

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Proposed residential community with 350 new homes on land at Common Farm, Wash Water, Newbury

What is the application for?

The planning application is for the development of a residential community comprising up to 350 new homes including homes for older people and 40% affordable homes. The development will contain a wide range of community facilities, landscaping and associated infrastructure works.

The application is a hybrid planning application, which means it is part outline application and part full application. An outline application is to establish the principle of development on the site and a full application is to establish the details of development.

The outline application is for 350 dwellings including

- Homes for older people
- 40% affordable housing
- A community use building
- A health and wellbeing centre
- A convenience store
- Provision of open space (7.96 hectares)
- Allotments and community gardens,
- A riverside park/nature trail
- Enhancement of the Public Right of Way (PRoW)
- Sustainable Drainage features to attenuate areas of flooding
- Landscaping and infrastructure including roads and footpaths.

The full application is for phase 1 of development comprising 90 new homes, public open space, landscaping and infrastructure works including roads, footpaths and a new vehicular access onto Andover Road (A343).

Who has submitted the application?

Bewley Homes are the applicant and have submitted this hybrid application for development on land at Common Farm. Bewley Homes are a local development company based in Baughurst, Hampshire and have been developing new communities since 1991.

Watermill Bridge has provided Bewley Homes with an exciting opportunity to create a low carbon residential community which is fit for the future and where residents feel proud to live.

When was the application submitted?

We submitted the application on 29 October 2021. The submission follows a period of public pre-application consultation and design evolution of the scheme.

How long will the application take to determine?

The proposed development is classed as a major development, and the statutory timescale for the determination of a major development is 13 weeks. The Local Planning Authority (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council) may ask the applicant for an extension of time during the application process if they consider that they need more time to consider the proposals.

Is the site within the Green Belt or protected by any other designations?

The site is not within the Green Belt, although part of the site is greenfield it is not considered to be of good quality land. The site is not allocated for development within the Adopted Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, which guides development for the area, and therefore is classed as open countryside. The applicant has made a strong justification for proposing development in the open countryside which is detailed in the Planning Statement accompanying the application. In summary, the Council do not currently have a 5 year housing land supply, which is a requirement of planning policy, and therefore sites within the open countryside will be considered if it accords with criteria set in other policies of the Local Plan.

The proposals and the site have been thoroughly assessed against these policies in the Local Plan and it is considered that the development does accord with the relevant policies. As part of the application submission there are a comprehensive number of supporting developments which have considered the impact on the surrounding environment and the neighbouring North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The proposed development can make an important contribution to meeting the housing shortfall without causing unacceptable harm to the character of the area, increasing flood risk, having an adverse impact on highway safety, and will be sustainably accessible, provide a low carbon development and provide biodiversity enhancements (biodiversity net gain) on the site. It is therefore considered that the proposed development should be seen as a significant opportunity for the Council.

How is flooding going to be addressed on the site?

The proposed development does not include any built development within the flood zones at higher risk of flooding. Part of the overall site boundary does fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which the government considers at higher risk of flooding and therefore the extent of flooding on the Site has underpinned the design of the whole scheme.

The existing Environment Agency flood mapping of the Site is limited and not sufficiently accurate for use in site-specific assessment of flood risk, therefore the RPS hydrology team have undertaken a hydraulic modelling study of the site. The study was undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance published by the Environment Agency.

The hydraulic modelling has ascertained the flood risk associated with the River Enborne and produced flood risk data (depth, hazard and water level mapping) in order to inform the development design and any required mitigation measures. The hydraulic modelling has been used to inform the site design and layout and ensure that no built development is proposed inside the areas at risk of flooding.

A Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) is proposed across the Site utilising a variety of methods and techniques. A geology assessment has been undertaken and has identified that the underlying geology at the Site could accommodate infiltration techniques (drainage into the ground) such as soakaways, which is the preferred method in the drainage hierarchy in the National Planning Practice

Guidance. Open storage features such as attenuation basins and swales will be included on the Site and the permeable paving on footpaths and car parking areas will be used across the site.

