

Application No: 21/00105/FULL Full Application

Site: Land Of Folly Hill, Hale Purlieu, Hale, Fordingbridge, SP6 2NN

Proposal: 2no. Affordable dwellings; parking; associated landscaping

Applicant: Mr Templeton, Hale Village Community Land Trust

Case Officer: Clare Ings

Parish: HALE

1. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

Rural Exception Site
Significant local interest

2. DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION

Conservation Area

3. PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

SP4 Spatial strategy
SP6 The natural environment
SP7 Landscape character
DP2 General development principles
DP18 Design principles
SP19 New residential development in the National Park
SP28 Rural exceptions sites
SP16 The historic and built environment
SP17 Local distinctiveness

4. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

Design Guide SPD
Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD

5. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Sec 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Sec 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Sec 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Sec 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

One Member comment received from Edward Heron as follows:

Contrary to SP28. Whilst the ambitions of the Community Land Trust and the generosity of the landowner are applauded, this is not enough to deliver affordable housing in a way that ensures both the homes and the future occupants successfully integrate within an established community.

The site is in the wrong place.

The CLT is not a sufficiently trusted delivery mechanism and its proposed tenant allocation policies do not ensure the homes will “meet a particular local need that cannot be accommodated in any other way”.

7. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Hale Parish Council: Recommend refusal for the following reasons:

- The proposal would be contrary to a number of policies:
- SP28A - Identified need has not been demonstrated or could be met in another way in neighbouring areas where property is more affordable and development is taking place.
- SP6 - The highly protected area of conservation should be protected and development should not be allowed unless an overriding public need has been demonstrated. The benefit of housing two families would not outweigh the environmental and ecological damage.
- DP2 - The properties are out of keeping with other properties on this road which are detached and set on large plots of land.
- SP21/DP18 - The properties are oversized; rooms are too large and could be subdivided to create addition bedrooms.
- The survey conducted by the council showed that villagers are opposed to this site.
- While the properties might be available to support commoners the paddock at Folly Hill would be lost.
- Decorative aggregate surfaces represent a loss of grassland and an increase in the probability of run off to the protected adjacent land.

8. CONSULTEES

- 8.1 Tree Officer: Objection on the grounds of potential loss of tree cover
- 8.2 Ecologist: Objection - cannot currently support the application as accordance has not been demonstrated in respect of local plan policies SP5 and SP6
- 8.3 Building Design & Conservation Area Officer: No objection, subject to conditions

- 8.4 Natural England: No objection, subject to appropriate mitigation
- 8.5 The National Trust: Comment. Any sight lines would have to be with the agreement of the National Trust.
- 8.6 Housing Development NFDC: Comment.
- There is a need for two dwellings (1 x 1 bed and 1 x 2 bed) on the NFDC Housing Register as at 5th May 2021
 - The proposed scheme does not accurately reflect the requirements of households who are currently listed on the New Forest District Council housing register
 - The proposed affordable homes are to be 'for rent'; however the proposal gives no indication of what the rents would be, or how they will be modelled and controlled beyond stating they will be let at a 'price substantially less than prevailing local market rates
 - Comprehensive details or heads of terms have not been provided on the Policy content itself, how the homes and tenants will be overseen and managed by the Community Land Trust, or how and by whom the Policy will be approved and scrutinised
- 8.7 Highway Authority (HCC): No objection, subject to appropriate sight lines and gates to be set back 6m

9. REPRESENTATIONS

- 9.1 42 representations received in support of the application, stating:
- well thought out plan, with tastefully designed dwellings
 - close to local school - about 15 mins walk
 - good location for young people
 - if built would help with mix of people (ages) in Hale
 - occupants would have links to locality
 - three independent surveys have demonstrated a need for the development
 - would help support school
- 9.2 85 representations received objecting to the application for the following reasons (although a number have supported the principle):
- contrary to policies SP28 and DP2
 - CLT have not demonstrated a need that could be provided in any other way
 - affordable housing should only be location on brownfield sites
 - principle may be acceptable, but this site is the wrong location
 - impact on ecology
 - surveys have only demonstrated a "desire" to live in Hale, not a "need"

- no accessible facilities
- occupiers would be dependent on cars as no public transport
- increase in traffic along single track road
- concern that there are not details as to who would manage the dwellings once built
- negative impact on neighbouring amenities
- traffic congestion, especially during construction, and increase in animal accidents
- insufficient parking provided
- set precedent for more dwellings on greenfield sites
- semi-detached dwelling would be out of keeping in this area of larger detached dwellings
- poor access, over a ditch
- loss of grazing back up land
- light pollution

9.3 Two general comments received referring to the need for affordable housing in Hale.

9.4 Friends of the New Forest have objected for the following reasons:

- concerns over the administration of the affordable housing, leading to possible sale
- development won't meet the criteria of policies SP28 a) and d)
- no urgent need for the development
- impact on wildlife which would be contrary to policies SP5 and SP6
- light pollution
- negative impact on character of area

10. RELEVANT HISTORY

10.1 None relevant.

11. ASSESSMENT

11.1 The site forms part of the domestic curtilage of Folly Hill and lies to the south of the village of Hale, just to the west of a long straight single carriageway "C" road which links Hale and Woodgreen. It is a level, open parcel of land with trees and other vegetation along its boundaries. There are also trees, including a Red Oak, within the site. To the east of the site is open Forest. There is a field access into the site. The road is characterised with detached properties of mixed size, age and design along its western side. The site lies within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area.

11.2 The application is for the erection of a two-storey semi-detached pair of affordable dwellings put forward by the Hale Village

Community Land Trust (HVCLT). One dwelling would have three bedrooms and would have a floorspace of 99sqm, whilst the other would have two bedrooms and a floorspace of 82sqm. They would be constructed of red brick under a slate roof with timber doors and windows. Each plot would also have a small garden shed. The dwellings would be located at the northern end of the site. Parking provision for five cars would be situated to the south of the dwellings. The existing access would be used and unaltered.

11.3 The key considerations are:

- the rural exceptions policy and whether there is a proven local housing need for the type of houses being proposed
- the scale and design of the dwellings
- the impact on trees within the site
- the impact on ecology

Policy considerations

11.4 The provision of affordable housing on 'rural exception sites' is supported by Policy SP28 of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019). Rural exception sites make an important contribution to meeting identified local housing needs in the National Park and Policy SP28 requires such sites to be subject to a Section 106 planning obligation to ensure that the dwellings provide for low-cost housing for local needs in perpetuity (criterion b); and to be managed by an appropriate body (criterion c). Community Land Trusts are specifically mentioned in criterion (c) as being an appropriate body to manage affordable housing on rural exception sites.

11.5 Provided that schemes meet these criteria, this type of development would not have to be on a brownfield site (and usually this would not be the case), nor would it be seen to set any type of precedent for general open market housing.

11.6 Part a) of Policy SP28 requires that a rural exception site should meet a particular local housing need that cannot be accommodated in any other way. Whilst it would appear that 11 sites in and around Hale had been investigated by the HVCLT (including land controlled by NFDC at Carters Close), a number had not been offered to the HVCLT and others were considered too sensitive for development; thus only this site has been put forward as a realistic possibility of being developed.

11.7 In providing evidence of affordable housing need in the parish of Hale the applicant refers to two housing need surveys – one from 2008 and another from 2018, and a Parish Plan survey from 2017. All three surveys have identified some need for affordable housing by local residents, but they are lacking in detailed evidence of eligible applicants currently registered on NFDC's

official housing register. More recent information as at 5 May 2021 from the New Forest District Council Housing Register for those households who have a confirmed a Local Parish Connection to Hale has indicated two such requirements, but for smaller units - 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom. This scheme is for a one 2-bed house and one 3-bed house, and therefore the proposed scheme for one 2-bed house and one 3-bed house would not accurately reflect the requirements of these local households.

11.8 Whilst Community Land Trusts have been viewed as an appropriate vehicle for the delivery of affordable housing, little information has been provided by the applicant as to whether HVCLT has the necessary capabilities to develop and manage an affordable housing scheme, even if only small-scale. The proposed affordable homes would be 'for rent' and would be bound by a Housing Allocation Policy ensuring the appropriate allocation and occupation of properties by those with a local connection and who can afford the rents. However the proposal does not provide any indication of what the rents would be, or how they will be modelled and controlled beyond stating they would be let at a 'price substantially less than prevailing local market rates'. Reference is made to some of the principles that a Housing Allocation Policy would address, but comprehensive details or heads of terms have not been provided on the Policy content itself, how the homes and tenants will be overseen and managed by the HVCLT, or how and by whom the Policy will be approved and scrutinised, such as how the potentially occupants would be nominated, and how the rent (to ensure its affordability) would be considered. Given CLTs are still a relatively new type of affordable housing provider and the fact that there are no other examples in the New Forest, it is essential that sufficient detail on this aspect should be provided to demonstrate HVCLT's ability to build and manage the proposed dwellings, which would assist in demonstrating that the requirements of Policy SP28(c) can be met.

11.9 Part d) of SP28 requires that the development should be located where there are appropriate services, such as schools, shops or public transport. Hale (and Woodgreen) do have limited facilities although the application site would lie some distance from any of these: just under a mile from the village 'centre' of Hale and necessitating a 15 minute walk. Access on foot would be along the single carriageway "C" road. Most journeys are therefore likely to be undertaken by car, as public transport is very limited and also some distance away. Whilst the location of the site is not ideal it is recognised that this is the only available site currently being put forward for affordable housing in the village.

Design and scale

11.10 The design of the semi-detached pair is considered to be

acceptable, and would make use of appropriate materials. They would be constructed of red brick with a slate roof and a partial roof covering of solar panels on the front southern aspect, to maximise solar gain, using a design which has been influenced by the New Forest vernacular, and the design of the two affordable houses built at Bransgore. The proposed dwellings are planned to incorporate sustainable features such as a ground source heat pump. A chimney at one end is also proposed. The design is therefore considered simple, relatively unadorned and would work well in this location of mixed modern character.

- 11.11 In terms of scale, Local Plan policy SP21 (size of new dwellings) requires that any new dwelling should not exceed 100sqm and the proposal conforms to this requirement (as confirmed at 11.2 above).

Impact on trees

- 11.12 As stated at 11.1 above, the site is surrounded by mature trees of varying species, size and age with a large Red Oak tree growing within the site's interior. The submitted site plan shows the retention of this Red Oak tree, which would be positioned on the boundary fence line between the proposed dwellings. However, the tree officer has queried whether the retention of this Oak is viable given its close proximity to the proposed dwellings and dominance over both gardens. The surrounding tree cover and crown spreads of other trees also appear to extend heavily over the proposed properties and garden space, and this could lead to pressure from future tenants of the proposed dwellings to fell or prune the trees, which have an important amenity value in the area. It is possible that a future detailed tree management strategy for the site could overcome this issue, but none has been offered. In the absence of such, the Tree Officer has therefore raised an objection on the potential loss of tree cover.

Impact on ecology

- 11.13 The habitats of the site are not thought to be of high quality or rarity, but they form part of a wider network of value and the site lies immediately adjacent to highly designated nature conservation sites. Biodiversity mitigation has been put forward, but these may be outweighed by the loss of trees which support various species, such as habitats for foraging and commuting bats (barbastelle) – hence the current objection from the Authority's Ecologist. Whilst there may be likely effects from the development on the sensitivity of the designated sites (SPA and SAC), which lie within 400m, it is considered that this could be addressed through financial contributions towards mitigation as set out in the adopted Habitat Mitigation SPD (June 2020). Natural England have not objected to the application, subject to this mitigation being secured.

- 11.14 The application site also lies within the catchment of the River Avon SAC, and the advice from Natural England is that there is a likely significant effect on these Habitats Sites due to the increase in waste water from any new housing within the River Avon catchment. As a way forward, a Grampian condition to secure mitigation for these impacts on this prior approval application, could be imposed, but there is currently a lack of information.

Highways and traffic

- 11.15 There are no objections from the Highways Authority, other than to secure appropriate sight lines for the access. The parking provision of five spaces appears appropriate, and would be unlikely to lead to parking outside the site on the verges. It is noted that no changes are proposed to the access which is controlled by the National Trust.

Conclusion

- 11.16 Whilst it would appear that there is support in principle for an affordable housing scheme in Hale, it is considered that this application has not adequately demonstrated a precise enough local housing need to support the proposed development, based on the most recent assessment of the District Council's Housing Register. There are concerns that the proposed development could lead to the loss of important tree cover within the site. In addition, there are outstanding concerns over the delivery of the scheme by the HVCLT to ensure it would meet all aspects of policy SP28. On the other hand, the design of the dwellings is found to be acceptable and, given the dense vegetation along the boundaries, the impact of the proposed development outside the site would be negligible and would not be detrimental to the wider landscape or the character and appearance of the conservation area. However, on balance, it is considered that the justification for the proposal having regard to the requirements of policy SP28 has not been fully made and the application is therefore recommended for refusal.

