Pineapple Farm, Mulberry Road, Congresbury Statement of Community Involvement

M7 Planning Ltd and M7 SW LLP January 2022





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61260/01/JCO/CK
20588592v1

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1.0 Introduction

- This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of M7 Planning Ltd. It accompanies an outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access for residential development at Pineapple Farm, Land off Mulberry Road, Congresbury.
- The proposed development of the site is for up to 90 new homes that would cater for the housing needs of different groups in Congresbury and beyond, including first time buyers and the elderly. The proposal will deliver a significant proportion of affordable housing (up to 30%).
- 1.3 The proposal will assist North Somerset Council (NSC) in meeting its increased housing needs and demonstrating a 5-year housing land supply. The development will also deliver a new children's play area, informal footpaths and public open space.
- Prior to finalising the application proposals, M7 Planning Ltd and M7 SW LLP engaged with a variety of stakeholders in order to influence the scheme's proposed design.

Purpose of Report

- 1.5 The purpose of the report is to summarise:
 - a) the community/stakeholder involvement undertaken;
 - b) the main issues raised by the community/stakeholders; and
 - c) how the proposal has been revised to take account of the issues raised and, where the application has not been revised, the reasons why not.
- The SCI sets out the public consultation process that has been undertaken, and the methodology applied to ensure that good levels of engagement with local groups have been achieved, particularly in the light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.7 The document should be read in conjunction with other key documents that form part of the planning application which include technical reports.

Report Structure

- 1.8 The format of the SCI is as follows:
 - Section 1: Introduction
 - Section 2: Proposal
 - Section 3: Policy Context
 - Section 4: Approach to Consultation
 - Section 5: Summary of Consultation Feedback
 - Section 6: Response to Consultations
 - Section 7: Conclusion

2.0 Proposal

Application Site

- The site is located on the eastern edge of Congresbury; on flat land above the adjacent River Yeo corridor which is enclosed by ridges to the north. The application site comprises agricultural land used for sheep grazing. The site is typical of the surrounding agricultural field pattern with mature and dense hedgerows delineating field boundaries.
- The site area is regular in shape and slopes slightly from south west to north east. This minor topographical slope aids the flow of surface water drainage into the pond and ditch network at the north east corner of the site.
- 2.3 The surrounding area is characterised by residential dwellings as well as agricultural fields.
- 2.4 Two public rights of way (PROW) cross the site providing pedestrian connections to the local street network and surrounding amenities. The PROW also provides walking connections to the wider countryside adjoining the site to the east.

Proposed Development

- 2.5 The description of proposed of development is as follows:
 - "Proposed outline planning application for the erection of up to 90 dwellings including 30% affordable housing, public open space, children's play area, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage system and engineering works, with vehicular access off Mulberry Road. All matters reserved except for means of access."
- 2.6 The proposal is for up to 90 residential dwellings comprising a range of dwelling types developed on approximately 3.3ha of land. The proposed development also includes open space, including a children's play area.
- 2.7 The proposed development comprises a variety of house types and sizes ranging from 1, 2, 3and 4-bedroom homes which will include homes that cater for first time buyers and the elderly. The definitive mix of the proposed dwellings will be determined at reserved matters stage.
- 2.8 Subject to development viability, the proposal will be providing policy compliant 30% affordable housing. Affordable housing will be integrated into the scheme layout using the same design principles as for the open market housing.
- 2.9 The affordable units are intended to be spread across the site, with no more than 6 units being sited together in accordance with the Councils' SPD on affordable housing.
- The affordable housing will include a mix of social rented, affordable rented and intermediate tenures. The tenure of the proposed affordable housing units is expected to be split 82% social rented and 18% intermediate ownership.
- 2.11 The application site is sustainably located. The site has clear synergies with Congresbury with easy access to local services and facilities.

Policy Context

3.1 There are a range of policies which are in place to support community involvement in the planning process. This section of the SCI seeks to provide an overview of relevant legislation and policy/guidance at a national and local level.

Localism Act (2011)

- 3.2 The Localism Act provides the context within which the planning system currently operates. The Localism Act (November 2011) sets out the Government's continuing intention of shifting power from central Government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. The Localism Act introduced several changes of government policy including:
 - Decentralisation and strengthening local democracy;
 - · Community empowerment; and
 - A re-booting of the planning system including neighbourhood planning.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021

- 3.3 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 3.4 The NPPF recognises the importance of pre-application engagement and front-loading local resident and stakeholder consultation prior to the submission of any application. Paragraph 39 recognises the benefits that early engagement with all parties can play on the design and the benefits it can have on the overall outcome of a scheme. The paragraph specifically states that:
 - "Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community".