Will the development cause highway issues?

A detailed Highway Assessment has been undertaken assessing the impact it will have on highway safety and capacity.

The proposed development will facilitate the development of a ghost island right turn land priority junction from Andover Road (A343) and will include new pedestrian and cycle crossings on Andover Road (A343). The proposed access has been carefully designed and discussed with Hampshire County Council Highways Department and is in full accordance with relevant design standards and provides visibility based on recorded speeds and Hampshire County Council's guidance. It is considered that a safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

What ecology benefits are being proposed?

An Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken and has identified opportunities for biodiversity enhancement on the site. The following ecological enhancements recommended in the Ecological Appraisal have been incorporated into the masterplan for the Site:

- Wildflower Grassland;
- New Tree and Shrub Planting;
- Wetland Features;
- Watercourse Management;
- Bat Boxes;
- Bird Boxes;
- Habitat Piles; and
- Bee Bricks.

Using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.0 calculation tool taking into account the proposed ecological enhancements listed above it is considered that a 17.57% on-site biodiversity net gain could be achieved on the site, increasing to 27.19% when accounting for land proposed to the north of the application boundary. This is considered a significant benefit of the scheme and is substantially higher than the 10% indicated in the Environment Act 2021 and emerging policy.

How will the site be low carbon?

Bewley Homes' key objective from the start of this project has been to create a low carbon and sustainable development which exceeds current targets set by government.

The proposed development will be constructed to a high standard of energy efficiency, in accordance, on average, with the emerging 'Future Homes' standard. This includes the commitment to deliver the scheme with alternative heating solutions to conventional gas central heating. The first phase of the development is expected to see an average improvement of +95% carbon efficiency beyond the 2013 Building Regulations, with an average of at least 75% committed across the remainder of the development.

The housing for the open market will be designed with a high thermal efficiency and increased insulation. These 'fabric first' measures will be dovetailed with a strategy for renewable generation to ensure that each property is equipped with either solar photovoltaic panels and/or air source heat pumps to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

In respect of the affordable housing, the properties will be delivered in conjunction with Sovereign Housing, constructed using modular housing, originally designed as Passivhaus, and adapted to produce low carbon, tenure blind homes.

The proposed community hub in the centre of the development, whilst also constructed to high standards of energy efficiency, will utilise water from the brook running through the Site to power a waterwheel to generate electricity for the building.

What community facilities will be developed on the site?

The proposals will include a community hub in the centre of the development, which will be a flexible space, capable of hosting local community functions and supporting workstations as part of a live/work environment on the site.

A health and wellbeing building is proposed in the centre of the development. This will provide space for a GP surgery and other health services.

A small convenience store is planned on the eastern parcel of the proposed development. Although this is principally anticipated to serve the site, it will also serve to enhance the provision of local convenience retail in this area and benefit the residents of Wash Water.

The proposals include the development of a dedicated cycle route, extending some 1.8km along Andover Road (A343) from Wash Water into Newbury. This enhanced infrastructure will enable better access between the site and Newbury via sustainable modes of transport.

Facilitation of a bus route within the site, providing accessibility to Newbury and surrounding.

The proposals include 7.96 hectares of open space, comprised of both formal and informal amenity areas. This accounts for around 35% of the total site area.

The proposals will include a woodland play area, in addition to other enhancements such as community gardens and allotments; a riverside park; parkland; open space for play. In total, the proposals will lead to an increase of around 3 kilometres of walkways within the development.

It is considered that the proposed community facilities will not just benefit the community of Watermill Bridge but the community of Wash Water and the wider catchment of Newbury.

When and how can I make comments on the planning application?

Once the Local Planning Authority (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council) have validated the application, they will commence a period of public and statutory consultation where you will be able to view the application documents we have submitted and make comments on the proposals.

12 November 2021