

## **Hartley Wintney Proposed Rural Exception Site Questions and Answers – June 2021**

Hartley Wintney Parish Council, Hart District Council, Action Hampshire and Hastoe Housing Association introduced proposals for an affordable housing development during two public consultation events held online on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Attendees were offered the opportunity to make comments, provide feedback and ask questions during the sessions, and these were addressed as part of the question and answer session at the end of each session. These questions, along with others received during the process of developing plans, are provided below along with responses from the hosts.

Please note that we did receive multiple questions that were similar in nature, so the questions will not appear as a word for word transcription of what was posed. In these instances we have grouped together similar questions where appropriate. If in doing so, you feel we have missed any key elements of your questions, please get in touch and we will be sure to add any necessary clarifications.

### **Questions and Answers**

#### **Will this development lead to more housing being built in the village?**

Hopefully not. At the time that we were preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, Hartley Wintney had a zero allocation of houses to be built meaning that we have already fulfilled our quota and no more development is required from us during the period of the Hart Local Plan ending in 2032. Due to the development being an “exception” site, it will not set any precedent for building outside of the development boundary. Should the Parish Council obtain a scheme which does not fully cater for the level of housing need in the village, they can apply for another scheme, but they will have to repeat the process (including evidence of housing need) from the beginning. Plans for any large scale developments will be strongly objected to for many reasons from both the Neighbourhood Plan and the Hart Local Plan. It goes without saying that any development will be judged against current planning laws and requirements.

#### **What is rural affordable housing?**

Rural affordable housing is housing which is provided in rural parishes for local people who would not otherwise be able to find an affordable place to live locally through the general housing market. Affordable rented housing is usually owned by a Registered Housing Provider and rented at a weekly rent that is below market rents. Shared ownership and shared equity homes are partly purchased by the resident and partly owned by the housing provider.

#### **What are the benefits of affordable housing?**

An affordable housing scheme can make a huge contribution to the parish. It not only meets the housing needs of local people, but it can help maintain the viability of services and amenities in the parish, such as the local school, a village shop and post

office. It may also help maintain a mixed and diverse community and support informal social networks that are essential elements in small villages.

### **The increase in traffic may increase the risk of accidents and pedestrians are detached from the main village. Has this been considered?**

Yes these are all valid concerns and we are looking at the impact and ways to limit risk with our highways consultant which will include a specific pre-app. One of the attractions of the site is that it has very good pedestrian and cyclist access to the village, which is enhanced by the new pedestrian link through the site.

### **Were there no other suitable sites, such as the tip?**

The site was selected after a call for sites was made. We are limited by the sites that come forward, and Rural Exception Sites tend to be on agricultural/ Greenfield sites. They are very specific in terms of the viability. It may be many years before the tip moves – if it does - and it may prove to be contaminated land.

### **Why build on a site that floods?**

The site was deemed the most suitable available site to bring forward this much needed affordable housing. We are carrying out a ground investigation and producing a flood risk assessment as part of the planning package. This will cover off any points we need to take account of in the design and build of these homes.

### **How much and what type of housing will be built?**

In order for a Rural Exception Site to receive planning approval, a proven local need for affordable housing must be demonstrated. This can include information from Hart's Housing Register (showing the need for rented affordable homes) and the Help to Buy 3 register (showing the local need for shared ownership homes). Often a housing needs survey will also be carried out to identify and confirm local need for affordable homes, however in the case of this site, this has not been undertaken due to the high and consistent local need that is demonstrated through Hart's Housing Register and the Help to Buy 3 register. The number of homes that are being proposed has been determined to help meet some of the identified local need for affordable housing, whilst being careful not to over-develop the site that is available. The size and tenure of homes being proposed have also been determined based on the assessed local need for different sized and types of homes and also for a split between affordable homes to rent and to buy.

### **Who can apply for the affordable homes on the site?**

Anyone who is registered on Hart's Housing Register (for rented homes), or the Help to Buy 3 register (for shared ownership homes) could apply for the homes on this site, however checks will be carried out for both the rented and shared ownership homes to ensure that any applicants who are considered for the affordable homes meet the local connection criteria which is set out in the S106 criteria. Applicants applying for the rented homes will also be restricted to applying only for the size of home (i.e. 1 bed, 2 bed, 3 bed) that meet their assessed bedroom need (i.e. size of home they require based on the age, sex and relationship of all household members).

### **How can I apply for one of the rented homes on this site?**

In order to apply for one of the rented homes, you will need to have an active application on Hart's Housing Register. You will be awarded a priority Band (based on your assessed housing need), an Effective Date (when you were awarded your band) and an assessed bedroom need (based on your household's requirements). Applicants' Band award and Effective Date may be used to determine who should be allocated a home if two or more applicants meet the same local connection criteria. The homes would be advertised through the website during Hart's weekly advertising cycle alongside all other available rented vacancies and you will be able to log in and apply ('bid') for the homes using your application number once they are advertised for let.

To find out more about renting an affordable home, or how to apply, contact Hart's Housing Team -

Visit: [www.hart.gov.uk/housing-advice](http://www.hart.gov.uk/housing-advice)

Call: 01252 774420

Email: [housing@hart.gov.uk](mailto:housing@hart.gov.uk)

To make an application to Hart's Housing Register, you can complete an online form at - [www.harthomes.org.uk](http://www.harthomes.org.uk)

### **How can I apply for one of the shared ownership homes on this site?**

To apply for shared ownership homes on this site, you would need to register with Help to Buy 3 and have your eligibility for shared ownership housing checked (e.g. maximum income levels etc.). Once they are ready for sale, the shared ownership homes will be advertised on the Help to Buy 3 website ([www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk](http://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk)) and also on Hastoe's website ([www.hastoesales.com](http://www.hastoesales.com)). If accepted for a home, applicants will then be able to proceed with the normal conveyancing process to purchase the home.

To find out more about the shared ownership homes at 'Land off Hares Lane', contact Hastoe -

Visit: [www.hastoesales.com](http://www.hastoesales.com) (please note that information regarding the shared ownership homes will only be available 6 months prior to completion of the homes)

Email: [sales@hastoe.com](mailto:sales@hastoe.com)

Call: 0800 783 3097

To find out more about shared ownership and to register with Help to Buy 3 -

Visit: [www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk](http://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk)

Email: [info@helptobuyagent3.org.uk](mailto:info@helptobuyagent3.org.uk)

Call: 0800 456 1188

### **I am interested to understand how many parking spaces are allocated to each property and how wide the access route will be?**

The parking is proposed as per Hart's guidance. This means some homes have fractions of a space, such as 1.75 per one bed. We have shown these fractions as being unallocated for now as we will be looking at the parking layout in more detail as

plans progress. The access route will be 5.5m at the entrance (unless we are advised otherwise by Highways) and likely to be 4.8m within the site.

### **How many of the 14 dwellings will be shared ownership?**

It is proposed that 3 of the 14 affordable homes will be available for shared ownership.

### **How can we be sure they will go to local people?**

It will be set out in the Section 106 legal agreement (S106) that the affordable homes will be let/sold to people who meet the specific local connection criteria that has been agreed. Applicants with a local connection to the parish will be prioritised for these homes when they are advertised for let/sale. A list of neighbouring parishes is also included in S106 as reserves if no-one can be found from the main parish. These neighbouring parishes will be agreed with Hartley Wintney Parish Council, and it is expected due to the high need for affordable housing by Hartley Wintney parish residents that vacancies will be filled by people with a strong local connection to the parish. During the sales/lettings process, the local connection of any prospective buyer/tenant will be checked to ensure they meet the criteria.

### **How will the homes remain for local people?**

As with any Rural Exception Site scheme, the local connection criteria set out within the S106 must be followed when the homes are let or sold. The S106 legal agreement (which is developed as part of the planning permission) ensures that all of the affordable homes (both rented and shared ownership) are allocated in line with the agreed local connection criteria in perpetuity (initial sales/lets and all re-sales/re-lets). During a let/sale of the homes, the criteria will be checked to ensure that any applicant being considered meets the criteria set out in the S106 agreement. Tenants of the rented homes will have the right to exchange their home with another social housing tenant, but only if the incoming tenant meets the local connection criteria.

In addition, because these homes will be developed as a Rural Exception Site, there will also be a restriction in place within the S106 agreement preventing owners of the shared ownership homes from increasing their purchase share (known as staircasing) above 80%, meaning that the homes will remain as affordable homes in perpetuity and can never be purchased outright and sold on the open market.

### **What is meant by local connection?**

The local connection criteria will be set out in the S106 legal agreement and will be followed every time the affordable homes are sold or let. The local connection criteria has not yet been finalised but will be similar to the criteria used for other Rural Exception Sites within Hart and will be agreed between Hart District Council, Hartley Wintney Parish Council and Hastoe. There is often a cascade process in place, whereby highest priority is given to applicants meeting the 'strong local connection criteria' to the parish and dropping down to applicants with less of a connection or a connection to neighbouring parishes to be considered if no applicants with a strong local connection are identified.

A strong local connection to the parish may include:

- Applicant resides within the parish and has done so for x number of years.
- Applicant was previously resident in the parish and has close family members (e.g. parents, siblings, grown up children) who live within the parish and have done so for x number of years.
- Applicant is employed within the parish and has been employed within the parish for x number of years.
- Applicant has a need to reside within the parish either to support or to be supported by a member of their family (e.g. parent, sibling grown up child) who live within the parish.

### **Is the site in a protected area?**

We have reviewed the site and whether it falls within a conservation area, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (THBHSPA), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and any other protected or restricted areas. From the mapping we have seen and the work done by the ecologists we have engaged with, the site falls outside of the conservation area, the THBHSPA and the SSSI. However, it is close to some of these and we are expecting that some mitigation measures and/ or contributions will be required. This will become clearer through the planning process.

### **What is shared ownership and how does it work?**

Shared ownership is a form of affordable housing that can be a first step on to the housing ladder for people who otherwise may struggle to purchase a home in the area they want on the open market. The shared ownership scheme requires the purchaser to obtain a mortgage and requires a minimum income level. The housing association will own the freehold of the property and the shared owner has a shared ownership lease. The shared owner buys a share of the property, whilst the remainder is owned by the housing association. You can own between 10-80%.

### **How much will the shared ownership homes be to buy?**

The shared ownership scheme now allows you to buy as little as a 10% share (previously a minimum of 25% under the old shared ownership model that ended in 2021) of the home. It will be based on the value of the property at the time it is marketed, so if for argument's sake one of the homes is valued at 300K then a 10% share would be £30K, 20% would be £60K etc. The share that is bought is typically via a mortgage and there is rent payable to Hastoe on the remainder. That amount is based on what share is retained by Hastoe, but is based on 2.75% of the unsold part.

### **What will the rent levels be?**

The rents charged on affordable rented homes are regulated by Homes England and the housing provider's rent policy. There are two types of rented product managed by Hastoe, Affordable Rent and Social Rent. Affordable Rent is up to 80% of market rent values, inclusive of service charge and capped at the Local Housing Allowance level. Social Rent uses a rather more complicated calculation, but tends to be lower than Affordable Rent. Until we have greater information on costs, we are unable to confirm

which of the two models will apply at Hartley Wintney. Indicative rents can be provided on request.

### **What standard will the homes be built to?**

Hastoe have recently launched our Hastoe new build standard. This ensures that our homes will go over and above building regulations striving to hit high levels of energy efficiency. We do this by using technologies such as air source heat pumps, by good design and close monitoring of the works on-site. We have built schemes to Passivhaus standard, which is generally considered to be one of most energy efficient methods of construction, and still aim to do one scheme per programme year, but even where that standard cannot be achieved we can take use some of those principles and apply them to the benefit of all of our schemes.

### **How long before the homes are built?**

There are many stages in developing an affordable housing scheme. Rural housing schemes are traditionally difficult to develop, but each site is different so a number of factors can influence the time frame, including the number of plots available, how much work is required on the roads, whether the planners are in favour of the site, the funding and how much opposition there is to the site in the parish. For the homes in Hartley Wintney, we have carried out some early investigations and engaged with planners via a pre-application. We have a number of surveys still to do and will consider all of the feedback received as part of our consultation. All going well, it is our intention to submit a full planning application this summer. If the application is successful, then we would likely start works in spring 2022.

### **What are self-build homes?**

Self-build and custom housebuilding cover a wide spectrum, from projects where individuals are involved in building or managing the construction of their home from beginning to end (self-build), to projects where individuals commission their home, making key design and layout decisions, but the home is built ready for occupation (custom-build).

Three of the homes on this site will be 'self-build', where an individual will purchase a serviced self-build plot (meaning it will have access to the highway, and connection to mains water, electricity and wastewater) but they will need to arrange for the home to be built. A detailed planning application will be obtained for the affordable and self-build plots on this site, and so if a self-builder wishes to vary the way in which their home is built, further planning permission will need to be sought to make alterations to the originally agreed permission. Self-build should allow flexibility to the self-builder to build a home that meets their own requirements, however there will be certain restrictions in place to ensure that the self-build homes are built to an appropriate scale and external appearance to fit into the local environment and to compliment and feel incorporated within the whole site.

For more information regarding self-build:

See the Information Guide on Hart's website –  
[www.hart.gov.uk/self-build-custom-housebuilding-register](http://www.hart.gov.uk/self-build-custom-housebuilding-register)

You can also contact Hart's Planning Policy Team -

Email: [planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk)

Call: 01252 774118

### **Why is there self-build on this scheme?**

To make this scheme viable for all parties, it is proposed that the vendor receives the benefit of a planning permission for 3 self-build plots in lieu of payment from Hastoe for the land providing the affordable housing. The ratio of homes needed to be appropriate and consistent with Rural Exception Site policy, so involved detailed discussion and assessment.

### **How can I buy a self-build plot/home on this site?**

If you are interested in self-build, you are able to join Hart's self-build register of people seeking self-build plots within the district. There is a Fee and eligibility criteria to join (including local connection criteria). Hart will notify people on the self-build register when self-build plots come up within the district, including the one at 'Land off Hares Lane', however by being on the register, this does not guarantee that you will be successful in purchasing a self-build plot.

To join Hart's Self-Build Register, you can complete an application form online -  
[www.hart.gov.uk/self-build-custom-housebuilding-register](http://www.hart.gov.uk/self-build-custom-housebuilding-register)

The landowner for this site will deal with sale of the self-build plots, and Hart, Hastoe and Hartley Wintney Parish Council would not be involved with this process. Hart will communicate any information regarding the self-build plots on this site to those on the self-build register, however the landowner may also choose to advertise the self-build plots in other ways. It is important to be aware that landowners do not have an obligation to sell their self-build plots to a purchaser on Hart's self-build register.

### **Are there any other similar sites we could go and see?**

Yes. There are a number of recently built schemes that may give you a better idea of the type of homes and scheme that we build in rural areas. Many of these are near to Hartley Wintney. As the homes are being lived in and we have not yet had opportunity to let them know there may be visitors, we will not include the locations on this document, but we can share some locations with those requesting them directly, once we have notified affected residents.