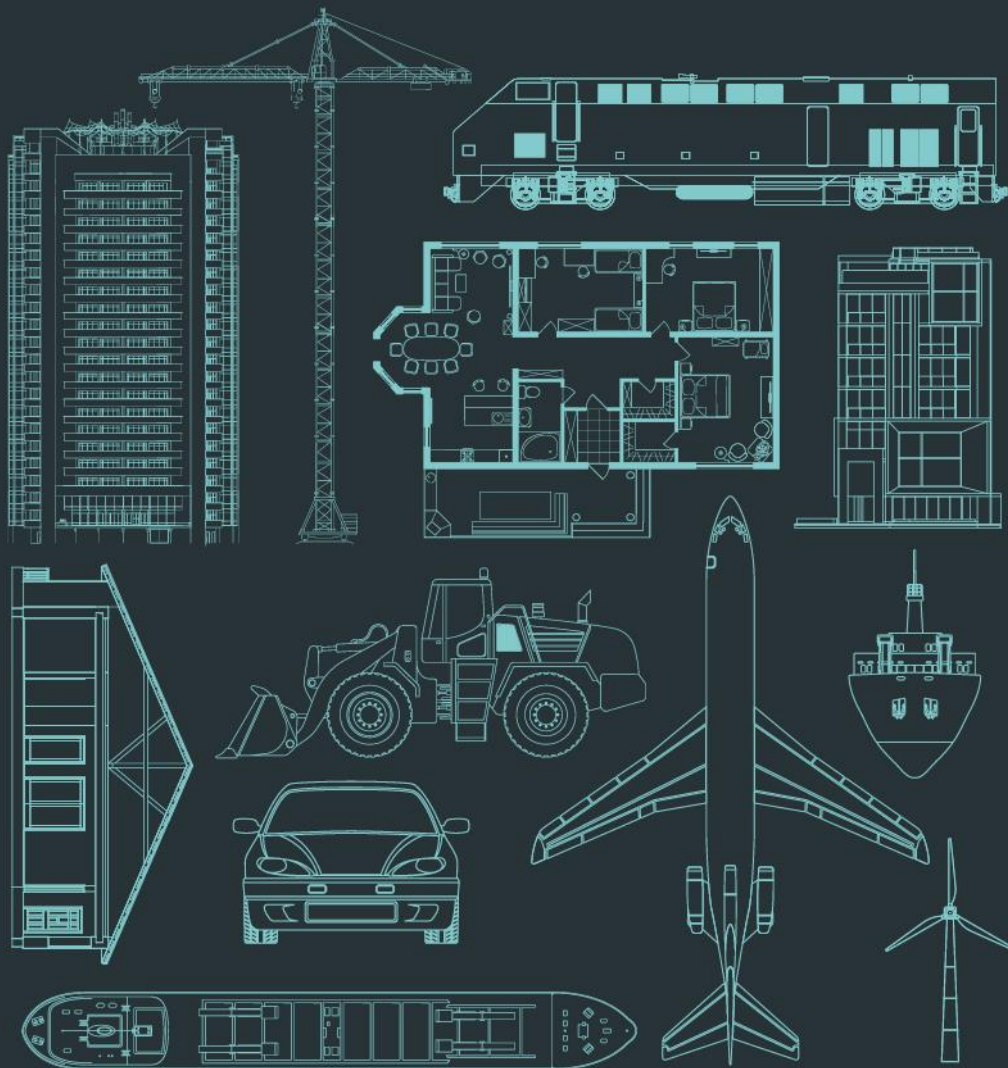


becg



Statement of Community Involvement

Bellair (Scotland) Ltd | Great Birchwood Country Park

December 2021

1 Executive Summary

BECG has been appointed by Bellair (Scotland) Ltd to undertake community and stakeholder consultation regarding proposals for the redevelopment of a former caravan park & camp site, Great Birchwood Country Park, in Lytham St. Annes.

Consultation with key stakeholders and those living and working in this area of the Fylde has been undertaken since project inception in March 2021. This has included meetings with relevant members & officers at Fylde Borough Council and a site open day in summer to which local ward councillors and the Fylde MP were invited. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the methodology for consulting nearby residents and businesses pre-application has focussed upon 'arms length' consultation methods, via direct mailing and a project website.

This document outlines in detail the scope of the pre-application consultation that has been undertaken by BECG on behalf of Bellair (Scotland) Ltd. It also details the responses which have been received through the official feedback mechanisms and how the application has sought to address concerns raised.

Responses to the consultation principally expressed concerns about the level of housing development taking place on the Fylde, though many respondents did agree that the Great Birchwood site was in need of redevelopment.

BECG will continue to update interested parties throughout the planning determination period on behalf of Bellair (Scotland) Ltd via local media and direct contact (where appropriate).



Indicative site layout for new homes at Great Birchwood Country Park

2 Background

2.1 Proposal site

The proposal site is the former camp site & caravan park, Great Birchwood Country Park, on Lytham Road between the village of Warton and the town of Lytham St. Annes. This area is a highly desirable part of the Fylde coast, with new homes constructed nearby proving popular.

The proposal site is in a highly sustainable location, on the main road between Warton and Lytham St. Annes, which is served by buses to Preston, Warton, Blackpool and St. Annes. Whilst located in the Green Belt, the site is previously developed and has extant permission for a high density development of caravan plots.



Entrance to Great Birchwood Country Park

2.2 Proposal

The proposals will deliver up to 62 high-quality family homes on a site incorporating generous green space and play & community facilities for new and existing residents.

The scheme will deliver:

- Up to 62 new high-quality family homes
- A 'stop off' area at the Lytham Road frontage for us by passing cyclists & walkers
- A play area for use by local children
- New planting and a green corridor running the length of the site
- Sustainable drainage features which will provide aquatic habitats for wildlife
- A contribution towards affordable housing in Fylde
- Green technologies including electric vehicle charging points and renewable energy

3 Stakeholder & Community Consultation

3.1 Statement of Community Involvement

Bellair (Scotland) Ltd agrees with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in July 2021, which states that “*early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties*” and that “*good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community*” (paragraph 39).

As such, a programme of consultation with key stakeholders and local residents.

Fylde Council adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in March 2020. The document contains guidelines for developers to follow when consulting on planning applications within the boundaries of the local authority.

The Great Birchwood proposals would be classed as a major application. For plans of this nature the Council strongly encourages applicants, not already required to do so by law, to carry out their own pre-application consultation.

The SCI states that the benefits of pre-application consultations can enable applicants to:

- Identify and so address problems before an application is submitted, and this may reduce the chance of refusal of planning permission;
- Prevent abortive work, as refinements to the proposal can be made at an early stage;
- Provide an opportunity to explain proposals to the community, reducing the potential for misconceived objections;
- Reduce the time and cost in obtaining a decision.

The scope of the consultation to be undertaken regarding Great Birchwood was recommended to Bellair (Scotland) Ltd by BECG, with the methodology reflecting the current limits to face-to-face engagement as a result of Coronavirus.

3.2 Contacting Statutory Bodies

Proposals for Great Birchwood County Park have been the subject of pre-application engagement with a number of stakeholders including Fylde Council & Lancashire County Council.

Officers at Fylde Council have been engaged in pre-application discussions throughout the application process. A formal pre-application advice request was submitted to the Council on 21st October 2020 with an initial residential scheme. Formal meetings were subsequently held with Fylde Council on 3rd December 2020 and 25th May 2021, where officers outlined the site's designation as previously developed land in the Green Belt. Initial views on highways were also engaged from officers.

In addition to the meetings with officers, proposals for Great Birchwood were presented to local councillors, the Member of Parliament for Fylde and representatives of Warton Town Council at a site open day on 23rd July 2021. Feedback on the proposals indicated general agreement that the site in its current form was in a poor state and that re-development would be welcome. There were differing views on the exact nature of any redevelopment but several councillors were in favour of seeing new homes constructed on the site.

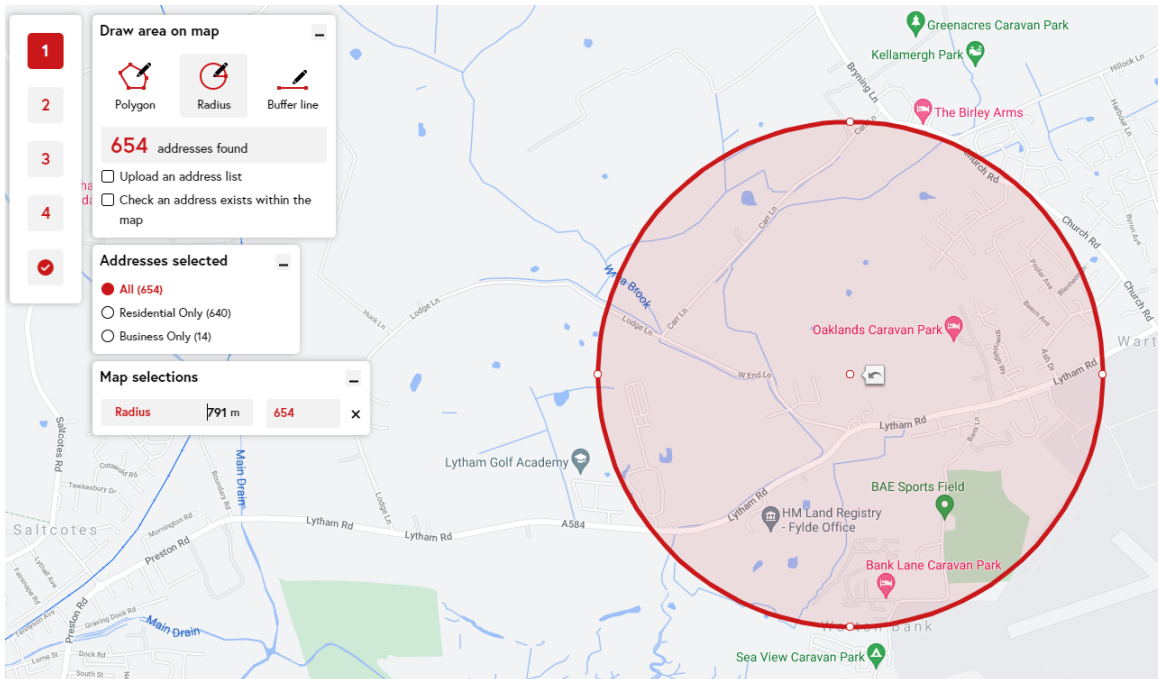
3.3 Community Newsletter

Prior to submission of the planning application for Great Birchwood, BECG launched a consultation process with people living and working close to the site and with residents of nearby Warton.

The consultation was launched via a direct mailing to approximately 650 residential and business addresses surrounding the site's location on Friday 19th November 2021. The mailing comprised a full-colour two-page A4 newsletter which describes what is being proposed for the site and explains how recipients can submit their views to the project team.

A copy of the newsletter was also distributed via email to Fylde MP Mark Menzies, local district & county councillors, members of Fylde Council's Planning Committee and the Leadership of Fylde Council.

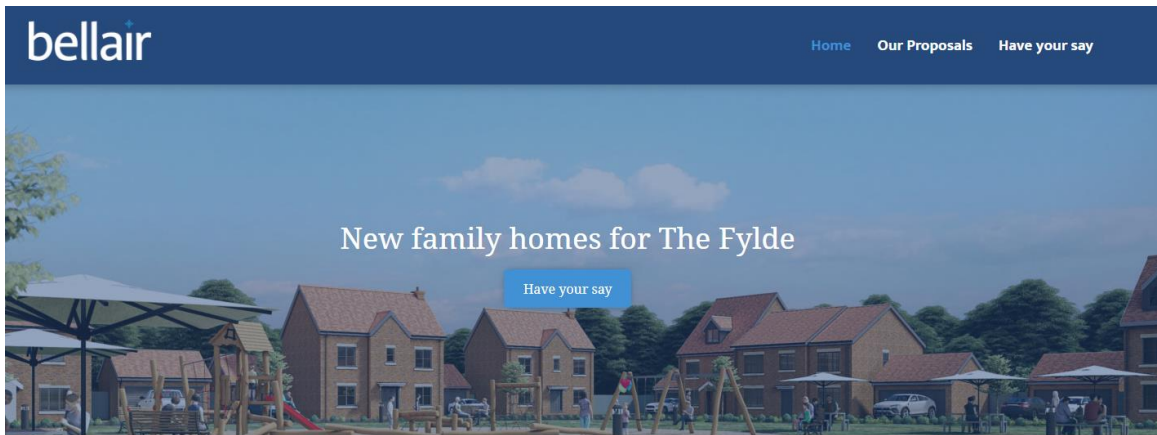
A copy of the newsletter can be found at **Appendix A**.



Delivery area for Great Birchwood newsletter

3.4 Great Birchwood Project Website

A bespoke consultation website has been developed for the Great Birchwood proposals, providing an overview of the plans and an online feedback form for people to register their views. Screenshots from the website (www.greatbirchwood.co.uk) are shown below:



Welcome

Great Birchwood Country Park is a former Caravan Park close to the village of Warton and the popular, Lancashire seaside resort of Lytham St. Anne's. The site has a long history of development and occupation, having originally been developed as a base for US Air Force personnel during the Second World War.

Whilst there is currently planning permission for more than 150 caravans at Great Birchwood, the site closed as a caravan park in 2016.

Bellair have acquired the former Caravan Park and are seeking to bring forward a development of much-needed family housing.

As a family-owned developer we have worked hard to ensure that our proposals are sympathetic to the surrounding countryside and re-integrate Great Birchwood into the local community.

Find out more about Great Birchwood, our plans and tell us what you think below.

History of Great Birchwood

Originally developed to accommodate US Air Force Personnel during the Second World War, Great Birchwood has been built on for more than half a century. The legacy of that original development is still present today, with roads, concrete hard standing and buildings present throughout the site.

Following the end of the war the site was re-developed in to a Caravan Park and became a popular holiday destination for many decades. In its heyday it was the largest Country & Western themed Caravan Park in Europe and played host to several big-name performers including Dr Hook & The Medicine Show.

With the growth of foreign travel the popularity of Great Birchwood declined with the Caravan Park ultimately closing in 2016. It was at this point that alternative uses for the site began being considered.



Previous proposals for redevelopment

In 2018 Fylde Council acknowledged that this previously developed site had no future as a Caravan Park and approved plans for 33 assisted living bungalows and a two-storey care home. However, attempts to find a developer to deliver the proposals were unsuccessful, with no potential provider able to make the scheme work financially.

Determined to find an alternative, sustainable use for Great Birchwood our thoughts then turned to other ways to bring this derelict site back in to use, and make it a part of the local community once again.

Redeveloping great Birchwood allows the site to be enhanced and for it to make a positive contribution to the surrounding area. By providing houses on an existing developed site, it also reduces pressure to find houses on Greenfield land.

Our Proposals

As a privately-owned, family-run business Bellair can have a focus on quality and sustainability in a way that large, high-volume housebuilders arguably cannot. Here at Great Birchwood that means we are proposing a high-quality, low-density development of no more than 62 new homes.

Due to the low density of the development each new home will come with generous, private outside space and the site itself will retain quality open space for use by new residents and the wider community.

We also intend to integrate any development at Great Birchwood in to the community by providing community facilities at the frontage, enhancing transport infrastructure and investing in retaining and improving the environmental features and biodiversity of the site.

[Find out more](#)



Next steps

We intend to submit an outline planning application to Fylde Council by the end of 2021. If approved, we will work partner with a specialist housebuilder to deliver our vision.

Between now and then we want you to have your say on our proposals. Please fill in our online form with your views.

[Have your say](#)

3.5 Media Coverage

To further promote the consultation a press release launching the consultation website and announcing the planning submission was distributed to *The Blackpool Gazette*, *The Lytham St. Annes Express*, *Place North West*, *Insider Media* & *The Business Desk* on 18th November 2021.

The press release received the following pieces of coverage, all of which publicised the details of the scheme and how people could participate in the consultation:

- *Place North West* (19.11.21):
<https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/bellair-seeks-views-on-lytham-scheme/>
- *Lytham St. Annes Express* (19.11.21)
<https://www.lythamstannesexpress.co.uk/news/environment/have-your-say-on-homes-plan-for-former-camp-site-and-music-venue-3464136>
- *Blackpool Gazette* (19.11.21):
<https://www.blackpoolgazette.co.uk/news/environment/have-your-say-on-homes-plan-for-former-camp-site-and-music-venue-3464136>

4 Feedback Received

This section contains a summary of the feedback received in response to the consultation by **Wednesday 1st December 2021**. The feedback was submitted via a combination of the project website and the reply slips accompanying the newsletter drop. No telephone enquiries were received by BECG. The questions asked were the same on both the online form & newsletter reply slip.

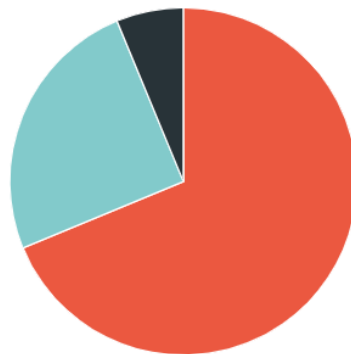
4.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire asked three specific questions before providing an opportunity for people to submit their own comments as free text.

Below is a breakdown of the responses to the specific questions featured on the feedback forms:

Would you like to see this derelict site redeveloped?

Total Responses	Yes	No	Unsure / Blank
48	33	12	3
100%	69%	25%	6%

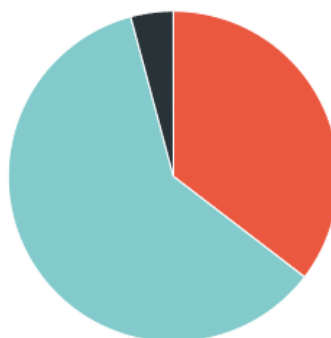


Feedback / Answers
● Yes ● No ● Not sure

The responses to potential redevelopment indicated that people were strongly in favour of seeing a new use for the site. This is encouraging and shows that there is recognition that Great Birchwood, in its current state, is not an asset to the area and alternative uses for the site would be much better.

Do you agree with building new homes on previously developed sites like this one?

Total Responses	Yes	No	Unsure / Blank
48	17	29	2
100%	35%	60%	5%



Feedback / Answers
● Yes ● No ● Not sure

There is a significant minority of people that responded positively to the question of whether homes should be built on previously developed sites such as Great Birchwood Country Park. Whilst responses to this question may suggest some scepticism about new homes being the best way of redeveloping Great Birchwood Country Park, there are no other viable options for bringing this site back in to use.

Are you, or anybody you know, currently looking for a home?

Total Responses	Yes	No	Unsure / Blank
48	8	33	7
100%	35%	60%	5%



Feedback / Answers
● Yes ● No ● Not sure

Bellair (Scotland) Ltd is encouraged that responses to this question did identify demand for housing in the area. Whilst the number of people expressing an interest in new housing was relatively low, the fact that demand was identified at this early stage of the planning process suggests that when further detail is provided at reserved matters stage, additional interest will be received.

4.2 Summary of comments

In addition to the questions, for which the results are displayed above, respondents had the opportunity to submit additional comments as free text. The majority of additional comments were left by those who indicated their opposition to development in earlier questions, with those who responded positively in earlier questions leaving the comments section blank.

Principally these comments focussed on the perceived impact on infrastructure, such as highways and public services, that new homes would have. These concerns have been addressed within the outline planning application.

5 Response to Feedback

Bellair (Scotland) Ltd is encouraged that there is recognition from stakeholders and the local community that Great Birchwood Country Park should be redeveloped to make the most of a previously developed site. It is clear that the community recognises Great Birchwood Country Park as a site that is in need of redevelopment.

Whilst there is some disagreement about the proposed new use for Great Birchwood Country Park, the only viable way to redevelop the site and bring it back into use is through the delivery of a modest amount of family homes.

The project team has spent a considerable amount of time working with key stakeholders to ensure that our plans are sympathetic to the surrounding Lancashire countryside. This is demonstrated through the low density of proposed development, the incorporation of generous open space with each property and the inclusion of green & blue infrastructure that will retain or create wildlife habitats.

Those who have been unable to offer their support to the proposals express concerns about the number of homes being constructed in Fylde more generally. Whilst this is a legitimate concern, the site's status as a piece of previously developed land means that construction here can reduce the pressure to construct new homes on Green Belt and undeveloped sites to help meet Fylde's housing needs now and in the future. Similarly, the concerns about traffic and a perceived lack of amenities for new residents must be set against the context of the site having extant permission for a high-density development of more than 150 caravans.

Beyond the construction of new homes Bellair believe that the proposed re-development of this site would bring a range of other benefits compared to the current development and that which has planning permission. These include improvements to biodiversity, a financial contribution towards off site affordable homes and community facilities at the Lytham Road frontage to provide a safe stop-off point for pedestrians and passing cyclists.

In summary, the proposals for Great Birchwood Country Park offer a wide range of benefits for Fylde. They make a contribution towards meeting local housing need, including for affordable homes, and bring a derelict site back in to use in a way that is much more sympathetic to the surrounding countryside than the use which has extant permission.

6 Ongoing Community Engagement

6.1 On-going communications

Given the interest shown by residents and stakeholders, BECG will ensure information continually flows through existing channels to all interested parties throughout the determination period.

The project website & email address will remain open with the project team able to respond to queries quickly and accurately.

6.2 Liaison with Fylde Council

We look forward to continuing to work positively with both officers and members of Fylde Borough Council to ensure an efficient path through the determination period.

This includes providing timely responses to requests for information from the planning department, working with supporters to make their views known and providing relevant information to members of the Planning Committee when they consider the planning application.

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Copy of the consultation newsletter



Great Birchwood Country Park is a former Caravan Park close to the village of Warton and the popular seaside resort of Lytham St. Anne's.

Once a popular holiday destination for people from all over the north, it closed to the public in 2016. Disused, the site is littered with dilapidated buildings and concrete hard standing from where caravans previously stood.

Bellair property want to make this site loved once again by re-developing it into a low-density development of high-quality family homes that draw inspiration from the surrounding countryside.



Site History

Great Birchwood Country Park has a long history of development, having originally been used as a base for US Air Force personnel during WWII.

At the end of the war, it became a caravan park with planning permission for more than 150 caravans. The site ultimately closed in 2016 and has fallen into disrepair.

Outline planning permission for 33 assisted-living bungalows and a care home was granted in 2018, however these proposals have been found to be unviable.

Bellair believe that a development of new homes will provide a sustainable future for this previously developed site. We intend to submit a planning application by the end of 2021.





Our Proposals

We want to bring forward a low-density housing development of no more than 62 much-needed family homes on this previously developed site. Our plans will be sympathetic to the surrounding countryside and, by building here, will reduce the pressure for development in other parts of Fylde.

By enhancing the wildlife habitats already present on site, creating new public open spaces and providing community facilities on the Lytham Road frontage our plans will make this unloved area an asset to the community once again.

Incorporating a range of sustainable features and making an allowance for affordable housing, the development will be compliant with ambitious local and national targets on sustainability and housing need.

Truly Sustainable Development

Our proposals represent a significant improvement compared to the current condition of the site.

To enhance biodiversity existing water features will be retained, new trees will be planted and important hedgerow habitats surrounding the site will be protected.

The homes themselves will be sustainable, incorporating renewable energy measures, such as solar photovoltaics and electric vehicle charging points.



Key features

- No more than 62 high-quality homes
- Be sympathetic to the surrounding countryside
- Generous landscaping and new areas of public open space
- Reduce the pressure for development in other parts of Fylde
- Provide a sustainable use for a previously developed site
- Deliver housing for Fylde in accordance with local policy

Find out more and give your feedback online

If you would like more information or have any questions you can find out more by visiting www.greatbirchwood.co.uk.

If you are interested in the homes that could be built, you can also leave your details on our online portal for consideration.

We want to hear from you

Provide your feedback & comments on the enclosed FREEPOST reply slip, or contact the project team on 0800 298 7040 feedback@consultation-online.co.uk

Please submit your views by **Friday 3rd December** to ensure they can be considered in plenty of time.