

REPORT TO COLDEN COMMON PARISH COUNCIL - 3RD MARCH 2014

REPORT BY COMMONVIEW (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP)

WINCHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN PART 2 - VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1. In 2012 the Village Design Statement outlined the desire of residents in Colden Common to protect and preserve its rural aspects and characteristics. Once the requirement for 250 homes to be built in Colden Common over the following 20 years was known (Local Plan Part 1), the Community Engagement Group (now called Commonview) was formed on a voluntary basis from a mixture of Parish Councillors and residents. Considerable advice and assistance was provided by Winchester City Council officers in providing a framework and conducting a number of consultation exercises.

2. The first consultation workshops were held in the morning and afternoon of 9 February 2013 when residents were asked to suggest what sorts of housing might be required to meet the needs of residents over the forthcoming 20 years; which sites might become available for development; and which of these might prove the most acceptable to residents, having regard to their desire to preserve the rural nature of the village. The results of these exercises were analysed and presented to the Parish Council on 6 March 2013 and made public to all residents. Further information was presented at the Parish Annual Assembly on 29 May 2013 by Commonview and WCC officers and comments were sought from residents during a consultation period and a further invitation was issued to the public to join the Commonview members in their work. At that meeting, the Parish Council endorsed the work that had been done.

3. Between February and June 2013, Commonview worked with WCC officers to determine which of the sites proposed for development might be suitable. This was done against a set of criteria provided by WCC officers which included considerations of such issues, among others, as: capacity, presence of minerals, pipelines and power cables, water courses, proximity to services, access, availability, restrictions against development and residents' preferences. This reduced the number of sites that could be considered suitable for development.

4. On 18 June 2013, Commonview met with the developers who had expressed an interest in sites and set out the preferences and wishes of the residents gathered from the consultation exercises. On 21 July 2013, the developers exhibited their development proposals to the public in a consultation exercise arranged by Commonview. Approximately 550 residents attended this event, were able to discuss developers' proposals with them, and completed a questionnaire which allowed Commonview to ascertain their views on each site. Commonview were then able to analyse the responses and produce a ranked order of preference for development (**Appendix 1**).

5. It was clear from residents' feedback that the "most favoured" (or least unacceptable) sites for development were 275, 2389 (which cannot be developed as it is a SINC site) and 888. Sites 2494 and 889 fell into the next category as "favoured", with sites 2561, 2500 and 2527 being "not favoured". The sites "least favoured" for development were 1874 and 1870.

6. On 10 September 2013, Commonview met with WCC officers to consider the feedback from residents and the advice from WCC officers on such issues as landscape, transport and the current settlement boundary. It then became clear that, in order to provide the capacity of housing needed, and to meet the requirements of planning policies, the most appropriate sites for development were along the eastern side of the village with good transport links and access to village amenities, namely 275, 888/889 and 2494. In addition, a small plot of land fronting Main Road adjacent to site 275 had subsequently been put forward by the owners (ref. 2495).

7. On 29 September 2013 Commonview presented the strategy from the 10 September meeting as an exhibition at a drop-in event for residents.

8. On 2 October 2013, the Parish Council received and endorsed the Development Strategy (DS) presented by Commonview and it was unanimously agreed that a written statement of their report would be submitted to WCC. The report, which was based on technical evidence provided by WCC and previous consultation exercises with Colden Common residents, identified three preferred sites for development:

- Sandyfields Nurseries and adjoining site fronting Main Road (sites 275/2495)
- Clayfield Park Homes and land adjacent to Avondale (sites 888/889)
- Land off Main Road (site 2494)

9. The DS was then put out for further consultation with residents until 17 November 2013. This period was subsequently extended to 30 November 2013 to accommodate those who wished to comment on prospective developers' conceptual proposals for land east of Highbridge Road, although that particular site (ref. 1874) did not form part of the preferred strategy.

10. A summary of the further comments received is attached to this report (**Appendix 2**). A schedule of the full responses is also available on the Commonview website. An analysis of the comments shows the following: -

Supports Development Strategy (DS)	7
Supports DS & objects to 1874	6
Objects to 1874	2
Objects to 1870 & 1874	1
Objects to 2494	4
Objects to 2494 & 1870	4
Objects to DS/2494; promotes 1871/2561	1
Objects to DS; promotes 1874	1
Objects to 2494; supports 2527	2
Supports 2527	1
Objects to 888 & 889	1 (+ supports 1870, 2494. 1871/2561)
Other non-site specific comments	2

The Preferred Sites

Sites 275/2495

11. Commonview have received confirmation from the owners of sites 275 (Sandyfields Nurseries) and 2495 (land fronting Main Road) that, as a single combined site, it is available for development immediately and that there are no issues relating to land assembly.

12. Crucially, planning consultants and land agents on behalf of the owners of site 275 now believe that this site could provide more than the (provisional) 125 homes set out in the DS. The landowners have made the decision to make the land available for development. From draft layouts put forward, it is evident that a development of up to **165** homes can be achieved and would accord fully with the requirements of Local Plan Part 1 in terms of affordable housing, open space, design, sustainable construction, etc.

13. The proposed development could also be expanded to include 2.5 hectares of woodland to the east of the Sandyfields site. Subject to agreement with the Parish Council and the local planning authority, the owners have generously proposed to make this available for public use as community woodland, either through the Parish Council or some other suitable group. Some discussion will also take place with South Downs National Park Authority as the proposed open space lies within its remit.

Sites 888/889 (1 objection)

14. As available and suitable sites in a sustainable location within the existing settlement boundary, there is a presumption in favour of their development, even without any formal allocation in the Winchester Local Plan Part 1. The loss of (private) open space and employment are not considered significant constraints to the sites' potential for housing development.

Site 2494 (11 objections; 1 in support)

15. This site received the most objections of those proposed in the DS. They relate primarily to the impact of development on the setting of nearby listed buildings. The proposed site is located on the opposite side of Main Road to the listed properties and the listed buildings themselves are set well back from the road and screened by mature trees.

16. There was always a reluctance to include this site in the DS, but it was accepted (at the time) that not all of the net housing requirement could be accommodated on other favoured Main Road sites (275/2495 and 888/889). The site was considered to be in an acceptable location in terms of its accessibility to services and facilities in the village. WCC's Historic Environment Assessment of Colden Common (as amended, January 2014) acknowledges the proximity of the listed buildings and states that their setting would need to be taken into account. Whilst development is not ruled out, the assessment advises a precautionary approach so that any new housing here would not be overbearing for the listed properties. The same principle would apply to the impact on the local landscape, given the site's 'highly sensitive' rating in WCC's Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal.

17. The need for this site to be allocated, however, has been reappraised in the light of the opportunity that has arisen to locate increased numbers of dwellings on preferred site 275/2495 (above).

Representations Received to Other (SHLAA) Sites

18. All these sites were considered as part of the process of preparing the DS, but were discounted for the reasons set out in the DS statement.

Site 1870 (Lower Moors Road) (5 objections; 1 in support)

19. Objections state similar issues as site 2494. Support came only from the objector to 888/889.

Sites 1871/2561 (Church Lane) (2 in support)

20. The representation from the sites' promoter argues in favour of the site's sustainable location and acceptable landscape impact, and against the DS considering it to be based on a flawed residents' survey. The other support is from the objector to 888/889.

Site 1874 (East of Highbridge Road) (9 objections; 1 in support)

21. Some of the objections refer to a promotional leaflet distributed throughout the village by the site's prospective developer in anticipation of a (speculative) planning application. The only support came from the site's promoter.

Site 2527 (Swift's Farm) (3 in support)

22. The site is in an isolated location in open countryside with poor accessibility to village services. Its previously developed nature does not overcome the principle objections to its development regarding its location.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

23. Commonview have always hoped to try to discount site 2494 from the DS and to reduce the number of development sites from three to two. Feedback from residents showed site 2494 to be by far the least popular of the preferred sites.

24. Subsequent to the consultation, Commonview worked with the landowner, WCC officers and the landowners' planning and land agents to establish how many homes the combined site 275/2495 could accommodate. The suggested increase in density, subject to acceptable quality of design, could obviate the need to allocate site 2494 which is recognised as a less favoured (but not necessarily unsuitable) location for new housing.

25. Information received from the developers and, supported by WCC officers, now confirms that omitting site 2494 as an allocation could become a reality. This is because the increased housing capacity proposed for site 275/2495, together with the proposed donation of 2.5 hectares of open space/community woodland on adjacent land, can still produce a development of a type and quality to conform with the policy requirements of Local Plan Part 1. However, it should be noted that some discussion will be needed with the South Downs National Park as the proposed open space lies within the Park and will require the support of the Authority.

26. Commonview therefore seek the Parish Council's endorsement that the Development Strategy is revised to **exclude site 2494**, provided that the required number of homes can be achieved on sites 275/2495 and 888/889, the relevant planning permissions from WCC and

agreement with the SDNP can be obtained. Whilst it is clearly understood that the final decision rests with WCC, Commonview wish to present the revised strategy to WCC with the Parish Council's support and endorsement.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Parish Council:-

- (i) endorse the proposed revision to the Colden Common Village Development Strategy whereby site ref. 2494 (Land off Main Road) is deleted, provided that the required number of homes can be achieved on sites 275/2495 and 888/889, and the relevant planning permissions from WCC and agreement with the SDNP can be obtained; and
- (ii) forward the revised strategy to Winchester City Council for consideration in the preparation of the Local Plan Part 2.

Appendices

- 1. Map showing residents' gradations of preference for development**
- 2. Summary of comments received to the Development Strategy consultation (September – November 2013)**

Colden Common site survey responses- September 2013



