

The Alton Society's response to the Reserved Matters planning application for the Development of land at the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital site, submitted by Crest Nicholson: Ref: 30021/066

We welcome the modest changes proposed by Crest Nicholson, following the albeit limited consultation process carried out in June, and are encouraged by the detailed character study undertaken in the town and surrounding villages, and the six discrete 'character areas', in both respecting and exploiting the topography of the site, and helping provide a 'sense of place'.

The reduction in the number of dwellings in The Gallery, with the resulting increase in the size of the wildlife corridor, is also to be welcomed. This will hopefully significantly improve the distant views from the south into this very exposed 'ledge', but we wonder why the remaining houses could not be removed entirely? (Confusingly, the 'Listening and responding' section of the developers' Newsletter seems to repeat the same point [items 3 and 4]).

Notwithstanding these and other improvements, we are very disappointed that the developers have failed to address what is probably the most important issue - the need to give maximum protection to the "butterfly meadow". You will of course be aware of the strength of local feeling over the need to protect this part of the site, and we have grave doubts as to whether the EIA or the proposed EHDC-commissioned review of its findings will afford the required protection. We note that the proposal is to reduce the developable area of the Glade by approximately ten percent, but this reduction falls well short of the wishes of local people and, indeed, of The Alton Society. We're particularly disappointed to find that that the compromise we suggested in our letter dated 10th June has largely been ignored, and strongly urge the developer to consider a more robust buffer zone along the western edge of The Glade. Such a widening of this corridor would also facilitate more space in front of the water tower, making it much more appealing as a visual feature.

We have listed below our further concerns over some of the detail:

1. The developers reaffirm their intention to designate the remaining eight hectares as 'a Country Park' (although not to be formally accredited as such). As we stated in our feedback in June, the Society is strongly opposed to ANY development taking place in this area. This includes both car parking and organised play areas. Apart from the potential degradation of these natural meadows, any play equipment would carry a serious risk of vandalism, in an area so far removed from the residential areas. Our view has not changed in

this respect. This whole notion of a 'Country Park' should be dropped, and the meadows left alone, for the continued enjoyment of the town's walkers and cyclists.

2. The plans for play areas are misguided in our view. The description of the proposed 'LAPs' and 'LEAPs', and their proposed location, raise a number of issues, and, we believe, require a total rethink:
 - a. Firstly, the location of the LEAP (Local Equipped Area of Play) – in the undeveloped meadow (called a 'country park') is totally inappropriate. Though designed for children 'beginning to go out and play independently', it's a sad fact that today most parents will not want their children straying so far from home on their own. (We would perhaps single out The Meadows as the one exception where homes may be close enough).
 - b. Secondly, its position – so far away from the residential 'pockets' - will leave the facility and its equipment extremely vulnerable to vandalism and antisocial behaviour. There are clear examples of this already in The Public Gardens and Anstey Park. The notion of such a play area for older children is perfectly acceptable, but it must be better located.
 - c. We would assume from the description of the LAPs (Local Areas of Play) that there are no plans to provide play equipment. If so, this is a serious omission in our view. It is difficult to discern precisely what is proposed from the rather vague description in Section 5 of the DAS, and it's unfortunate that no illustrations have been provided, but they need to be equipped and properly fenced off areas.
 - d. In terms of location, these play areas need to be within easy and safe walking distance for all residents.

Turning to building design and layout aspects...

3. As stated above, we welcome the basic premise of dividing the development into six distinct character areas. However, despite the detailed work the developer has put into the local area "character studies*" (DAS Sec 2) we see little in the design of the proposed elevations to satisfy the stated aim suggested in the Alton Town Design Statement that house design "...should be of a distinctive character that is of its own time" and "this is something that should be encouraged in newer developments rather than merely imitating styles from the past, often not very well". [Section 5.2 of the Architectural Overview].
4. We welcome the potential variety of designs suggested by the addition of materials such as coloured weatherboarding and clay tile hanging (as opposed to concrete), which are of the local vernacular. Might we suggest that brick walls, incorporating flint knapping, and placed strategically, would also be of benefit to the overall effect?
5. We note the widespread use of close boarded fencing, particularly separating private gardens. This can be to the detriment of free movement of wildlife, particularly hedgehogs, slow worms, frogs and toads etc. Perhaps low-level border fences could be considered.
6. To counter the problems pedestrians will have navigating the estate, especially given the circuitous feeder road, and the steep terrain, a comprehensive network

of footpaths throughout the site will be essential. Although footways are indicated on some of the plans, these are not clearly defined, and – from the information provided – would appear to be inadequate. The Glade of course is particularly remote, but we would suggest that residents of Treloar Place and The Meadows should have direct access to Chawton Park Road, through the existing Treloar Heights development.

7. Two further points of detail:

- a. We note that a substantial block of flats in the south-eastern corner of Lime Avenue** has been relocated much closer to existing residents in Florence Way. This seems to us a very overbearing building and unacceptably close to the existing houses, and there is only very limited screening provided by the line of deciduous trees. We would strongly urge the developer to consider moving this back to the Chawton Park Road frontage.
- b. The DAS also details the proposed internal layout for the New Robertson House. The internal space seems rather oddly proportioned, and very cramped. Although we don't have accurate dimensions, the second bedroom is extremely small, and there is very little internal storage space. Surely the design can be improved?
- c. **There is one basic error in the naming of the six character areas – a 'Lime Avenue' already exists on the Greenfields estate.

8. Finally, we are very concerned to find that the imagination and creativity we see in the overall layout of the site has not been applied to the question of sustainable design standards. Whilst the 10% renewable provision is welcome, we see no serious attempt at innovative, sustainable energy provision for the site as a whole, and the claim by the consultants Hodkinson that what is proposed is "considered sustainable" is extraordinary in our view. To repeat our earlier comments, not only do the plans fly in the face of EHDC's own Energy Strategy but such a large development - especially with its southern aspect - is an ideal opportunity to showcase what can be achieved in terms of self-sufficient, sustainable energy provision.

Rod Eckles
Chairman, Built Environment Group

22nd August 2018
