



# Planning Statement

## Redevelopment of former Garrison Church for 12 new homes



Barratt David Wilson Homes  
Planning Statement  
March 2021

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Barratt David Wilson Homes (BDW) to accompany the full planning submission for residential re-development on part of the site of the former Garrison Church of St George, as indicated in the figure below.

**Figure 1.1: Site location**



- 1.2 The application seeks approval for 12 residential dwellings with parking, access and landscaping. Under this application, permission is formally sought on a 'policy compliant' basis whereby 4 of the 12 are provided as affordable units.
- 1.3 However, there is an agreement in place between BDW, Homes England and Sage (a housing association) which will ultimately result in a 100% affordable scheme. This will be secured by the Section 106 Agreement corresponding to the planning permission sought.

## 2 Surroundings and planning background

- 2.1 The Parish of Whitehill is made up of the communities of Whitehill & Bordon. It lies in the North east corner of East Hampshire and is situated on the A325 midway between Farnham in the north and Petersfield in the south and is close to Guildford, Portsmouth and Basingstoke and is a gateway to the South Downs National Park. The garrison town of Whitehill & Bordon has a strong identity borne out of its attractive wooded landscape context. The town's military sites are characterised by a formal street and building structure punctuated by well-defined areas of formal open space.
- 2.2 As shown in Figure 2.1, the site of the former Garrison Church is wrapped the west, north and east by the consented New Heritage development scheme, which comprises a re-development of the Louisberg Barracks and forms part of the wider Whitehill and Bordon Masterplan (2012). This received Reserved Matters permission in 2016 and development of 500 consented dwellings is now nearing completion.

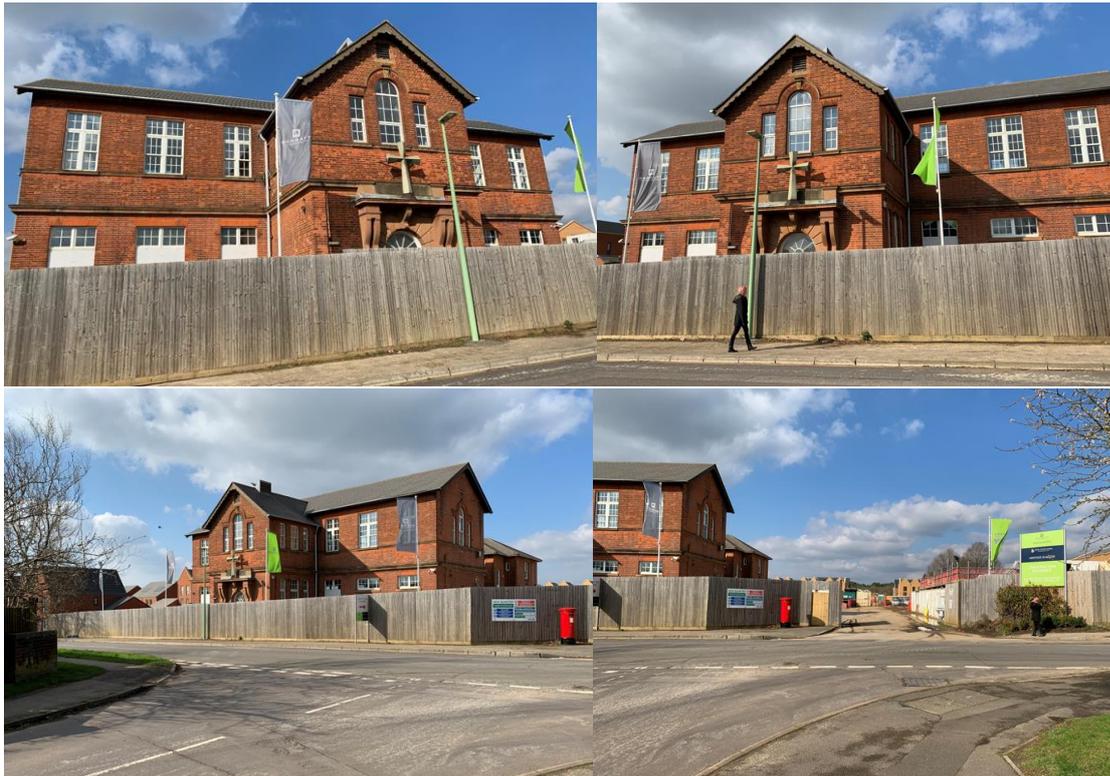
**Figure 2.1: Application site in the context of the approved Louisberg Barracks development**



### 3 The application site

3.1 The site is currently occupied by a large red brick building, dating back to 1906, known as the Garrison Church of St George, formerly used as a church in connection with the Louisburg Barracks. As indicated in the photographs below, its most recent use has been as a site office for the new development. This was regularised by a previous application, ref. 56732<sup>1</sup>

#### Views of the former Garrison Church from Station Road



#### Views from within the application site



<sup>1</sup> [https://planningpublicaccess.easthants.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=EHANT\\_DCAPR\\_237774](https://planningpublicaccess.easthants.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=EHANT_DCAPR_237774)

**Views from within the application site**



3.2 The development is now drawing towards completion, and hence in the near future there will be no requirement for the site office, such that the site would (by default) become vacant.

## 4 Pre-application engagement and issues arising

4.1 Pre-application advice was sought in January 2020 regarding the principle of re-development of the former Garrison Church site, access from Station Road, parking, housing mix, and general layout of a 100% affordable scheme of 12 residential dwellings. The provisional layout is shown below.

**Figure 4.1: Provisional layout at pre-application stage**



4.2 The pre-app layout was on the basis of:

- 4x 2-bed houses
- 6x 3-bed houses
- 2x 4-bed houses

4.3 Feedback was received in March 2020 and has informed the present application. Key issues raised are outlined below.

#### **a. Principle of demolition**

##### 4.4 Pre-application advice indicated that:

*'Whilst not listed, the building was built in 1906 and was one of the early brick built buildings for the Garrison. There will be concerns regarding the demolition of what is a non designated heritage asset. The Council's Conservation Officer has raised concerns and will raise an objection to any application to demolish the building. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF is relevant and a judgment upon the loss of the heritage asset will need to be weighed up and taken into account when considering any application. As a consequence, you will need to appraise the feasibility of converting the building rather than demolishing, and justify demolition if that is the only measure you consider to be viable.'*

##### 4.5 It is acknowledged that there is some historic interest in the building, however, conservation is only one part of a balanced planning judgment that the NPPF requires, bearing in mind the benefits of the proposed development. We note that:

(a) This advice exceeds the requirements set out in national planning policy. Although Paragraph 195 of the NPPF requires this sequential approach in relation to designated heritage assets, there is no such requirement in relation to 'non-designated' heritage assets (NDHA) where it is necessary only to take their significance into account in planning decisions. This building is not listed, nor locally listed, albeit East Hampshire District Council and/or Historic England could have elected to pursue such a designation, if the evidence or status warranted.

(b) Planning officers have suggested that if the former church had been included within the original planning application, being replaced with appropriate housing, the likely outcome would have been approval since other NDHAs were demolished.

(c) Similarly, the approval of the wider redevelopment provides a precedent.

##### 4.6 The pre-application advice continues:

*'As a footnote, the military heritage of the site was a significant debating point when determining the wider redevelopment of Louisburg Barracks and there is clearly sentimental value to the building's retention and therefore cannot be understated in the consideration of potential redevelopment of the site. If the building were to be demolished appropriate (photographic) recording will need to be undertaken.'*

##### 4.7 This is acknowledged and we would envisage that a comprehensive photographic record would be undertaken and submitted to the authority prior to demolition, with the specification of this being agreed through the planning process. This record would be published and made available as appropriate.

##### 4.8 There has been an enquiry to Homes England from the Town Council asking for the removal and preservation of the cross displayed on the front of the building.

**Figure 4.2: Cross to be preserved and given to the Town Council**



**b. Use as a community facility**

4.9 Pre-application advice had sought a marketing exercise to establish whether another community use could be made of the site. This was on the basis of Local Plan policy CP16, and the standpoint that the existing building is a community facility that would be lost. BDW have highlighted that:

- (a) The facility was integral to the Louisberg Barracks which no longer exists, and the building has not served as a community facility in years. Hence the 'loss' has already occurred.
- (b) Albeit we have not undertaken a marketing exercise, had we done so, it could not have been relied upon in the circumstances of the pandemic. Nor would it be appropriate to wait until an adequate level of normalcy has been reached (an indeterminate period), and then undertake marketing for 12 months before then submitting an application. This would be an unjustified and substantial delay to progressing with much-needed housing.
- (c) There are numerous alternatives in the area, as has most recently been demonstrated by a Community Facilities Study published by EHDC in 2021<sup>2</sup>. An excerpt of this is shown below.

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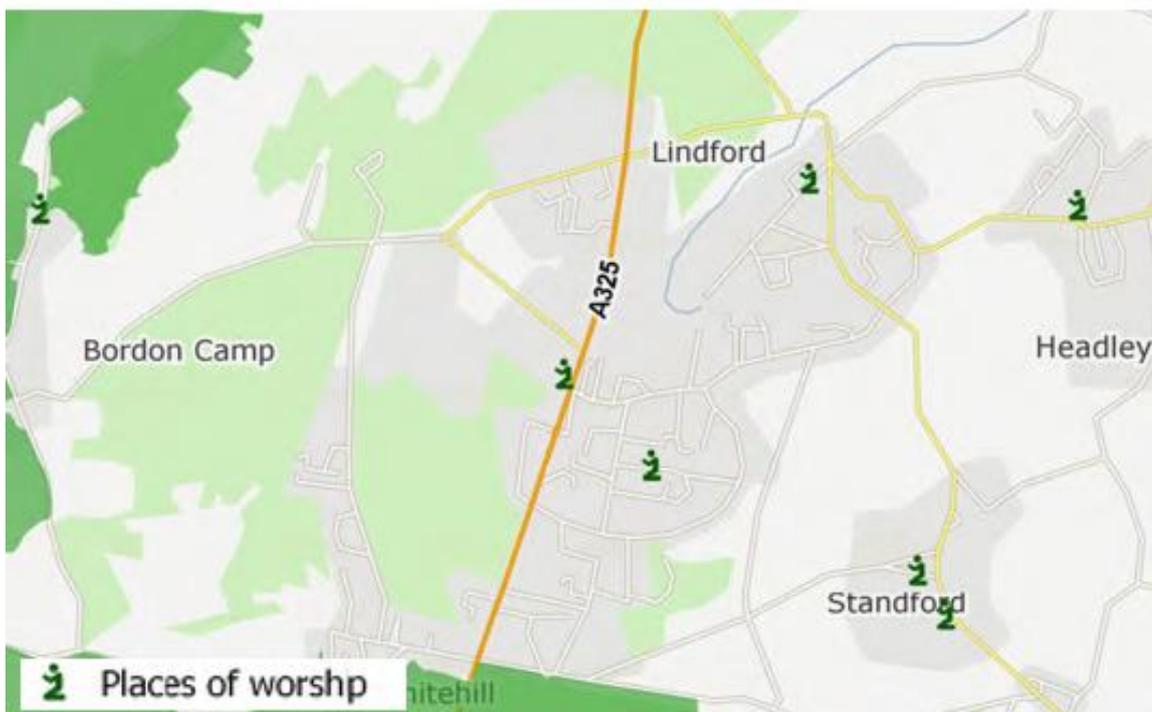
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/infrastructure-evidence-base-studies>

Of particular note is the Phoenix Theatre and Arts Centre, located no more than 150m to the east of the site along Station road.

**Figure 4.3 – meeting places in the Bordon Area (EHDC, 2021)**



**Figure 4.4 – places of worship in the Bordon Area (EHDC, 2021)**



**Table 4.1 – list of community facilities in the Bordon area (EHDC, 2021)**

Facility	Address	Postcode
The Kingsley Centre	Main Road, Kingsley, Bordon	GU35 9ND
St Nicholas Chapel	Kingsley	GU35 9NW
Forest Community Centre	Pinehill Road, Bordon	GU35 0BS
Whitehill Village Hall	Sutton Field, Whitehill	GU35 9BW
Phoenix Theatre & Arts Centre	Barbados House, Station Road, Bordon	GU35 0LR
Bordons Working Mens Club	Alma Road, Bordon	GU35 0DH
Farminer Hall	High Street, Bordon	GU35 0AX
Café 1759	Chieftain House, Challenger Place, Bordon	GU35 0FP
Café Hogmoor & Beehive Education Room	Hogmoor Inclosure, Hogmoor Road, Whitehill	GU35 9HN
BOSC Cricket Club Pavilion	Bolley Avenue, Bordon	GU35 9HG
St Marks Church	Pinehill Road, Bordon	GU35 0BS
Oakmoor School	Budds Lane, Bordon	GU35 0JB.

4.10 In view of all the above we do not believe there is any shortage in community facilities within and around Bordon, nor would the application proposed result in any 'loss'. Hence there is no justification to withhold planning permission for this site on the basis of provision of community facilities.

### **c. Housing mix**

4.11 Feedback was received from the Housing Officer on the provisional mix which indicated that:

- Demand for affordable four bed units is low in the district.
- Demand is highest for 2 bed houses but only 4 are offered.
- If 12 units could be accommodated a preferred mix would be to avoid 4-bed units and include 2-bed units instead.

4.12 In response to this an adjustment to the proposed mix has been made favouring smaller units.

### **d. Design matters**

4.13 Various design issues were raised which are outlined below along with our response:

- Support was indicated for the continuation of the properties fronting onto Station Road. This is agreed and provides beneficial continuity and enclosure.
- Concerns were raised over the parking layout, with the Council's adopted parking standards. Based upon the initially proposed mix, a deficit of 4 parking spaces was identified. This has since been remedied in the submission scheme by combination of providing smaller units, and revising the total number of spaces.
- Concerns were raised over parking spaces which jutted into the rear gardens of plots 7 and 8 providing inadequate amenity for those properties. This has been addressed in the revised proposals with gardens no longer having parking spaces 'jut in'.
- Concerns were raised over parking location, in respect of manoeuvring and safety. This has been reviewed through design and tracking work has been undertaken by our consultant highway engineers, with drawings appended to this application.
- Concerns were raised over amenity implications on plots within the adjoining recently-built development to the north. However, this has been assessed in relation to standoff distances and shadowing and is considered acceptable.

4.14 It was suggested by EHDC that overall in combination, 12 units may be too high for the site, however we believe that the revised designs presented in this scheme overcome the concerns.

## 5 Proposed development

5.1 This application proposes the following key components:

- Demolition of the existing building;
- Erect 12 no. residential dwellings (comprising a mix of two and three bed houses);
- 100% affordable homes (4 no. affordable homes within planning permission, 8 no. homes to become affordable by way of legal agreement);
- Landscaping;
- Access from Station Road;
- Private and visitor parking.

**Figure 5.1 Site Layout plan**



### Housing Mix

5.2 The proposals are set out on drawing 101 P1 which is attached to this submission. As shown, a total 12 dwellings are applied for, comprising the following mix:

	Two bed	Three bed	Total
Private	4	4	8 (66.6%)
Affordable	0	4	4 (33.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 (33.3%)</b>	<b>8 (66.6%)</b>	<b>12</b>

5.3 Four of the proposed units will be affordable homes, whilst the other eight will be subject to a Legal Agreement to become affordable homes, ultimately resulting in a 100% affordable scheme.

### Scale and appearance

5.4 All of the homes in this proposal will be 2 storey in height and are intended to

#### Figure 5.2 Excerpt from indicative elevations

*Please refer to separate drawings for full scaled version*



*Elevation facing southward to Station Road*



*Elevation facing eastwards viewed within the site*

### **Access and Parking**

- 5.5 Each dwelling will have 2 parking spaces. Access to plots 1, 2, 10, 11 and 12 will be via a short cul-de-sac from the existing access position. Direct street access from Station Road will be provided to plots 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. A total of 3 unallocated visitor parking spaces will be provided within the site.
- 5.6 Further reference should be made to the accompanying transport technical report (Paul Basham Associates).

### **Amenity**

- 5.7 As identified in the proposed layout, the dwellings will each benefit from private garden space with the development being softened by grass, hedging and ornamental trees.
- 5.8 The overall form and density is consistent with the surroundings, which have an urban character. Materials have been carefully selected to reflect existing adjacent development.

## 6 Planning policy considerations

### Local Plan

- 6.1 The site is located within an area covered by **Policy CSWB1** from the Joint Core Strategy 2014 (JCS), which relates to the **strategic allocation of Whitehill and Bordon**. As described in the officer's report to the previous application on the Church site;

*Policy CSWB1 is the key JCS policy that relates specifically to the strategic allocation and requires the new development to be '..designed to create a green town ..(that is) an exemplar of a modern sustainable community in terms of the places of work, schools, travel planning, promoting and supporting healthier lifestyles, provision of local services and sustainable use of resources.'*

*The background to the JCS originates with the 2012 Masterplan, which outlines the vision for the regeneration of the town and the way the infrastructure, including integrated transport and community facilities should be planned and delivered to ensure that development is properly co-ordinated and maximises the regeneration opportunities. The overall regeneration is proposed to follow the aspirations of the 2012 Masterplan, which proposed the construction of up to 4000 new homes, and the creation of 5500 jobs to be delivered over approximately 20 years.*

- 6.2 Other policies relating to housing which are relevant to this proposal include:

- **Policy CP2 (Spatial Strategy)** states that new development growth in the period up to 2028 will be directed to the "most sustainable and accessible locations in the District in accordance with the Spatial Strategy shown on the Key Diagram". Correspondingly, Bordon is identified as a key sustainable settlement. The policy also states that "new development will make the best use of previously developed land and buildings within existing built-up areas".
- **Policy CP10 (Spatial Strategy for Housing)** provides for a minimum of 10,060 dwellings in the period 2011 to 2028 across the plan area as a whole, with development at Bordon being the largest single contributor.
- **Policy CP11 (Housing Tenure, Type and Mix)** addresses housing requirements and the creation of sustainable communities, and states that new residential development will be required to "maximise the delivery of affordable housing".
- **Policy CP16 (Protection and Provision of Social Infrastructure)** suggests the loss of community facilities be resisted unless they are shown to be no longer required or viable.

### Principle

- 6.3 Consistent with the aims of Policies CSWB1, CP2 and CP10, as well as the overarching drive of the JCS to achieve sustainable residential development, the proposal will provide an additional 12 residential units within the Whitehill and Bordon strategic allocation area. The scheme is strongly supported by Policy CP11 in that the development will "maximise the delivery of affordable housing".

6.4 **CP16: Protection and Provision of Social Infrastructure** states:

*“Development proposing the change of use or loss of premises or land currently or last used for community facilities, public services, leisure and cultural uses will only be permitted where both the following criteria are met:*

- a) the facility is no longer required and alternative facilities are easily accessible for the community they are intended to serve; and*
- b) it can be demonstrated through a rigorous marketing exercise that the use is no longer viable, that all reasonable efforts have been made to retain it and that there is no alternative use that would provide a beneficial facility to the local community.”*

6.5 It is clear that criterion (a) is met, because;

- a. **Requirement:** The church was military in origin, being an integral part of the Louisburg Barracks, which are no longer present. Although the church was able to be used by civilian members of the public, its primary purpose/role has gone.
- b. **Alternatives:** There exists a diverse array of places of worship within Bordon and immediate surroundings, as outlined above

6.6 New evidence published by WHDC confirms there is no lack of provision of places of worship for the community as an alternative to the St George’s Garrison Church which has now been closed for several years. The former Garrison Church building is not listed as a community facility in the East Hampshire’s Community Facility Study 2021. Of particular note is the Phoenix Centre which is described as following on its website:

*“Converted from a former Edwardian school, The Phoenix is a thriving theatre and arts centre based in Whitehill and Bordon, Hampshire. Our intimate theatre space plays host to over 100 shows a year including comedy, drama, music and dance. As well as offering a wide variety of entertainment, we are a community arts agency able to place writers, artists, musicians, dancers and drama facilitators in a wide variety of community arts projects with schools, colleges and community groups. We have experience of working with groups of all ages, needs and abilities including those with physical and learning disabilities. The Phoenix Theatre & Arts Centre runs after school clubs and holiday activities for children and young people and can tailor a project to suit the particular needs of a group. In addition to this we work with a number of local schools providing drama activities to compliment the core curriculum.”*

6.7 Bearing in mind this and other alternatives, it is not considered there is any realistic prospect of securing a viable future community use of the former St Georges church, and insofar as there is any departure from the aims of policy CP16 this is substantially outweighed by the delivery of affordable housing. The Council have previously given indication that provided that the proposals will ultimately provide 100% affordable housing, they would positively consider a departure from planning policy on this site, and waive the requirement for a 12 month marketing period. This would also avoid introducing an entirely new and potentially competing use, very close to the Phoenix Theatre which is becoming a key local community facility.

6.8 Homes England have previously conducted surveys in relation to the condition of the existing building, and it is apparent that the costs associated with its conversion or refurbishment, for a Community use, are likely to be prohibitive. This adds additional justification for the proposed

re-use of the land for housing.

### **Parking SPD**

6.9 The adopted EHDC Vehicle Parking Standards SPD July 2018 has been used to inform the private and visitor parking numbers within the site. Accordingly, 2 private spaces have been provided for each of the two and three bed dwellings. 3 visitor spaces have been provided, consistent with the recommendation for 1 short stay space per 5 dwellings.

### **Planning obligation**

6.10 A confidential viability assessment has been provided with this application which demonstrates that the site is able to be delivered for affordable housing use taking into account reasonable costs of build, land, fees and profit. However, the site cannot sustain the provision of any additional s106 contributions. The site specific abnormal works costs combined with the relatively low affordable housing revenue prevent any additional costs being sustainable.

## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed development will contribute in a small but locally meaningful way to housing delivery in a sustainable location, and deliver a tenure and size of unit that is specifically required. Modest but important improvements have been made to the plans in light of pre-application advice received in March 2020.
- 7.2 The form, density, materials and overall appearance of the scheme will be consistent with surrounding development, responding to the character of the wider urban context and creating a high quality living environment.
- 7.3 Although the existing former church building has a residual element of historic interest, it is not designated and therefore can only be afforded a limited amount of weight in the decision making process. Likewise there is no realistic prospect, let alone public benefit, in seeking to convert the site into any kind of community facility. The principle of development should therefore be considered acceptable.
- 7.4 Hence the balance in these proposals is undoubtedly in favour of granting the proposals.