

**Mearley Croft
Woone Lane, Clitheroe**

Planning Support Statement

for

**Erection of 10 cottage style dwellings on currently vacant land
(Application to replace PP 3/2011/1064 for erection of 32 dwellings)**

By

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APPLICATION BACKGROUND

This Statement is intended to support the planning application submitted by Beck Developments for the erection of 10 cottage style dwellings on land to the South of Woone Lane, Clitheroe.

It is a fact material to the consideration of the application that the site already benefits from a full planning permission for the erection of 32 affordable dwellings on this site, albeit for an extended development site area. That permission (3/2011/1064) was also related, in a hybrid fashion, to a second larger site a short distance along Woone Lane, on which it was proposed to erect 81 market dwellings - although the planning decision notice was structured in such a way as to allow each site to be progressed in an independent manner - the smaller site through the discharge of conditions and the larger site through submission of Reserved Matters.

Both permissions were, however, linked in terms of delivery of affordable housing and statutory contributions, through an engrossed Section 106 Agreement, that Agreement (amongst other things) preventing a start on the larger site until the smaller affordable scheme has been completed. In some respects, this approach varied from the Council's normal requirements in terms of delivery of on-site affordable housing (which envisages any affordable units being progressively delivered on a phased basis - first triggered by completion of a certain number of market dwellings) but Beck Developments had previously agreed to similarly deliver the full complement of affordable houses (in association with Contour Housing Group) in advance of the main scheme at Primrose Village Phase 1, and believed that a similar approach would benefit the Borough by accelerating affordable housing provision within Clitheroe.

However that has proved not to be possible since the serious nature of technical problems associated with poor ground conditions at Mearley became more apparent during the detailed site investigation which followed the grant of planning permission. The Council is aware of the nature of these problems, coupled with the need to delay commencement of development by over two years in order to eradicate a serious outbreak of Japanese knot weed. Further ground investigation also confirmed the need for substantial and expensive stabilisation works closer to Mearley Brook itself - which, in turn, questions the capability of the site to accommodate the original 32 unit scheme. Certainly the extensive stabilisation costs would have substantially eroded if not eliminated any commercial viability and would have rendered an affordable scheme as unbuildable.

The knock-on effect of this problem has been the prevention of any start on the main 81 unit scheme (due to the conditions imposed on the Section 106 Agreement), following an initial delay associated with the timing of the site access construction through the Miller Homes scheme. That access has now been available for several months and the applicants wish to agree with the Council a variation of the original development intentions in order to accelerate delivery of both schemes.

Discussions regarding the variation of the Section 106 Agreement terms have been ongoing for some time and it is acknowledged that as part of this planning application (and also the separate application being progressed for approval of Reserved Matters on the main site) there will be a need to produce a Deed of Variation in order to respond to any adjusted contributions, together with the timing of delivery.

Separately, therefore, details of the larger 81 unit scheme are being submitted for approval of reserved matters, although that scheme will be adjusted to incorporate the required 30% affordable housing in the normal manner (as opposed to the original intention of locating the affordable element, off-site, at nearby Woone Lane (Mearley)).

That leaves the smaller Mearley site to be progressed on a totally independent basis through submission of a fresh detailed planning application. As shown on the submitted plans and drawings (and explained in the accompanying Design and Access Statement) the proposal is to build 10 smaller cottage style dwellings along the Woone Lane frontage strip, that being the area not as seriously encumbered with the ground stability problems associated with the land to the rear. Whilst the applicant is disappointed that this sustainable and accessible housing location cannot deliver the larger number of dwellings originally intended, the new proposal does make effective use of the available developable land and should deliver smaller, more affordable units of accommodation to Clitheroe in the very near future.

Beck Developments is currently completing the small Copperfields housing development on the site to the rear of the Craven Heifer PH, a short distance to the south of Primrose Lodge and believes that a scheme of smaller units would complement the development as well as meet market requirements.

This is a sustainable housing location, readily accessible in terms of walking distance to shops, employment, schools and essential facilities but also with ready access to the open countryside. The scheme will also benefit from the environmental regeneration of the Primrose Lodge woodland and water area in due course.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Because the site already benefits from extant planning permission 3/2011/1064 it is not considered necessary to justify the proposal in terms of planning policy, nor in terms of locational suitability - those issues having been analysed and endorsed as part of the previous application assessment.

Both national and local policy supports sustainable schemes, especially those located within existing settlement boundaries where future residents can take advantage of a wide range of available facilities, together with available public transport, without the need to make excessive demands upon local infrastructure. The new proposal (as with its predecessor) satisfies those important requirements. But project viability and scheme delivery are equally important considerations which must be taken into account in any balanced planning application assessment.

In the case of the application site, those latter considerations have highlighted a need to review the delivery process (and therefore the application content) in order to restore project certainty.

As the accompanying Design and Access Statement confirms, the scheme takes the lead from the character of the immediately adjacent residential area and proposes cottage style, terraced dwellings which will sit well in their Woone Lane setting. The cottages will be partly set back from the public highway but will be set down into the site because of the falling levels. This allows car parking also to be sited below the level of Woone Lane where parked vehicles will be partly screened, as in the already approved scheme.

The new properties will overlook Mearley Brook and Primrose Lodge, providing an attractive outlook but will be located above any flood safeguarding levels. Occasional access for pedestrians and maintenance vehicles will also be provided to the land of the rear, as well as to the watercourse bank.

The residual area of land, which will not now be developed, would be retained purely as an open area either for long-term integration with the broader Primrose Lodge environmental project or possibly as future allotments. However, the area is excluded from the present application as such use is consistent with its established planning use.

The applicant is able to confirm that there is no intention to add a further phase of development on the land to the rear, especially because of its limited access and poor load-bearing capabilities.

SUMMARY

The applicant therefore invites the Council to support the new proposal as a small sustainable housing project located in a popular housing area, with excellent access to Clitheroe town centre and a wide range of local facilities. If approved, the scheme is anticipated to be speedily commenced as the developers have been encouraged by the high demand for their recently completed properties at Copperfield Close.

Having been effectively separated (in development timing terms) from the larger 81 unit scheme further down Woone Lane, there should be no procedural reason for a delayed start. Likewise, there should be no reason why the larger scheme cannot independently commence in the near future following separate approval of Reserved Matters. It is anticipated that the larger scheme will continue to be qualified through variation of the existing Section 106 Agreement, albeit in the suitably modified form. An amended S106 would not be required to for the smaller 10 unit scheme because of its restricted size.