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 3.5 PPG brings together planning practice guidance in England and provides an accessible and useable document to guide best practice. The guidance provides further detail to assist in the understanding of policies set out within the NPPF which also includes requirements for preapplication engagement.
- Paragraph 013 of the 'Consultation and pre-decision matters' (updated on 23rd July 2019) section identifies that:

"Early and timely engagement between developers, statutory consultees and local authorities at the pre-application phase is important in helping to address issues and opportunities early on and avoid delays occurring at the formal application stage."

North Somerset Council's (NSC) Guidance: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), adopted September 2019

3.7 North Somerset Council adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in September 2019. Informed by national planning policy, the document sets out how the Council will consult and involve the public in the preparation of planning policy documents and planning applications.

3.8 Notably, the document highlights the importance of applicants to undertaken pre- application consultation for proposals. Early pre-application is encouraged through applicants discussing the proposal with local people adjoining the development site, the relevant town or parish council and their North Somerset councillor, at an early stage before they submit their planning application.

Summary

- 3.9 Ensuring communities and stakeholders are actively participating in the design evolution of proposed development schemes is a key objective of recent modifications to the planning system.
- 3.10 Consistent with this, the applicant has engaged with representatives from local groups and neighbours as the proposal has progressed. This has ensured that those affected by and those interested in the proposal have been given the opportunity to share, and have their views considered and to input into the design process of the scheme prior to a planning application being submitted.
- 3.11 The community involvement has been undertaken in full accordance with the Government's aspirations for pre-application community engagement and in full accordance with NSC's adopted SCI.

Approach to Consultation

4.1 The following section outlines the aims of the consultation, method used, processes applied, and the participants involved in the consultation process.

Aims of the Consultation

- 4.2 The aims of the consultation undertaken were identified specifically for the project as:
 - Ensuring those who are likely to be affected by the proposal and groups/individuals who are likely to have an interest in the development are consulted.
 - Engaging with the key representatives of key groups, residents and businesses to provide information about the proposal and give an adequate timeframe to make comments relating to the proposal.
 - Acknowledging the comments made during the consultation and to consider whether the
 requested changes to the scheme are appropriate and feasible in the context of the
 development, and if so to make those changes and to provide a response.

Scope of Consultation and Strategy

- Based on the scale and context of the development it was agreed that the following parties would be engaged with:
 - · Congresbury Parish Council; and
 - · Adjacent/ surrounding residential properties and commercial uses.

Engagement with Consultees

This section of the report summarises the consultation that has been undertaken prior to the application being submitted to NSC. A copy of the consultation form can be found in **Appendix**

Local Councillors

5.0

- The consultation website was sent to James Tonkin and Stuart Treadaway (NSC Councillors) via email on the 3rd November 2020. Extracts of the consultation website can be seen at **Appendix** 2.
- 5.3 The consultation website included full details of the intended application proposals along with information on how to respond. Consultation responses on-line were accepted for a 5-week period from 12 October to 20 November 2020. The website remains live albeit it is now closed for consultation purposes.

Congresbury Parish Council

- 5.4 The application site is located within the Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan Boundary.
- 5.5 On 12 October 2020, M7 Planning joined the Congresbury Full Parish Council meeting and outlined the proposals at Pineapple Farm, Mulberry Road, Congresbury.
- At the Full Parish Council meeting, key aspects of the proposals were described by M7 planning including flood risk, landscape sensitivity, storm water attenuation, ecological buffers around the listed building to the north of the site and the site's access.
- 5.7 Comments were welcomed from the Parish Council group, though none were received. We understand that the Parish Council intend to respond to the formal planning application once it has been submitted to submitted to NSC.
- At the meeting, M7 Planning asked Congresbury Parish Council to direct residents to the consultation website where residents could view the proposed plans and provide feedback. On 16th October 2020, M7 Planning sent Congresbury Parish Council the website consultation link. Thereafter, Congresbury Parish Council notified residents of the consultation website via the Parish Council website and on social media via their Facebook page.
- 5.9 The proposal was made available online at https://your-feedback.uk/pineapple-farm. The consultation period ran for 5 weeks from 12 October 2020 until 20 November 2020. The website remains live albeit it is now closed for consultation purposes.

Residents and the wider public

- 5.10 Three hundred leaflets notifying residents of the proposal and the consultation website were hand delivered to local residents and businesses in the immediate vicinity of the site week commencing 12 October 2020.
- 5.11 The leaflet included full details of the intended application proposals along with information on how to respond. A 5 week period was stipulated for comments to be received. This ended on 20 November 2020.
- 5.12 A copy of the leaflet delivered to neighbouring properties can be found in **Appendix 3**.
- 5.13 The extent of the neighbouring properties consulted is shown on the map below, letters were distributed to all properties located along the pink lines.



Congresbury Library

- M7 Planning provided A3 booklets and response forms which contained information on the proposal (same as the website) to the local Congresbury Library. Providing information at the local library allowed residents to be aware and respond to the proposal even if they resided beyond the immediate vicinity of the proposal site or if they did not have access to IT equipment.
- 5.15 Three feedback forms were received from the Library.

6.0 Consultation Feedback

6.1 This section provides a summary of the consultation feedback received.

Feedback from Ward Members

6.2 No responses received.

Feedback from Residents/Neighbouring Businesses

A total of 79 responses were received from local residents and businesses as a result of the community engagement carried out. Out of the 79 responses, 76 responses were received through the consultation website and 3 hard copy response forms were provided from Congresbury Library. The responses have been summarised into key themes below:

Need for Housing

- Congresbury has insufficient housing, particularly smaller and more affordable family
 homes. Our primary school is in need of more pupils and our community facilities, pubs,
 shops and cafes all need more customers to survive.
- Support family homes of 3/4/5+ bed.

Scale of Development

- Concerns over the development imposing on currently quiet areas of the existing village destroying the character/ identity if the open space is built on.
- Concerns that more green site development outside of the village boundary is being proposed which is turning the village into a town
- Concerns that Congresbury has had a number of new developments and any more will be
 detrimental to the overall environment. A break in development is required for the
 infrastructure to settle down and absorb.
- Concerns that the proposal seems like it wouldn't fit with the surroundings and would intrude on the natural space.
- Concerns of overdevelopment with too many houses for the site when considering the proposed route of entry to the site and if it is to include decent sized boundaries/walkways.
- Concerns that the proposal will encourage further development and contribute to urban sprawl into the countryside.
- Concerns that the houses that have recently been built in the area are small and cramped with no gardens or outside space more suited to a town or city environment. For the development to have a good layout with houses not crammed on top of each other.

Different Types of Housing

- Propose affordable housing for all ages and categories of people, first time buyers and social
 houses. This could involve a number of different schemes including self builds and part
 ownership schemes as well as ready built.
- Request that affordable housing is not pre-sold to the likes of 'Alliance Homes' to enable local first-time buyers the opportunity to purchase.
- Request the scheme includes retirements homes and bungalows to cater for the ageing population in the village.

- Queries over the suitability of affordable housing within the scheme which could bring 'the wrong stereotypes into the vicinity and will devalue existing properties'
- Queries if the density of development could present 'high quality' homes.

Style of Housing

• The majority of respondents requested housing of more traditional design.

Access and Traffic

- Concerns surrounding the level of traffic that the proposals will generate on Venus Street, Park Road, Mulberry Road and Brinsea Street.
- Concerns that the highway infrastructure cannot support more traffic or congestion and will create road noise and pollution.
- Concerns that the traffic generation will impact highway safety.
- Concerns over the access point from Mulberry Road being suitable for the housing proposed.
- Whether access to the site could be achieved from the private road towards the top of the site as an alternative was queried.
- Concerns over the amount of parking spaces proposed on site.
- Concerns that both ends of Park Road which connects to Mulberry Road has poor visibility at junctions. Poor junction visibility is also noted coming out of Venus Street onto Brinsea Road. Proposed road adjustments would be required if the proposal went ahead.
- Propose to retain the existing footpath to the northern edge of the site which provides a continuous link to further footpaths through a gate at the north east corner.

Amenity

- To protect the open amenity space for farm animals to use and for people to walk through.
- To protect the countryside views of the existing houses which back onto the site.

Ecology

- Concerns that the proposal will destroy biodiversity and impact on species of wildlife using the area.
- To protect the wildlife and nature in this area including bats, herons and kingfishes.

Flooding and Drainage

- · Queried flooding issues on site.
- Queries as to where the extra run off will go from the new proposal.
- Concerns that the field suffers from bad flooding/waterlogged in the bottom corner by the footpath access to the river.
- Concerns that the sewage system is already being overloaded at Park Road.

Other concerns

• Queried the capacity of services (e.g shops, schools, doctor's surgery) to cope with the residents that the development would potentially bring.

- Queried if the developer will be paying towards new residential facilities such as schools and surgeries.
- Concerns that the surgery and local school is already too stretched to absorb the extra housing in the village.
- Concerns that the site is not in a sustainable location due to it being too far from shops, schools etc.
- Queried if the bus stop within 400 metres of the site is in service.
- The neighbourhood plan contains details of sites allocated for housing growth until 2036.
 The development is not allocated within the Neighbourhood Plan; therefore, it should not be built on.
- Concerns that the proposed number of 90 houses is a 'ploy' to then reduce the number when concerns have been raised in relation to the scale of the proposal.
- Queried that there is plenty of existing housing that could be used, refurbished, reallocated or repurposed. Why build more when we haven't used what we have?
- Concerns that the existing new developments in the east of the village, on the A370, in Mill
 Lane and Venus Street and the large estates being built in Yatton and the proposed
 development in Langford will severely increase the population of the area and make
 Congresbury a less appealing place to live without a proposed upgrade of roads, schools,
 GPs and other services.
- Concerns that far too many houses have been built of the wrong type, in the wrong places by various opportunistic large developers to no one's benefit but that of the developer.

Alternative use for the space:

Within the consultation response form, participants were asked what alternative use of the site do you consider appropriate? The following suggestions were made from participants:

- To maintain as existing farmland/ open space or a nature conservation area.
- For the site to be considered for the use of parkland, sports area or allotments.
- To reduce the size of the development to less dwellings.
- To provide more green space on site along with additional amenity facilities e.g. a village hall, school facilities.
- Suggested that development should be positioned in towns with more employment or on brownfield sites within North Devon. Strawberry field in Yatton was identified as a site suitable for redevelopment along with the redevelopment of Andrew Sheppy's home for a retirement home.
- To expand village boundaries through spine roads instead of developing in infill plots.
- A suggestion that there are several other areas on the village boundaries that would have less impact on the village and would still provide the same links to amenities.
- A suggestion to build where schools, shops, roads, workplaces are located, such as the Weston airfield area.
- Rewilding (ecological restoration) to reduce flood risk and carbon capture.

Response to Consultations

7.1 The following section of this SCI sets out the applicant's response to the comments raised under the same 'themes' as Section 6 above and where reasonable, seeks to make improvements to the scheme.

Need for Housing

7.2 The applicant welcomes the comments recognising the need for additional housing in Congresbury and in particular the need for younger families to ensure the Congresbury continues to fulfil its role as a thriving Service Centre.

Scale of Development

- 7.3 The development accommodates the growing demand of residential development within North Somerset, as identified within the Planning Statement.
- Due to the site's location being adjacent to existing residential developments within the Congresbury area, the proposal would be a continuation of the eastern edge of Congresbury, infilling the 'gap' between Park Farm and the residential properties of Mulberry Road. As such, the proposal would integrate reasonably well with the local landscape and is of an appropriate scale within the context of Congresbury, presenting a logical opportunity to deliver sustainable growth in an appropriate location.
- 7.5 Please refer to the Design and Access Statement for the full justification of the proposal's design, scale and density.

Different Types of Housing

- In response to the consultation, the proposed development comprises a variety of house types and sizes ranging from 1, 2, 3- and 4-bedroom homes which will include homes that cater for first time buyers and the elderly. The definitive mix of the proposed dwellings will be determined at reserved matters stage.
- 5.7 Subject to development viability, affordable housing will be provided across the site in accordance with the adopted Core Strategy target of up to 30%. Affordable housing will be integrated into the scheme layout using the same design principles as for the open market housing.
- 7.8 The opportunity to prioritise local affordable housing needs with the proposed scheme will be investigated through the \$106 process.
- 7.9 Furthermore, the potential impact of development on property values is not considered a planning matter.

Transport

- 7.10 Concerns surrounding transport and access have been addressed through the accompanying Transport Assessment (TA).
- 7.11 The TA concludes that the predicted traffic from the proposed development can be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing highways network.
- 7.12 The proposed access comprises a 5.5m standard of road with an adjacent shared surface for pedestrian access on the western side of the road. There is proposed to be a pedestrian / cycle link from the north west corner of the site directly onto Park Road. 6m radii is proposed onto

Mulberry Road, which is the typical urban standard where the access is not required to accommodate high levels of commercial vehicles. The proposed access has acceptable Manual for Streets (MfS) compliant levels of visibility in both directions.

- 7.13 The enhancement and retainment of the PROW will provide pedestrian connections to the local street network and surrounding amenities, along with walking connections to the wider countryside adjoining the site to the east.
- 7.14 The alternative suggestion from a consultee as to whether access to the site could be achieved from the private road towards the top of the site is not achievable.
- 7.15 Concerns surrounding parking will be addressed at a reserved matters stage. Electrical vehicle charging points will also be included on-site.

Amenity

- 7.16 The existing PROW connecting points out of the site will be maintained. The existing PROW route crossing the site will be slightly diverted across the north and eastern boundaries, rather than diagonally across the site.
- 7.17 The potential impact on loss of views of the countryside from existing residential units is not considered a planning matter.

Ecology

- 7.18 The planning application will include an Ecological Impact Assessment, informed by necessary surveys.
- 7.19 The Ecological Impact Assessment identifies several opportunities to ensure that the ecological qualities of the site and surrounding area are protected and enhanced. The development will retain key features within the site to create 'green corridors' which will provide foraging routes and connectivity between the habitat features within the site.
- Protective measures have been proposed such as mitigating construction lighting through the submission of a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcoMP) which will be appended to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). A lighting plan will also be submitted prior to the commencement of development, to ensure that foraging routes and habitats are not adversely impacted by light spill.
- 7.21 To mitigate the minor, residual loss of habitat for foraging bats, off-site habitat enhancement and creation measures will be proposed. This can either be proposed under the control of the applicant, or via a financial contribution to the LPA.
- The 'offset' would be wholly located within Consultation Zone A. This will be conditioned and secured prior to the commencement of development. As the scheme is proposed in outline, the amount of land required to offset this loss of habitat is not definitive, however it is anticipated that approximately 1.75ha of land would be needed based on the maximum quantum of development.
- 7.23 Other features are also proposed, which include the retention of suitable habitats for amphibians and by incorporating habitat features into the scheme such as bird boxes and bat boxes within some of the buildings proposed.
- As recognised by the Ecological Impact Assessment, the proposed development will not give raise to any significant, adverse residual impacts. Likewise, there are several opportunities for the developer to implement enhancements both on and off site which will be incorporated into the proposed development as far as practicable.

Flooding and Drainage

- 7.25 Concerns surrounding flooding and drainage have been addressed through the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment Report.
- The vast majority of the planning application site is located outside of a high flood risk area within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of fluvial or tidal flooding). The planning application boundary includes a small area of standing water in the north east corner which is located in Flood Zone 3 (having a less than 1 in 100 annual probability of fluvial flooding or 1 in 200 probability of tidal flooding); this area will not be developed and will form part of the open space. All built development will be located within flood zone 1 in accordance with NPPF sequential approach.
- The site-specific FRA submitted as part of the enclosed planning application has been produced in accordance with the requirements of NPPF, Planning Practice Guidance, and EA advice notes. This demonstrates that that the proposed homes will be flood-free for the 100-year (+ CC) and 1000-year events and that safe routes of access and egress can be provided. It can be concluded that in terms of flood risk the proposed development is acceptable.
- 7.28 The applicant is in discussions with Wessex Water regarding foul drainage and the scheme will include a new pumping station located to the north east of the development.

Other concerns

- The proposal will generate increased use of local health and education facilities, however, additional capacity for education would be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy which the scheme is liable to pay. In respect of local health services, these are commercial operations and the addition of new customers within the catchment of the local surgery will ensure their continued financial viability and potentially their expansion.
- 7.30 The suitability of the site's location and distance to surrounding amenities has been addressed within the accompanying planning statement.
- 7.31 Concerns relating to the development not being in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan and that the development should be delivered via brownfield development has been addressed within the accompanying planning statement.
- 7.32 The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year land supply and therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applicable. Service Villages such as Congresbury present a valuable opportunity to assist in meeting housing needs without presenting a departure from the thrust of the adopted Core Strategy.

Alternative use for the space

- 7.33 Within the consultation response form, participants were asked what alternative use of the site they consider appropriate instead of the proposal. Many suggestions were put forward from participants, some of these suggestions have been incorporated into the proposal, including:
 - The provision of open space and a children's equipped play area; and
 - Incorporation of a sustainable drainage attenuation feature which will create a wetland habitat within the north-east corner of the site.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The engagement strategy that was formulated and implemented has successfully informed and involved those who are in proximity to the development site or those may have an interest in the development proposal.
- 8.2 It created the opportunity to liaise with a wide range of stakeholders as showcased through the SCI. Those consulted were given the opportunity to contact the relevant parties for further detailed information if it was required.
- 8.3 The process undertaken has taken on board the concerns and recommendations made. Where suitable and viable, these recommendations have informed changes to the proposed development.



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