

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In relation to

Land at

PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON, SOLIHULL

Proposed Residential Development by

BARWOOD DEVELOPMENT SECURITIES LIMITED

12 October 2023

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Barwood Development Securities Limited (hereafter known as Barwood Land) has prepared and submitted an outline planning application in respect of land at Pheasant Oak Farm, Waste Lane, Balsall Common (referred to as the Site).
- 1.2 This outline planning application seeks to secure approval for the following description of development:

“Outline application for residential development (up to 250 homes, including 40% affordable) with vehicular access off Waste Lane; demolition of existing buildings/structures; associated landscaping and new public open spaces; community growing area/orchard; and enhancement to Millennium Way through the Site.”

- 1.3 This document is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which accompanies the outline application submission. It explains the steps taken by Barwood Land to engage with the local community, local planning authority and other key stakeholders during the formulation of the application proposals.
- 1.4 Barwood Land recognises the importance of effective community engagement which often can result in better schemes being presented to local planning authorities. Barwood Land is grateful to those members of the local community at Balsall Common, ward councillors, parish councillors and planning authority officers who have contributed to the development of this scheme and have positively influenced the final form of the application proposals.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that it is important there is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the planning process. It 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.¹
- 2.2 At a local level Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) published a Statement of Community Involvement in February 2007. Whilst much of this document outlines how the Council will interact and engage with local communities on planning matters, it also provides some guidance in relation to engagement by applicants.

¹ NPPF para 39

- 2.3 The policy statement notes that there is no statutory requirement for community and stakeholder involvement at the pre-application stage, though the Government encourages applicants to involve the wider community and this is supported. There is therefore an expectation on the part of SMBC that developers for major proposals seek to involve the wider community at a pre-application stage.
- 2.4 Table 6 of the document outlines various scales of development and describes the type of community involvement which will normally be expected by SMBC in each case. The current application proposals fall within the large scale housing (50 plus dwellings) category, which suggests the following types of engagement:
- Notify the owners/occupiers of neighbouring sites and allow a period for comment
 - Contact stakeholder bodies such as the Environment Agency, Highways Agency and other consultees to ascertain any specific requirements
 - Contact ward councillors, parish/town council and local amenity societies and/or attend meetings and allow time for comment
 - Consider holder public exhibitions/drop-in sessions, public meetings and providing a newsletter to keep people up to date with the progress of the scheme
- 2.5 Although this list is not intended to be prescriptive, Barwood Land have followed best practice and conducted a pre-application/community engagement exercise which comfortably meets and exceeds these levels of involvement. The actual engagement undertaken is described more fully below.

3.0 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING PROCESS BY BARWOOD LAND

- 3.1 It is worth noting at the outset that, before embarking on their pre-application engagement, Barwood Land has actively participated in the forward planning for Solihull Borough through active participation in the Local Plan Review (LPR) preparation process.
- 3.2 This included production of a 'Vision' document to present the Site's sustainability credentials and demonstrate its suitability for residential development, at the time when SMBC was considering which would be the most appropriate site to allocate for housing development in the new local plan. Effective engagement

with SMBC officers took place therefore at an early stage of the Plan's preparation.

- 3.3 Subsequently Barwood Land appeared, through its professional advisers, at various sessions of the Local Plan Examination, including the submission of written evidence and prepared an indicative masterplan demonstrating the deliverability of the Site and its potential housing yield. This was against the background of SMBC having identified the Site as draft allocation BC4 in the LPR. Thus the process of presenting the Site to the examining Inspectors was effectively a collaborative approach.
- 3.4 Although the LPR Examination is currently paused, as set out in the Supporting Planning Statement accompanying Barwood Land's application, the Inspectors have expressly endorsed the Council's overarching housing strategy, including this site allocation, as one which is sound and thus there is a positive context in which these application proposals are being brought forward now.

Pre-Application Work with SMBC

- 3.5 Barwood Land prepared a detailed and comprehensive pre-application submission document to ensure effective engagement with a wide range of officers representing a cross section of disciplines, as part of a formal pre-application process in late 2022. A virtual meeting with officers took place in November 2022, which was followed up by a detailed pre-application advice letter from SMBC dated 2 December 2022.
- 3.6 The advice set out in this pre-application letter has guided the applicant's approach to scheme development subsequently.
- 3.7 Outside of this meeting, members of Barwood Land's professional team have engaged separately with key officers to discuss matters such as public open space, landscape/visual, heritage, transportation, policy and other similar matters, and so there has been a continuing dialogue during the design development process.

Engagement with Local Ward Councillors/Berkswell Parish Council Members

- 3.8 At an early stage in the preparation of their indicative plans for the Site, Barwood Land reached out to local ward councillors and representatives of Berkswell Parish Council, in whose area the application site is situated. This led to a meeting held in Berkswell Village on 10 November 2022 when members of the project team presented the proposals informally to local councillors, and responded to questions raised. Feedback from this initial session was taken into account during the subsequent design development process.

Public Exhibition

- 3.9 Once Barwood Land had refined the scheme proposals to a suitable level, a more wide-ranging public engagement exercise was instigated. Contact with the ward/parish councillors was renewed, and a direct circulation to some 2000 addresses in Balsall Common was arranged to notify the local community of the emerging proposals, and the fact that Barwood Land were interested in their comments and feedback.
- 3.10 There were two main opportunities for interested parties to view the draft proposals:
- A 'virtual exhibition' which was hosted online and which ran between 9 May and 2 June 2023
 - An 'in-person' physical public exhibition held at Balsall Common Village Hall on Saturday 20th May 2023
- 3.11 Copies of the exhibition boards which were available at both events are at Appendix A. At the physical exhibition members of Barwood Land's professional design team were on hand to answer questions raised by the local community.
- 3.12 The public exhibition was attended by a number of ward/parish councillors (from both Berkswell and Balsall Parish Councils) as well as local residents and proprietors of local businesses. In all around 100 people attended during the day. Physical feedback forms were available in the Hall for attendees to complete, or alternatively an online form could be completed and submitted via the consultation portal.
- 3.13 In all a total of 43 consultation forms were returned, the main themes of which are summarised in the following section of this SCI.
- 3.14 Subsequent to the virtual/public exhibition stage of the process, and following Barwood Land's amendment of the scheme proposals in the light of this, invitations were extended to local ward councillors and both parish councils to receive a further briefing by Barwood's professional team members, to explain the changes made prior to the application being submitted.
- 3.15 A further virtual meeting took place with Ward councillors Andrew Burrow and Tony Diccico on 24 August 2023 to brief them on the revised proposals. An invitation for either an in person presentation or virtual meeting was also extended to members of Berkswell and Balsall Parish Councils, but at the time of writing this has not been taken up.

4.0 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE ENGAGEMENT AND BARWOOD LAND'S RESPONSE TO THEM

4.1 This section outlines the key feedback received in response to the community engagement exercise pro-formas and Barwood Land's response to each one.

Issue/question	Community Feedback	Barwood Land's Response/Comment
Respondents were asked if they agreed that SMBC needs new homes.	Twice the number of respondents agreed with this than disagreed. A significant proportion (25%) said they didn't know.	Noted. The level of housing need in SMBC has been endorsed by the Examining Inspectors. There is currently an acknowledged shortfall in deliverable housing land, and an acute shortage of affordable homes in Solihull/Borough.
Respondents were asked what type of homes they think are important.	There was a cross section of opinions expressed, with the most popular being first-time buyer homes, smaller homes and those suitable for the elderly, followed closely by larger family homes.	This is an outline application and the mix of housing types is to be determined at Reserved Matters stage. A range of types and sizes of houses is however anticipated.
Respondents were asked if they supported the 40% affordable housing provision.	A majority (55%) agreed.	Noted. The application provides for 40% affordable housing in line with the Council's policy.
Respondents were asked if a landscape-led approach was evident in the masterplan vision.	Views on this were mixed and finely balanced; 27.5% agreed or strongly agreed, whilst 33% neither agreed nor disagreed.	Noted. The submitted information including the Design and Access Statement; Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Landscape Strategy document seek to explain how a careful landscape-led approach has led to the creation of the indicative masterplan.
Respondents were asked if they agreed the plans enhanced/strengthened pedestrian and cycle routes in Balsall.	Overall 61% agreed or strongly agreed or were neutral on this point.	Noted. The submitted Design and Access Statement and Transportation Statement/Green Travel Plan present the proposed improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes in Balsall, and explain how these will be significantly enhanced within the Site, including major upgrading works to the Millennium Way, as well as the creation of new footways and cycleways within the scheme itself.
Respondents were asked what type of	Multiple responses were possible to this question.	Noted. This is an outline application and therefore the

<p>green space they would like to see.</p>	<p>There was a spread of answers, but the most popular was wildflower meadow/children's play area, followed by growing space/allotments and a community orchard. There was some support for general recreation areas, and limited support for an outdoor gym facility.</p>	<p>precise mix of green space and typologies of use is for subsequent agreement through the Reserved Matters process. However the indicative masterplan shows possible locations for children's play throughout the site, extensive areas available for grassland which could be managed as wildflower areas for nature conservation/biodiversity purposes, as well as an area in the south-eastern portion of the Site suitable for community orchard/growing space/allotments if appropriate.</p>
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4.2 There was also a 'free form' section of the response questionnaire which invited other more general comments and provided scope for residents to feedback on any issues which they wished to comment on.

4.3 The main themes of this feedback included:

- Concern over impacts on the local highway network.
- Impact on social and community facilities (concern over existing shops/lack of car parking in the village centre and local schools at capacity).
- There should be no vehicular access off Hob Lane.
- There is no need for further recreation space as the current space is not used; a children's play park on this side of the village would be a great improvement.
- Provision must be made for maintenance of the green space areas.
- Development would come too close to Rose Cottage, Waste Lane.
- The proposals are premature as the land is still within the greenbelt.
- The plans are 'one of the best seen throughout Solihull so far', keeping to the character of the local area.

4.4 All comments received have been carefully considered by Barwood Land and their professional design team. Where appropriate and possible, changes have been made to the indicative masterplan in response during the design

development process. The next section explains the principal changes that have been brought forward, and which are reflected in this outline application submission.

5.0 POST-CONSULTATION CHANGES TO THE INDICATIVE MASTERPLAN

- 5.1 The most significant change to the proposals introduced in direct response to local community/stakeholder feedback is that they have been reduced in scale, from up to 270 dwellings to up to 250 dwellings. This is as a result of significantly increasing the setback of the development from Waste Lane.
- 5.2 The new indicative masterplan now includes a sizeable tranche of land to be kept permanently open along the entire Waste Lane frontage. This has the effect of increasing the overall extent of green space from 4.97 hectares to 6 hectares (now representing some 47% of the overall site).
- 5.3 As a consequence of this change, the application proposals now effectively mirror the Councils Concept Master plan prepared for this site allocation and published in October 2020.
- 5.4 There has accordingly been reduction in the dwelling yield from the site. The anticipated yield of up to 250 homes is slightly ahead of the LPR forecast of 220 for the overall allocation but reflects an efficient layout and the optimisation of net developable areas under Barwood's control, whilst still protecting environmental assets such as existing trees and hedgerows and respecting nearby residential amenities. As such it aligns with national policy which seeks to make optimum use of land (including previously developed sites) which are to be released from the green belt to meet housing need.
- 5.5 The extent of green space within the scheme has also increased as a result of the reduction in development area. The precise configuration of the new greenspace will be for the Reserved Matters stage, but a range of potential uses is shown on the indicative master plan in response to the feedback received.
- 5.6 Other detailed aspects of the community feedback are addressed in the submitted technical reports. This includes demonstrating how the proposals can be safely accommodated in terms of local highway capacity (including Barwood's proposals to enhance pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the village centre); confirmation that only an emergency access for vehicles is proposed off Windmill Lane, and no access off Hob Lane; and ensuring adequate set back distances and buffer landscaping is proposed where housing is shown near to existing dwellings, as elaborated in the Design and Access Statement.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Barwood Land has carried out a comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement exercise, including participating in pre application discussions with the local planning authority and with a range of technical stakeholders. This has resulted in a robust scheme which meets all relevant policy requirements, and which represents a high quality, well considered and deliverable housing development with extensive associated green spaces which will ensure the creation of a beautiful place, well integrated with the existing community at Balsall.

APPENDIX A

PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON

WELCOME TO OUR PUBLIC CONSULTATION



Thank you for taking the time to view our exhibition presenting the masterplan vision for Pheasant Oak Farm, Balsall Common.

Barwood Land is delighted to share its new plans to deliver up to 270 new high quality homes in Balsall Common, including 40% affordable housing, extensive landscaping features and enhanced footpaths throughout the site.

The proposals will offer a wide variety of modern and sustainable housing - including homes suitable for first time buyers, those looking to downsize or those looking to move into a larger family home.

A key focus of the masterplan vision centres on landscaping that complements the existing natural environment, ensuring the new development not only fits into the surrounding area, but also enhances it.

The plans for Pheasant Oak Farm have been carefully thought through and are based on detailed research and studies of the site and we are eager to hear your thoughts on the wider masterplan vision. We encourage you to leave your feedback on the proposals.

Please take some time to navigate around the exhibition room, read the display boards and leave your feedback. In order to take your comments into consideration please ensure we receive them **no later than Friday 2nd June.**

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PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON

SUSTAINABLE LOCATION & CURRENT USES

The Pheasant Oak Farm site is located within Berkswell Parish Council's area and on the edge of Balsall Common.



PRESENT USE

The site is currently home to a farm yard, commercial and storage units, poultry sheds and an extensive caravan storage area, as well as grassed fields.



WHY THIS LOCATION?

The plans for Pheasant Oak Farm will deliver much needed new homes in Balsall Common. The site is allocated for housing within Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's draft Local Plan as a suitable location for delivering new homes, a position which has recently been independently endorsed by Planning Inspectors.

The proposals will ensure more people can stay living in the area they grew up in and have the opportunity to find a suitable home.

The site is located at the edge of Balsall Common, which will make a permanent new boundary between the village and the Green Belt - protecting it from further development.

In addition, the plans have the opportunity to extensively improve the current visual environment. The proposals will transform the built form and commercial activities currently on site to make the area more green and vibrant.

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PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON

BENEFITS

The development of Pheasant Oak Farm brings numerous opportunities to enhance the area and bring benefits to the local community. These include:

 <p>Ensuring a mix of new housing on a site specifically identified by the Council to meet local needs</p>	 <p>Providing 40% affordable housing to help local people on the housing ladder</p>	 <p>Offering a range of different types of new, publicly accessible greenspace</p>
 <p>Providing a new, strong and logical boundary for the Green Belt to the east of the site</p>	 <p>Enhancing user experience for pedestrians travelling on Millennium Way</p>	 <p>Improving off site pedestrian and cycle connections to Balsall village centre facilities</p>
 <p>Removing existing farm buildings and caravan storage to improve visual amenity</p>	 <p>Visually enhancing the site through high quality, attractive landscaping</p>	 <p>Developing sustainable and energy efficient homes - built to latest standards</p>
 <p>Retention of hedgerows and new open space to protect the locally listed Mulberry Cottage</p>	 <p>Creating 488 construction jobs during construction period and when the development is completed</p>	 <p>Limiting the height of new homes near the listed Berkswell Windmill to preserve and enhance character</p>
 <p>Providing a biodiversity net gain and other nature conservation benefits</p>	 <p>Using Sustainable Urban Drainage methods to effectively manage surface water run off</p>	 <p>Additional spending of some £9.5m per annum, a proportion of which will be retained locally in Balsall Common and the local area</p>

PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON

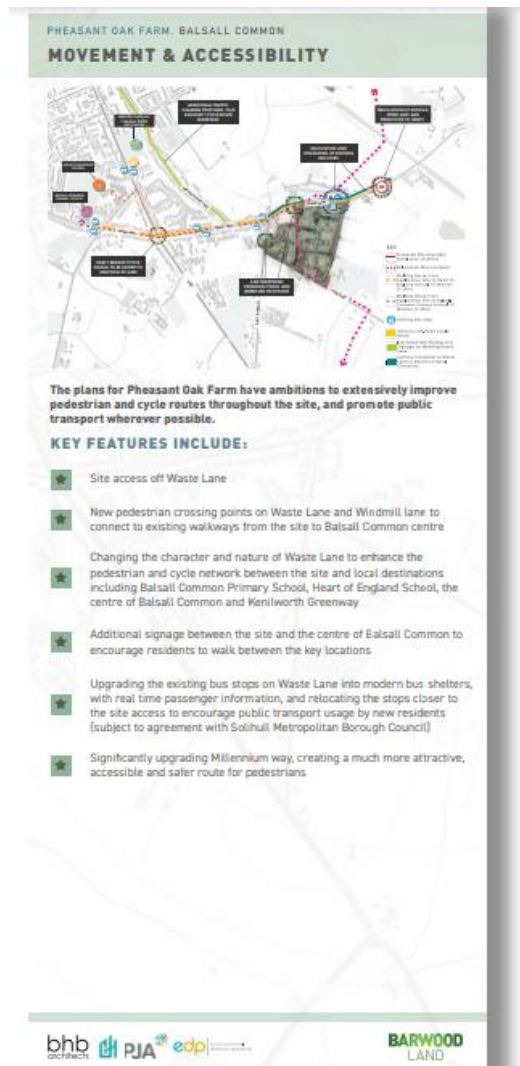
SITE CONSIDERATIONS



Alongside the many benefits of the proposed development, a number of key considerations have also been taken into account to ensure the proposals will not negatively impact the character of the existing area.

These include:

- ★ Where possible retaining existing landscape features including the pond, mature trees and hedgerows
- ★ Protecting the rural character of Waste Lane, Windmill Lane and Hob Lane where they form the site's boundaries
- ★ Respecting residential properties by enhancing landscaping to reduce any potential for visual and noise impact
- ★ Promoting connectivity across the site by enhancing existing pedestrian and cycle routes to the centre of Balsall Common
- ★ Respecting the listed Berkswell Windmill by limiting the height of homes and creating a buffer to the development
- ★ Working with Solihull Council to ensure local services, such as schools and GPs, have the capacity to cater to new residents
- ★ Undertaking a flood risk assessment and using a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) to protect the area from flooding



PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON
LANDSCAPE LED PROPOSALS



At the heart of the plans for Pheasant Oak Farm is enhancing and promoting landscaping throughout the site to create a welcoming green and attractive scheme with a strong ecological character.

KEY FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Retention of existing hedgerows, trees and ponds
- Extensive improvements to the appearance of the current site, making the Millennium Way more inviting
- Sensitive design to create habitats for local wildlife
- New wildflower gardens
- Creation of an extensive footpath network within the site that links to and complements the Millennium Way pedestrian route
- Beautifully crafted landscaped open areas for the community to enjoy
- Opportunity for community growing, a community orchard or allotments
- Incorporation of recreational spaces located off Millennium Way pedestrian route for the whole community of Balsall Common to use freely



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PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON
INDICATIVE MASTERPLAN




KEY FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Up to 270 high quality new homes, including a 40% affordable provision
- A range of different house types to meet local needs, including homes for first time buyers and larger family homes
- A landscape led development with enhanced greenspace features
- A significant Biodiversity Net Gain to allow the local wildlife to flourish
- Almost 4ha of green open public space for the local community to enjoy
- Outward looking homes that overlook the green open spaces to create a safe and inclusive environment
- Enhanced Millennium Way pedestrian route, including a new pedestrian crossing point on Waste Lane, to encourage greater usage
- Enhancement of the existing footpath and cycle network, and the creation of a new network of pedestrian walkways across the site to promote sustainable travel methods and connections to local facilities
- A new wildflower meadow, and possible community orchard, to create a welcoming green and attractive environment


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PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON

VIEWPOINTS



VIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM WAY FROM WASTE LANE (YEAR 0)




VIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM WAY FROM WASTE LANE (YEAR 15)


The plans for Pheasant Oak Farm are centred on preserving and enhancing the rural character of the area. The above images depict the existing view of the Millennium Way from Waste Lane and the view one year into construction.

The visuals depict the site during winter, and at its most exposed. The existing hedgerow fronting Waste Lane is proposed to be retained and enhanced with native planting.


Parkland tree planting, and a generous landscaped buffer between the site boundary and development softens the built edge and retains the rural character of Waste Lane. The Millennium Way pedestrian route will be enhanced and promoted across the site, encouraging safe and accessible connections between the site and Balsall Common.



VIEW OF THE SITE FROM THE WEST OF WASTE LANE (YEAR 0)



VIEW OF THE SITE FROM THE WEST OF WASTE LANE (YEAR 15)



VIEW OF THE SITE FROM THE WEST OF WASTE LANE (YEAR 15)

This viewpoint illustrates the view of the site from the west of Waste Lane and demonstrates how the proposed development would have a negligible effect on the rural character of Waste Lane.

The visuals depict the site during winter, and at its most exposed. The existing hedgerow, along with a generous offsetting of the development from the site boundary, immediately limits perceived views of development. The existing boundary hedge is to be supplemented and enhanced by native planting, and by year 15 the landscape infrastructure has matured to a point where views of the development from this approach are minimal.

The dotted white line depicts the roofscape and outline of the new houses behind the hedgerows.

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PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON

VIEWPOINTS



VIEW OF THE SITE FROM THE EAST OF WASTE LANE (YEAR 0)



VIEW OF THE SITE FROM THE EAST OF WASTE LANE (YEAR 15)



VIEW OF THE SITE FROM THE EAST OF WASTE LANE (YEAR 15)

This viewpoint illustrates the approach along Waste Lane from the east and again demonstrates how the proposed development would have a negligible effect on the rural character of Waste Lane.

The visuals depict the site during winter, and at its most exposed. Enhanced landscaping of the existing hedgerow fronting Waste Lane ensures the rural nature is protected and limits views of the development. By year 15, established and mature planting will screen the development almost in its entirety from this approach.

The dotted white line depicts the roofscape and outline of the new houses behind the hedgerows.



ILLUSTRATIVE VIEW FROM EASTERN BOUNDARY

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PHEASANT OAK FARM, BALSALL COMMON

HAVE YOUR SAY



Thank you for taking the time to view our plans and we look forward to receiving your comments.

The consultation closes on **Friday 2nd June 2023**. Please submit comments before the deadline to ensure they are considered by the development team.

TAKE PART IN THE CONSULTATION

-  Complete a feedback form, available on the consultation website www.pheasantoakfarmconsultation.co.uk
-  Call our Community Information Line on **0333 358 0502 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm)**
-  Email our designated consultation email address at pheasantoakfarmconsultation@havingyoursay.co.uk
-  Write to us at
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