

MC/12/2359

Date Received: 3 October, 2012

Location: Mid Kent College Site, Horsted Centre, Maidstone Road, Chatham, ME5 9UQ

Proposal: Application for approval of reserved matters (access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale) for phase 2.1 for the construction of 80 one and two bedroomed flats pursuant to planning permission MC/12/1860 (Variation of condition 5 of MC/11/2865 which allowed for minor material amendments of MC/11/0001 - Outline application for residential (up to 336) dwellings and employment/service facilities, new highway accesses, public open space and ancillary works together with a variation of condition 37 of MC/11/2865 to allow for a reduction in parking provision).

Applicant: Countryside Properties UK Ltd

Agent: Mr R Tilley CgMs 140 London Wall London EC2Y 5DN

Ward Rochester South & Horsted

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 2 January, 2013.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

A227_PL_045 - 77 received on 18 October 2012.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 2 No development shall take place until details of the cycle storage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle storage shall be provided in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of the building to which it relates and thereafter retained.

Reason: To ensure the provision of suitable cycle storage in accordance with policy T4 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 3 No development shall take place until details of the typical external wall details including deck access ways, balconies, eaves and window / wall junctions at a scale of 1:20 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of any part of the development.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area in accordance with policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This is an application for approval of reserved matters relating to access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale for phase 2.1 for the construction of 80 one and two bed roomed flats. This has been made pursuant to planning permission MC/12/1860 which effectively granted revised outline planning permission for residential (up to 336) dwellings and employment/service facilities, new highway accesses, public open space and ancillary works.

The access to the site would be via the existing main access into Phase 1 of the development (Pilots Way), which was also the main access for the former Mid Kent College. This application involves the construction of 5 blocks of flats and relates to the land either side of Pilots Way fronting Horsted Way / Maidstone Road. The building in the northern corner would be part 2-storey / part 3-storey and be 'L' shaped wrapping round the junction and providing a frontage onto both Horsted Way and Pilots Way. The 2-storey element would face onto Horsted Way with the 3-storey element facing into the site. Behind the buildings, a parking courtyard with landscaping would be provided and this would be accessed via an undercroft from Pilots Way. The remaining four apartment blocks would be located to the south of Pilots Way. The blocks fronting onto Horsted Way would be 3-storey and those fronting Pilots Way and into the site would be 3-storey and 4-storey. The 2 blocks in the eastern portion of the phase would be connected by a low single storey element. These buildings would be arranged in a rough pentagon shape to create an internal parking / landscaped area that would be accessed from Pilots Way.

All of the blocks would have a dual frontage with fenestration facing onto either the roads or the internal parking / landscaped areas. The flats would be accessed from front doors looking onto the parking / landscaped areas and above ground level this would be done via decks or cloisters. Balconies would be provided on the elevations of the building facing the road network. Parking would be provided within the internal courtyards together with spaces along the main access road (Pilots Way). Overall 119 parking spaces are proposed, all of which would be unallocated. The 80 flats would consist of 67 x 2 bedroom and 13 x 1 bedroom and the 2 bedroom units would provide a mix of 3 and 4 person.

Site Area/Density

Site area: 0.93 hectares (2 acres)

Site density: 86 dph (40 dpa)

It should be noted that this density relates to this phase only and not the entire development.

Relevant Planning History

MC/12/1951	Construction of a detached dwelling and garage Registered
MC/12/1934	Construction of two buildings to accommodate electricity substations Approved 2 October 2012
MC/12/1860	Variation of condition 5 of MC/11/2865 to allow a minor material amendment to allow alterations to elevations, change to footprint to extra care block and retained trees, together with variation of condition 14 (noise) and removal of condition 46. Approved 24 October 2012
MC/11/2865	Variation of condition 5 of planning permission MC/11/0001 (Outline application for residential (up to 336) dwellings and employment/service facilities, including commercial office/residential building (2500 sqm), and including full application for Phase 1 (except for the appearance of block A - sub-phase 1A) for 154 dwellings, A1 retail and D1 community development, new highway accesses to Maidstone Road and Horsted Way, public open space and ancillary works) to allow for minor material amendments to windows on plots 1-4 and temporary elevational change to plot 4 for its use as a temporary marketing suite Approved 23 May 2012
MC/11/0001	Outline application for residential (up to 336) dwellings and employment/service facilities, including commercial office/residential building (2500 sqm), and including full application for Phase 1 (except for the appearance of block A - sub-phase 1A) for 154 dwellings, A1 retail and D1 community development, new highway accesses to Maidstone Road and Horsted Way, public open space and ancillary works Approved 30 September 2012

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and in the press and by individual neighbour notification letters to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties. Kent Fire and Rescue, The Environment Agency, Rochester Airport Consultative Committee, Kent Police, Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Southern Gas Networks, EDF Energy, Rochester Airport Ltd, Southern Water, English Heritage, Ancient Monuments Society and the Rainham, Gillingham and Chatham Amenity Society have also been consulted.

41 letters have been received raising the following objections:

- Flats are out of keeping with the character of the area
- Buildings are too close to the highway edge
- Insufficient parking
- Insufficient internal space for residents
- Highway safety concerns with regard to the positioning of the access
- Roofs are higher than existing dwellings and balcony hoods are not in keeping
- Removal of landscaping which has been planted by the site entrance
- Impacts on existing trees and ecology in the area
- Impacts on local services
- Overdevelopment of the site and density is out of keeping with the area
- Increase in traffic
- Loss of view to Fort Horsted
- Balconies would not be used

All other matters raised not listed above are non-material

Ward Councillors (Cllr Clarke, Cllr Turpin and Cllr Griffin) object to the application raising the following objections: -

- Harm to the setting of Fort Horsted (Scheduled Ancient Monument) due to the siting of block A1
- Insufficient on-site parking which would harm social cohesion on the sit
- Particular concern with visitor parking spaces
- Parking areas would attract anti-social behaviour
- Poor sight lines for those using the parking court behind block A1
- Refuse trucks on site would limit traffic flow on site
- Scale, mass, proportion and siting of apartment blocks are out of keeping with the low density housing in the area
- Cramped form of development
- Flats are north facing having insufficient light
- Noisy environment for future residents
- Materials not in keeping with the wider area
- Insufficient health and education provision in the area

Environment Agency have confirmed they have no comments

Southern Water have confirmed they have no comments

Southern Gas Networks have raised no objections

Natural England have raised no objections

Kent Police commented on the application from crime prevention through environmental design perspective and have made the following comments:

- Low parking ratio
- Robust and efficient lighting scheme is required
- Some recessed doorways proposed
- Lack of defensible space in some areas
- Public access to decked areas could allow anti-social behaviour
- Undercroft area could attract people congregating
- Utility metres should be externally located

Friends of Horsted Valley raise objection to the application, as the flats are not in keeping with Horsted Way and City Way; there is insufficient on-site parking and development will block views to Fort Horsted

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the South East Plan 2009 and the Medway Local Plan 2003. The policies referred to within these documents and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 and are considered to conform.

The NPPF and the Medway Housing Design Standards (interim) 2011 are material planning considerations.

Planning Appraisal

Principles of Development

Planning permission has been granted under the outline consent for a mixed-use development of the site with a substantial portion of residential development. The indicative plans submitted with the outline application showed residential accommodation in this part of the site and so no objections are raised with regard to the broad principle of residential development.

Street Scene and Design

The application site is a key site in Chatham because of its position at the top of Maidstone Road acting as a gateway to the town; its location immediately adjacent to the Fort Horsted; and its location at the crest of a ridge overlooking the open Horsted Valley to the east. The prominence of the site demands a site-specific design of the highest order. This was recognised and reflected in the outline application which established the following principles:

- Apartment blocks (between two and four storeys) to address the busy Maidstone Road / Horsted Way gyratory and to provide an appropriately urban frontage to this large space. The apartment blocks were to be set back to preserve the mature trees that currently exist along this frontage and allow for further planting.
- Smaller scale houses on the sloping area of the site adjacent to Fort Horsted and the 'Area of Local Landscape Importance' of the Horsted valley. This smaller scale is intended to provide a more sensitive relationship of the development with the open valley and with regard to views to and from the Fort.
- A highly specific architectural concept. For the apartments this meant dual aspect flats arranged around individual courtyards. Vernacular Kentish materials such as redbrick and timber boarding were to be used, albeit in a modern way.

The submitted reserved matters application is very similar to the illustrative scheme for the apartments submitted with the outline application. It has been refined mainly by removing less desirable single aspect units, and by partially dividing the larger of the two courtyards into two separate halves. Overall, this phase of the development works well by reflecting the approach seen in the approved phase 1 of the scheme whilst also creating an appropriate urban edge to the gyratory. Dramatic gable ends at 3-storeys would mark the entrance to the scheme. Elsewhere, the frontage features are, at two and three storeys, not excessively high, especially given the size of the open roundabout on Horsted Way.

These frontage buildings are given interest and drama by tall and steep traditional tiled roofs, and by assertive balconies topped with timber 'hoods' for extra effect. These are said, by the applicants, to allude to the caps of oast houses. Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, in form the buildings are not unlike some of the large farm buildings that are sometimes found in Kent, albeit with a modern twist. The materials proposed are outlined in the design and access statement to match those materials already approved (and seen on site) for Phase 1 of the scheme.

The retention of high quality mature trees along part of the frontage is welcome. As with the outline application, only the most mature trees are to be kept. However the blocks to the south of Pilots Way would be set back sufficient distance from the pavement edge to allow for further planting. Elsewhere, the apartments are brought forward and are in quite close proximity to the road. The staggered alignment of blocks A1, F1 and F4 on the road frontage has been proposed to avoid a visually undesirable long continuous frontage and less regimented character. The facade of Block A1 would be set back between 6-7m and the balcony structures, low hedges and brick walls would provide sufficient privacy to habitable rooms within this block.

Within the scheme, each courtyard features 'cloistered walkways', which give decked access to each apartment. In architectural terms these add interest to the facades and create a welcome difference between the outward facing 'fronts' of each block and the inward facing courtyard elevations. Each deck gives access to relatively few flats. It is highly likely, therefore, that residents would know their neighbours and the majority of the people who use their part of the deck. In addition, windows would

overlook the decks whilst glass balustrades would ensure that all users are highly visible from the ground and from the flats. The decks are also reasonably generous in width. As such, there is no particular reason to suspect that the deck access arrangements at Horsted would give an increased risk of crime as is sometimes perceived with this approach. Other schemes with decked access have proved noisy due to the use of metal walkways. However the decks for Horsted park would be concrete and so there would not be the same noise problems.

Each courtyard would mainly consist of car parking, but, there would be small areas of green retained within each courtyard. This, plus the irregular shape of each courtyard, would help break down the impression of a mass of parking. In addition, the 'outshoot' of block F4 helps break the larger courtyard to the south of Pilots Way into two separate areas. A condition is included in the outline consent that requires detailed landscaping schemes to be submitted for each phase. The drawings provided with this reserved matters illustrate the general approach to positioning of landscaped areas and further details will be required to be submitted pursuant to the condition if planning permission is granted..

Overall, there is no doubt that the scheme would be a very visible addition to the street scene. However, the quality of the scheme is such that this should be welcomed. The scheme has been very carefully detailed. However in order to ensure the decked access is delivered to its highest quality, a condition is recommended to ensure that details of the typical external wall including deck access ways and balconies, eaves details and window / wall junctions are submitted. Accordingly, no objections are raised with regard to the impact on the character and appearance of the area and the provisions of policy BE1 of the South East Plan 2009 and policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Amenity Considerations

The development has been assessed against the Medway Housing Design standards as can be seen below - there are 5 different types of unit proposed.

Number of Bedrooms / Occupancy	MHDS GIA	GIA Proposed	MHDS Living / Dining / Kitchen Good Practice Minimum Floorspace	Living / Dining / Kitchen Floorspace Proposed	MHDS Bedroom Good Practice Minimum Floorspace	Bedroom Floorspace Proposed
2 bed / 3 person	61 m ²	61 m ²	25 m ²	24.36 m ²	Single = 8 m ² Double = 12 m ²	Single = 8.36 m ² Double = 12.21 m ²

2 bed / 4 person	70 m ²	70.50 m ²	27 m ²	27.04 m ²	Double = 12 m ²	Double = 11.84 m ² / 12.96 m ²
1 bed / 2 person	50 m ²	50 m ²	23 m ²	23.8 m ²	Double = 12 m ²	Double = 12.38 m ²
2 bed / 3 person	70 m ²	78.20 m ²	27 m ²	35.15 m ²	Single = 8 m ² Double = 12 m ²	Single = 8.1 m ² Double = 12.42 m ²
2 bed / 4 person	70 m ²	76.50 m ²	27 m ²	29.7 m ²	Double / Twin = 12 m ²	Double = 12.42 m ² / 11.61 m ²

The development accords with the Medway Housing Design Standards in terms of gross internal area and only falls very slightly short in some bedroom and living areas. The sizes given for bedrooms and living spaces in the document is guidance only and so this slight shortfall is acceptable. The window-to-window distances between units within the development (this phase and the approved dwellings) would on the whole exceed the 21-metre distance that is recommended. The fenestration either side of the driveway serving the larger parking court (in blocks F1 and F2) and that between blocks F1 and F4 are closer than this; however the obscure angle and positioning of windows would ensure good levels of amenity for residents.

The siting of the development and its relationship with surrounding buildings would mean no nearby dwellings would be detrimentally affected in terms of outlook, light or privacy.

Accordingly the application is considered acceptable with regard to residential amenity and the provisions of policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Highways

As outlined above, this reserved matters application relates to 80 apartments. This is a reduction in the quantum of development when compared with the indicative drawings submitted with the outline application, which showed 87 units and is a reflection of members comment in considering the outline application. The current proposal is for 13 x 1 bed flats and 67 x 2 bed flats. The ground floor layout plans show 119 parking spaces to serve the 80 apartments. This is an overall ratio of 1.49 spaces per unit and accords with the minimum standards for residential parking provision. Medway Council's Residential Parking Standards require 114 spaces to serve the 80 x 1 and 2 bed dwellings; the additional 5 spaces provided as part of this phase would be available to absorb the potential demand from visitors. These visitor spaces would be in addition to the 29 unallocated visitor parking spaces that were provided as part of Phase 1. The parking spaces being provided as part of Phase 2.1 would all be available on an unallocated basis, positioned across 2 courtyards and

along the main street known as Pilots Way.

In accordance with a condition imposed on the outline approval, an update to the current Parking Management Strategy shall be submitted to cover this phase of the development. This would ensure that the spaces within each courtyard are clearly available for use by any resident of either block and that the parking spaces along Pilots Way numbered 115 - 119 (at least) are marked for visitor use and could be utilised by residents / visitors relating to any unit from any phase in a shared way.

The specification and design of the cycle storage block has not been set out in the application documents and a condition is recommended that details be submitted to ensure it is appropriate and attractive.

Accordingly, the application is considered acceptable with regard to highway safety and parking and the provisions of policy T4 of the South East Plan 2009 and policies T2, T4 and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Building for Life

Building for Life is the industry standard, endorsed by Government, for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. It is designed to help local planning authorities assess the quality of proposed developments. A development is assessed against 12 criteria based on a traffic light system of red, amber and green. New developments should aim to secure as many 'greens' as possible, minimise the number of 'ambers' and avoid 'reds'. A development may not achieve 12 greens for a variety of reasons and local circumstances may justify why a scheme may only achieve an 'amber' against a particular question.

The first set of four questions is concerned with 'Integrating into the Neighbourhood'. This proposed scheme would be well connected with its surroundings and residents would have adequate access to local facilities and bus services. Requirements for affordable housing provision were not met in full but this was justified by a viability assessment.

Whilst the proposed architecture is strong and distinctive and the scheme generally satisfies the questions on 'Creating a Place', some questions remain. The initial design concept of 'green fingers' extending into the surrounding landscape have not been fully realised through design development and there may be some issues with legibility and way-finding caused by the layout of the earlier phases of the development. This is less of a concern in the current phase that is the subject of this application.

