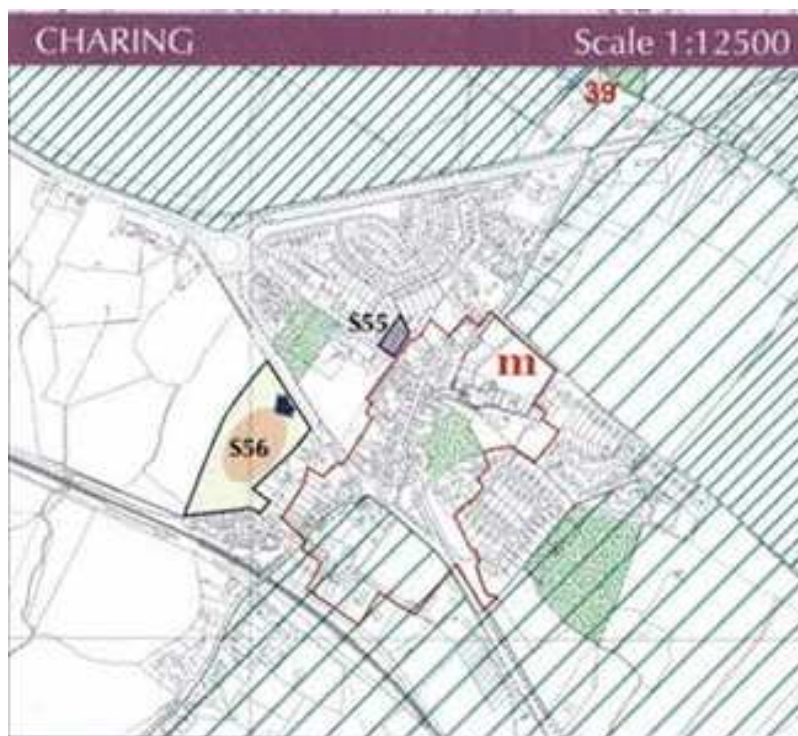
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- 5.3 With regards to the KWT's concerns over recreational pressures resultant from the development we would agree with Ashford Borough Council's view that it is unlikely that the development will result in a harmful degree of pressure upon the woodlands especially considering the site adjoins a large recreational ground.

6 RESPONSE TO HILLREED'S COMMENTS ON THE SUSTAINABILITY /SUITABILITY OF THE SITES IN CHARING

- 6.1 The key matter raised in the Hillreed Homes Examination Statement relate to performance of the sites in the Sustainability Appraisal. Their statement identifies that their site performed better in the landscape and wildlife/biodiversity categories.
- 6.2 Landscape impact has been carefully considered and assessed in the Lloyd Bore appraisal which considers the likely impact of the site on the wider landscape. Paragraph 4.19 of the report identifies that, '*The site is well defined and largely enclosed by developed land and structural landscape.*' In relation to long distance views the report states that, '*This existing landscape structure is well developed and capable of reinforcement and enhancement to address visual issues successfully.*' It is noted that any harm to the visual amenities of local views can be addressed through appropriate reinforcement boundary planting.
- 6.3 The Landscape Strategy plan for the site enclosed as Appendix 2, demonstrates the possible configuration of development of landscaping for the site. The plan highlights how the mirroring of development on the opposite side of the A20 coupled with the extensive landscaping on the south east of the site will create an attractive entrance and a definitive edge to the village.
- 6.4 The framing of the southern end of Arthur Baker Playing Field through improvements to the tree line and the addition of dwellings to the orientated towards the playing field will provide an attractive built frontage to the playing field and also allows for a high level of natural surveillance.
- 6.5 There is an error in paragraph 2.8 of Hillreed Homes statement; the site CHAR 1 does not adjoin the AONB. An extract from the local plan is included below which clarifies the extent of the AONB relative to this site. The AONB is annotated by the closely spaced green diagonal lines. The Conservation Area is enclosed by the red line. The green diagonal lines spaced further apart were areas identified as Special Landscape Areas; this designation is no longer applicable following the replacement of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 with the South East Plan.



- 6.6 Ashford has recognized that the development of the site will create a definitive edge to the village and provide an attractive built frontage to the playing fields in the supporting text to policy CHAR 1. They have also identified in their statement entitled Response to Matter 6 – Charing, paragraph 4, that, “It is therefore considered that the development of CHAR 1 would not alter the compact nature of the existing village.”
- 6.7 It is considered that the landscape impact of in light of the assessment and potential layout of development and landscaping on the site that the landscape impact of the will be neutral and the development of the site will not result in the loss of an important area of open space.
- 6.8 The site CHAR 04 is an area of open space within the conservation area of Charing and it was also part of the Special Landscape Area which no longer applies. Ashford have identified in paragraph 18 of their Response to Matter 6 that the site, *‘currently forms a pleasant area of open space which complements the Conservation Area of which it forms an integral part’*. Their statement also identifies that development of this site would require the provision of vision splays which, *‘would have a significantly adverse impact upon this green undeveloped margin to the Conservation Area’*.

- 6.9 It is considered that the development of CHAR 04 would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area contrary to policy CS1 of Ashford's Core Strategy 2008.
- 6.10 With regards to the issues of wildlife/biodiversity these have been addressed above in Lloyd Bore's Landscape and Ecology Appraisal. The appraisal identifies that the site will enable biodiversity to be enhanced through creation of extensive new habitats and important green corridor linkages between existing ecological features. The proposed landscaping to the south east of the site will provide a variety of complementary habitats for the Local Wildlife Site. The benefits the site can provide to wildlife and biodiversity mean that this issue is a strength as opposed to a weakness.

7 SUMMARY

- 7.1 The allocation of land South of Arthur Baker Playing Field should remain as site CHAR 1 in the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD. The development of this site will rationalise and 'round off' the south eastern boundary of the village. It will create a stronger sense of arrival at / departure from the village. The site will provide an attractive built frontage to the playing field and allow for a high level of natural surveillance. It will also improve access to the playing field. Development of the site would create extensive new habitats and important green corridor linkages between existing ecological features.
- 7.2 Overall, the site will bring significant landscape and ecological benefits to the village and it is considered that CHAR 1 is the most sustainable location for development in the village and it represents the best strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives.