



GLP Trows LLP and BDW Trading Ltd

LAND SOUTH OF COWM TOP LANE, CASTLETON, ROCHDALE

Statement of Community Involvement





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1 INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1.1. WSP has prepared this Statement of Community Involvement on behalf of GLP Trows LLP and BDW Trading Limited (the joint applicants) in support of a full planning application for residential development on land south of Cowm Top Lane, Castleton (“the site”). The application has been submitted to Rochdale Borough Council as Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- 1.1.2. Planning permission is sought for the following:
“Full planning application for residential development with associated access, car parking, landscaping and infrastructure at land south of Cowm Top Lane, Castleton”.
- 1.1.3. This full planning application follows on from the outline planning application, submitted in August 2022 (LPA ref: 21/01349/OUT) which is currently pending determination and seeks approval for up to 550 dwellings at the site.
- 1.1.4. The proposals aim to deliver a scheme that creates a safe sense of place and a well-balanced mixed community. This will be achieved by offering a range of different house types and sizes which reflect local needs but with a clear focus on delivering high quality family housing. The development will integrate with the surrounding developments to create an inclusive character.
- 1.1.5. The purpose of this Statement of Community Involvement is to explain the pre-application engagement and community consultation that has been undertaken in the lead up to submitting the planning application; provide a summary of the feedback received and responses to the points raised, noting where this has influenced the proposed layout as it has evolved.

POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1.6. The comprehensive pre-application community engagement undertaken by the applicant and the project team has considered relevant national and local policy guidance.
- 1.1.7. The importance of pre-application consultation and community engagement are emphasised in the following guidance:
- National Planning Policy Framework (2021);
 - Localism Act (2011); and
 - Rochdale Council’s Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (August 2021).
- 1.1.8. The NPPF promotes effective engagement between applicants, communities, LPAs and other interested parties throughout the process. Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that applicants should work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community.
- 1.1.9. Paragraph 5.9 of the Council’s SCI states that:
“Involvement in the process can often be useful before an application is formally submitted. The Council encourages applicants to undertake discussions with us prior to submitting their application. This will help to identify key issues and planning policies and identify any problems at an early stage, such as the need for a traffic assessment or flood risk assessment, to enable the applicant to address them”.

1.1.10. Paragraph 5.10 goes on to state:

“For significant development proposals, the Council has adopted guidance to encourage applicants/developers to consult with the local community before submitting their application. This enables the applicants to explain their proposals, receive feedback on which they might be able to act, create an atmosphere of genuine interest in the views of the local community and provide more certainty about any level of concern and the issues of concern.”

1.1.11. It is against this background that consultation with the LPA, local community and Councillors has been undertaken.

2 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

- 2.1.1. Given the prominence of the site and the potential scale of development, the applicants have, undertaken extensive pre-application discussions with Rochdale Borough Council across a period of around four/five years. Various iterations of sketch layouts and the vision for the site have been discussed with officers over the years
- 2.1.2. The most recent formal pre-application meeting took place on 21 February 2022.
- 2.1.3. Formal pre-application meetings have been held (via video conference) and in person with planning officers at Rochdale Council including Mark Robinson, Paul Moore, Daniela Ripa and Mark Caine over a number of years. These meetings were attended by members of the project team, including the applicant, planning consultant and technical consultants where necessary. Several of these meetings have also been attended by officers from the policy, highways and drainage teams.
- 2.1.4. The key discussion points at the meetings included:
- Principle of development of the site;
 - Masterplanning of the site;
 - Relationships between the application site and the proposed access;
 - Public realm and landscape;
 - Public consultation and stakeholder engagement;
 - Environmental Impact Assessment screening; and
 - S106 obligations
- 2.1.5. The feedback received has been valuable and has positively shaped the current scheme which fit with the ambitions of Rochdale's Core Strategy and the aspirations for this site within the emerging Places for Everyone draft Joint Plan. In particular, an additional area of POS has been incorporated into the scheme since these discussions, with the provision of a green spine now running through the centre of the site from north to south for almost the entire length of the site. This helps with connectivity through the site by offering footpath linkages and also a further opportunity for ecological enhancements.

3 COUNCILLOR ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1.1. In May 2022, the three Ward Councillors (Cllr Billy Sheerin, Cllr Aisling Blaise-Gallagher and Cllr Aasim Rashid), Cllr John Blundell as Portfolio Holder for Economy and Communications (Planning) and the Leader of the Council (Cllr Neil Emmott) were consulted via email and provided with a preview link to the consultation website (explained below) and a copy of the draft Proposed Layout Plan.
- 3.1.2. The correspondence offered the opportunity for a virtual meeting to be organised where members of the team would be on hand to explain the proposals in greater detail and also answer any questions.
- 3.1.3. A meeting took place on 1 June 2022, between Cllr Billy Sheerin and Cllr Aasim Rashid, a representative from BDW and the planning consultants. Cllr Aisling Blaise-Gallagher was invited to the meeting but was unable to attend.
- 3.1.4. Below is a summary of the feedback received:
- Pleased to see that the scheme was for below 550 dwellings as felt the area didn't have the infrastructure to cope with higher numbers.
 - Acceptance that Castleton has been in a period of decline and seen a number of social housing schemes built, therefore, please to see a large proportion of five-bedroom houses forming part of the scheme. There is a desire for larger family housing to be provided in this area.
 - Felt the scheme needed to provide spacious, high-quality housing in order to attract people, given the access is through an industrial estate.
 - Concern was raised about the loss of wildlife and need to ensure a biodiversity net gain and that this is clearly addressed in the application submission.
 - Concern was raised about impacts on social infrastructure, and in particularly health care and Castleton primary schools, however, acknowledged that there are four secondary schools within reasonably close proximity which could have capacity.
 - Keen that the open space facilities are provided to a high quality and to understand the approach to formal open space/recreation.
 - Issues of needing to ensure cycle connectivity was raised and how the scheme would integrate with the Bee Network.
 - Concern was raised about only having a single access point but were pleased to see that Trows Lane would offer an emergency access.
 - Antisocial behaviour issues do occur at the top of Cowm Top, but it was felt the new access and activity would resolve this.
 - Both noted would have preferred to see housing instead of the industrial estate to the north as it hasn't offered as many jobs as first promised.
- 3.1.5. Cllr Rashid ended the meeting noting he was supportive of seeing larger family homes delivered but wants a S106 package which does actually offer betterment to the local community.
- 3.1.6. Cllr Sheerin ended the meeting by noting that he understood the site is coming through the PfE but wants to ensure that the infrastructure is put in place to accommodate growth and the S106 package is appropriate.

4 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- 4.1.1. The consultation process for this application was designed to allow the local community to view the draft proposals and share their feedback with the team before the scheme is finalised and the application is submitted.
- 4.1.2. As a result, a letter, which provided details of the proposals was distributed to 892 properties across the distribution area shown on figure 4-1. The letter was posted on 30 May 2022 and also provided a link to a dedicated website which was prepared presenting more detailed draft plans of the scheme proposals. For those without Internet access, a phone number was also included on the letter.



Figure 4-1 - Extent of properties consulted (Source: Google Earth)

- 4.1.3. The website was live from 30 May 2022 to 15 June 2022. Comments on the scheme could be submitted via the on-line questionnaire or to a dedicated consultation email address.

RESULTS

- 4.1.4. A total of 4 responses were submitted to the dedicated consultation email address while 22 people chose to engage with the consultation using the online feedback questionnaire. A total of 3 telephone conversations were held with members of the public. The feedback provided presented a mix of opinions and comments:

ADDRESSING THE FEEDBACK

- 4.1.5. A total of 22 responses were received via the online feedback questionnaire and four separate email responses were received. A total of three people also called the consultation phone line. A breakdown of the comments received is set out below.
- 4.1.6. One of the respondents did agree with the principle of development, noting they recognised the need for more family housing in this part of Rochdale. However, 17 of the 22 online responses did not agree that more family housing is needed in Castleton.

The following points were raised by respondents, as summarised in the headings below:

Lack of Social Infrastructure

- 4.1.7. A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the proposed development has been carried out and forms part of the application submission. The HIA evaluates the health impacts of the scheme and does also look at capacity of existing social infrastructure in the surrounding area.
- 4.1.8. The assessments carried out as part of the HIA revealed that all three GP surgeries within 1.6km of the site are accepting new NHS patients. Whilst two are only taking patients from a defined catchment area, the third does not have any catchment areas for accepting new patients.
- 4.1.9. With regards to the two dentist practices in 1.6km, both of these are only accepting new private patients; which unfortunately reflects the current position nationally.
- 4.1.10. In terms of capacity in local schools, the HIA found that for primary schools within 1 mile of the site schools are slightly over capacity. We are aware that in response to a shortage of primary school places across Castleton, a new primary school is being delivered as part of development proposals at the former Car Craft Site on Nixon Street.
- 4.1.11. For secondary schools, 17 are located within a 3-mile radius and overall, there is considerable capacity within secondary schools across this area.
- 4.1.12. Furthermore, as part of accessing the application, impacts of development on local services and facilities such as schools, GPs and the highway network will be reviewed and commented upon by the LPA and their statutory consultees. Therefore, if necessary further discussions on these matters can take place during the determination period.

Traffic and Access

- 4.1.13. An updated Transport Assessment and Travel Plan have been prepared to support this application. The updated assessments conclude that the impacts from the proposed development on the nearby junctions assessed, will be minimal and cannot be considered as severe. Therefore, there is no reason on highways or transport grounds as to why the development proposals should not be granted planning permission.
- 4.1.14. The site is also located in a highly sustainable location, therefore, providing good access to alternative modes of travel, offering a real opportunity to maximise nearby public transport. This will be encouraged through a Travel Plan for the site. Pedestrian and cycle connections will also be maximised and enhanced, with the application providing a contribution to the enhancement of Cripplegate Lane which forms part of the Bee Cycle Network.
- 4.1.15. In terms of access, as part of providing vehicle access from Cowm Top, a financial contribution is being made which will go towards provision of traffic-calming and drainage improvements on the bottom part of Cowm Top meaning it can then be adopted by the Council.
- 4.1.16. A second emergency access will be available from Trows Lane. This will be of a sufficient standard to enable access by emergency vehicles, but it will be controlled to ensure other private vehicles can't use this access. It will, however, provide continued pedestrian and cycle access.

Overlooking distances / privacy on neighbouring homes in Leander Drive

- 4.1.17. There is a significant buffer of circa 75m between the proposed dwellings and the rear boundaries of properties along Leander Drive; back to back distance requirements are usually only 21m. This will provide a substantial separation distance and prevent any issues of overlooking/lack of privacy.
- 4.1.18. The buffer between the proposed dwellings and Leander Drive has to remain free from any substantial built development due to the presence of a high-pressure gas main. Therefore, in response, this part of the site is being dedicated to POS and will form a linear park stretching the length of the site. This area will be a shared resource between the new and existing communities.

Loss of wildlife

- 4.1.19. An Ecological Assessment has been carried out and forms part of the planning application submission pack.
- 4.1.20. It concluded that the amenity grassland, modified neutral grassland, scrub, bracken and tall ruderal habitats within the site itself are ubiquitous and have relatively low ecological value. The marshy grassland and hedgerows are species-poor, and the hedgerows are largely defunct. In response, a Landscaping Strategy has been prepared, which will be supplemented with detailed planting plans, to show how open spaces can provide opportunities for ecological enhancements, including the provision of two attenuation ponds.
- 4.1.21. Ecological mitigation and enhancements are also set out in the Ecological Assessment and recommend:
- A sensitive lighting scheme to avoid indirect impacts of lighting on nocturnal and crepuscular species;
 - Provision of a bird nest box scheme, bat boxes and bug hotels;
 - In newly created planting area use locally native plant species where possible;
 - For new grassland planting wildflower seed mixes could be used which are favourable to invertebrates; and
 - Enhance the attenuation areas to include native planting.
- 4.1.22. The incorporation of these features will encourage the existing flora and fauna of the area to become established after development has been completed which will ensure the continuity of native species of the area is maintained and preserved.

There are sufficient brownfield sites in Rochdale to accommodate new housing

- 4.1.23. Section 6 of this Planning Statement, in response to addressing the Protected Open Land policy (POL) (G5) demonstrates that there are no other brownfield sites which are capable of meeting the current housing needs of Castleton. There is a specific focus on seeking to deliver new, high quality family housing in the area including a range of a larger properties. The brownfield sites are unable to provide the range and mix of housing styles, sizes, types of housing as this site can, with most being focused on higher density apartment style accommodation.
- 4.1.24. As explained further in section 6, it is a case of looking at both the quantitative and qualitative housing needs to ensure that the true needs of the local area are being considered, this includes the type of housing the site is able to deliver. It is important to ensure that the right type of housing is provided on the right sites so that sustainable communities can develop, and the wide mix of housing needs is met.

Noise and Air Pollution

- 4.1.25. An addendum to the Air Quality Impact Assessment has been prepared and submitted with this application. This builds upon the Air Quality Assessment already carried out at the site which was submitted in support of the outline planning application at the site. Both reports conclude that through incorporating standard dust mitigation measures during construction works, to be implemented as part of a Construction Management Plan which can be secured by a suitable worded condition, no unacceptable impacts on human health, amenity or ecology receptors have been identified.
- 4.1.26. The Construction Management Plan would also outline the parameters within which building operations on site can be conducted, which will also cover potential noise sources and how impacts during construction can be kept to a minimum.

Who maintains the POS

- 4.1.27. The POS will be maintained by a resident's management company.

SUMMARY

- 4.1.28. This Statement of Community Involvement has demonstrated that extensive pre-application consultation and engagement has taken place in the lead up to submitting the planning application. This has included Council Officers, Ward Councillors and the local community.
- 4.1.29. We would like to thank those people who took the time to respond. This engagement and consultation has been helpful and the feedback received has been considered as the proposed site layout has evolved. Most notably a key difference has been the introduction of a green spine through the centre of the scheme, which was incorporated in response to feedback from Council Officer in relation to ensuring green spaces are fully integrated and dispersed throughout the scheme.
- 4.1.30. Overall, the application accords with the approach to pre-application consultation and has been prepared in the context of the NPPF, Localism Act and Rochdale's SCI.



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