12. RECOMMENDATION

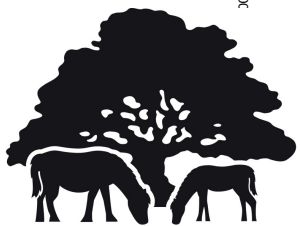
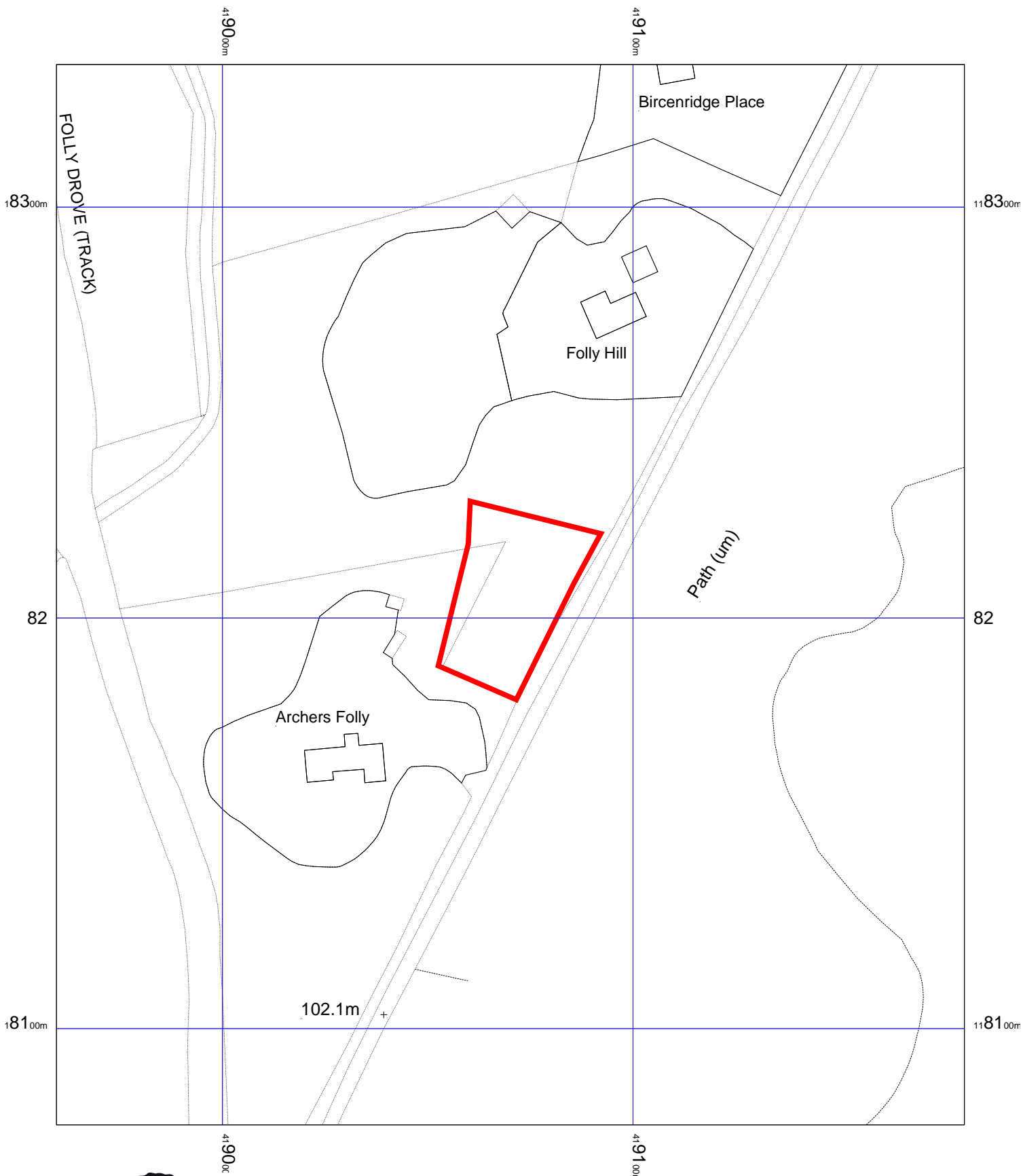
Refuse

Reason(s)

- 1 It has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the National Park Authority that there is a proven local housing need for the scheme as proposed, in respect of the size of the dwellings, nor that there would be appropriate safeguards to ensure that they would be truly affordable and retained as such in perpetuity. For these reasons, the proposal would be contrary to policy SP28 of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2016

(August 2019).

- 2 In the absence of a detailed tree management strategy for the site, the proposed housing units, by virtue of their positioning within the site, are likely to lead to pressure from future occupiers to fell or prune the Red Oak tree which is of high public amenity value. In addition, the presence of other important trees along the boundaries, which would dominate the rear gardens of the proposed dwellings, would mean that their future retention cannot be assured. The proposal would therefore be contrary to policy DP2 of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2016 (August 2019).
- 3 The application site lies in close proximity to internationally and nationally designated sites (SSSI, SPA, SAC) and it has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the National Park Authority, through adequate mitigation measures, such as financial contributions, that there would not be significant in-combination impacts on the ecological sensitivities of these areas, including the impact of the proposal through increased nitrates on the River Avon SAC. The proposal would therefore be contrary to policies SP5 and SP6 of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036 (August 2019).



NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK

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