The scheme scores all greens in the final section, 'Street & Home', which is concerned, in a more detailed sense, with the quality of the design and management of streets and shared external spaces. Appendix 1 provides the full assessment of the application with explanatory notes.

Local Finance Considerations

There are none relevant to this application.

Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

This reserved matters application follows the general approach articulated in the indicative plans submitted with the outline application. The scale and design would be appropriate for the gateway location. The development would not cause detrimental impacts with regard to outlook, light and privacy for residents and would afford future residents good levels of amenity. The scheme would utilise the previously approved access onto the highway and provide sufficient parking. Accordingly, the application is considered in accordance with the aforementioned development plan policies.

This application would normally fall to be determined under officers' delegated powers, but is being reported for Members' consideration due to the number of letters of representation received expressing a view contrary to the officers' recommendation.

Appendix 1 – Building for Life Assessment

	Criteria	Notes	R/A/G
1	Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones; whilst also respecting existing buildings and land uses along the boundaries of the development site?	Uses existing access point and creates new one. New pedestrian link to neighbouring areas and open space. Reinforces existing pedestrian right of way. (This criterion is concerned with physical connections and integration with surrounding areas so that new developments are not gated or otherwise cut off from surroundings).	G
2	Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?	Wider scheme provides offices, community space and retail. Some shops and pubs 8 min walk on Davis Estate. ASDA 6 minute drive or 15 min walk. Play space on site. School provision has been assessed and education team are satisfied with the education contribution secured.	G
3	Does the scheme have good access to public transport?	Bus stops on Horsted Way provide connections to Maidstone and Chatham and their stations. Contribution to enhance bus shelter.	G

4	Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?	Mix: phase 2.1 has mix of 1b2p, 2b3p and 2b4p units - appropriate in context of site as a whole. Tenure: Extra Care in phase 1 is the affordable provision but no general provision. Viability assessment agreed by Housing Strategy.	A
5	Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?	Strong and distinctive architecture and layout. Draws inspiration from Kent 'farmstead' idea and villages in a contemporary way. Brick and weather-boarding to reflect local materials palette. Roof profiles designed to be evocative of the cowl of an oast house.	G
6	Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), trees and plants, wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimate?	Topography and landscape has influenced layout - softer green edge - but 'green fingers' concept not fully followed through. Some existing trees retained but only those protected. Wildlife located on adjacent eco-park. A secure boundary was needed so no direct relationship with Fort. Site orientation and microclimate: some concern that block A1 will suffer from proximity to busy road although dual aspect dwellings helps to mitigate this.	A
7	Are buildings defined and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?	Blocks form strong built edge to main streets with enclosed inner courtyard providing parking and access. Buildings frame and clearly define entrance to site. Windows provided on all elevations. Entrances are from inner courtyards not main street.	G

8	Is the development designed to make it easy to find your way around?	Streets are well defined by buildings. This phase can use Horsted Way as point of reference for orientation. Street and inner courtyard defines clear hierarchy although there may be some ambiguity about entrance points. In wider scheme there may be a confusion of routes - both streets and green spaces - and there is a long cul-de-sac.	A
9	Are streets designed in a way that encourages low vehicle speeds and allows them to function as social spaces?	Shared surface - use of resin bonded gravel, granite setts and cast iron tree grilles. Designed to influence behaviour of drivers. Streets are also short and broken by changes of direction/ and courtyard spaces along them. All ground floor apartments provide natural surveillance of the street.	G
10	Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?	Parking numbers have been approved by transport officers. Phase 2.1: Resident parking in internal courtyards so visually enclosed, softened by planting, overlooked and not visible from street. Limited on street visitor parking with regular tree planting to mitigate visual dominance in street.	G
11	Will public and private spaces be clearly defined to have appropriate access and be able to be well managed and safe in use?	Most green public space is for use as a green buffer between main road and development and for privacy of ground floor units. Also to allow retention of existing mature trees. No play space included in this phase as more appropriate elsewhere. Management plan in place.	G
12	Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling, as well as vehicles and cycles?	Bin and recycling and cycle stores are provided on the ground floor and follow standard requirements. Parking numbers have been approved by transport officers.	G

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of the Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham.