

Potters Green

— West of Stevenage —

On 11 September 2020, the Potters Green virtual public exhibition website was launched to provide local residents and businesses with information on the emerging proposals for Potters Green; a sustainable new neighbourhood on the western edge of Stevenage.

It was advertised through a community newsletter which was delivered to approximately 300 properties and 120 businesses in the vicinity of the site, and also to elected representatives at Stevenage Borough Council. The newsletter invited comments and questions on the proposals over a 3-week period extending to 2 October 2020.

Taylor Wimpey, Persimmon Homes and their appointed project team are grateful to all those who visited the virtual public exhibition, and for the feedback received. The comments have been helpful in the further formulation of the planning application proposals.

In response to the comments and questions received, this document has been prepared to provide answers from the project team and also to assist interested parties by clarifying where to look for further information in the planning application once submitted later in 2020.

Housing Need

Why is there a need for a development of this scale in Stevenage?

Development targets for housing in Stevenage been determined by the Borough Council through the preparation of its Local Plan. These targets were scrutinised by an independent Planning Inspector prior to the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019 and expect at least 7,600 new homes to be delivered over the period between 2011 and 2031.

**Artist impression of the new gateway
from Meadway into Potters Green**



Why is greenfield land being developed instead of brownfield sites?

The Council presented evidence to the Local Plan Examination which demonstrates that all available brownfield sites had been exhausted before greenfield or Green Belt sites were considered for development in the Plan. Since the start of the Plan period in 2011 around 85% of new homes and planning permissions have been on brownfield land in the Borough. The Council also plans to redevelop a number of large brownfield sites in the future, including the Town Centre and some of the Neighbourhood Centres. However, Stevenage has a limited supply of these sites, therefore a number of greenfield sites do need to be developed in order to meet the overall housing requirement for the Plan period.

Transport Considerations

How will the development be accessed by vehicles and what impact will this have on the local road network?

Potters Green will be served by two vehicular access points. These are from Meadway to the north and Bessemer Drive to the south. The Meadway entrance is currently only wide enough for a one-way carriageway and new underpass of the A1(M) is therefore proposed to provide a new route for two-way vehicular movement. This then allows the existing underpass to be used exclusively for walking and cycling.

Robust assessments of the future capacity of the roads leading to the proposed vehicular access points have been undertaken based upon the year, 2036, by which point the development is expected to be complete and fully occupied. The traffic flows used in this assessment have been obtained from a model developed by Hertfordshire County Council.

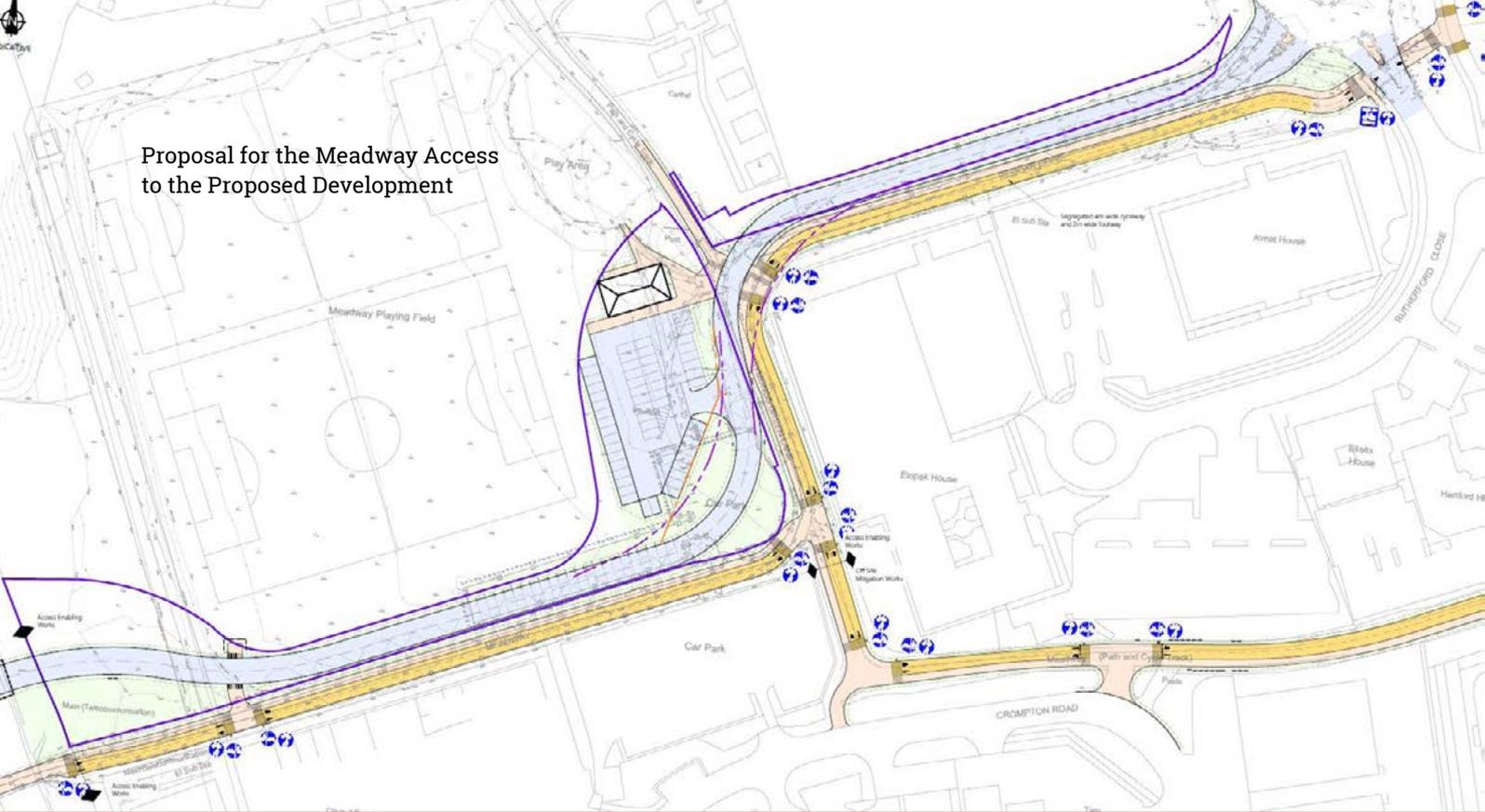
In carrying out this assessment, worse case assumptions have been made in terms of the number of car journeys that may take place. No adjustments have been made to reflect the substantial financial investment in delivering sustainable transport connections to the site.

The results indicate that, without intervention, queues and delays on Bessemer Drive and Clovelly Way will be increased by the proposed development. The development will therefore deliver a comprehensive package of mitigation measures on both road corridors that will not only address the impacts arising from the proposed development but also deliver a net improvement on current conditions. These measures include widening the Clovelly Way approach to the roundabout with Gunnels Wood Road to provide an extended flared two-lane approach to the junction. As a result of these works the queue length on Clovelly Way reduces significantly.

Further detail on the mitigation measures will be available on the Transport Assessment submitted with the planning application.

What impact is the construction of the new access going to have on Meadway Playing Fields and existing parking provision on Meadway?

The Meadway access proposals comprise the construction of a new carriageway parallel to the existing road alignment which enables the conversion of the existing carriageway to a segregated footway / cycleway. Where possible, existing trees along the corridor will be retained and supplemented with new planting.



Proposal for the Meadway Access to the Proposed Development

The alignment of the new carriageway and associated works requires the reconfiguration of the Meadway Playing Field car park and demolition of the existing Clubhouse. There will be no changes to the configuration of the existing sports pitches. A new car park, clubhouse and vehicular access will be constructed that provides 55 car parking spaces.

A controlled crossing facility for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided where Symonds Green Lane crosses the new carriageway.

With respect to parking provision on Meadway, the Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council Officers have expressed a desire to remove on-street parking that currently occurs along the length of Redcar Drive to Symonds Green Lane and this will be controlled by parking restrictions.

There is more than sufficient car parking available for staff in the adjoining Meadway Corporate Centre and Cavendish Road / Crompton Road estate to accommodate parking demand from these employment uses.

How will the uptake of sustainable travel modes be encouraged?

A guiding objective of the design process has been to ensure that priority is given to more sustainable forms of transport and opportunities to reduce travel demand.

A Movement & Access Strategy has been developed which will deliver:

- Measures to reduce the need to travel including super-fast broad connectivity and a broad range of local services and facilities within the new neighbourhood
- Incentives including a community website, travel information packs, and car sharing promotional strategies
- A comprehensive network of on-site 'Greenways' (traffic-free segregated pedestrian and cycle routes) and recreational footpaths connecting key land uses on and off-site
- Upgrades to the existing public rights of way on and around the site.

- Improved signage within the site and across the wider Stevenage Cycleway / Footway network
- Cycle parking across the site
- The inclusion of a 'Hub' within the local centre that will incorporate ultra-fast electric vehicle charging, last-mile delivery services, flexible workspace, refreshments, WiFi access and interactive personalised travel planning
- A regular bus service between the site, Stevenage Town Centre and Rail / Bus Interchange coupled with Real-Time Passenger Information at boarding points and key local facilities as well as promotional public transport ticketing
- Integration of a zero-emission Car Club operation within the development
- Measures to slow vehicle speeds on the internal street network.

This will be supported by the appointment and funding of a Travel Plan Coordinator to champion the implementation of the Movement & Access Strategy. The Travel Plan Coordinator will establish a Steering Group made up of enthusiastic members of the community to continue this role beyond the initial set-up period to ensure continuity in the delivery of a sustainable future for the site.

Community Facilities

Will any public rights of way across the site be closed?

The public rights of way across the site are largely to be retained and enhanced. Where short sections of footpaths are to be closed, alternative routes are to be provided so to create a more accessible network through the site. Connections through the development to the wider countryside beyond will remain for the existing community in the site's surroundings. The existing community will also benefit from the new routes created, such as the footpath around the edge of the development which provides a recreational route for residents and visitors to follow and make the most of views and links to the countryside.

Will sports facilities be provided?

Within the development, three principal open spaces are proposed. Adjacent to the local centre and primary school is a central park which will incorporate a community orchard and garden. This central area also offers formal play equipment, including a Multi-Use Games Area.

The Local Plan also identifies a need for land to be provided within the development for a new cricket pitch, subject to an up to date assessment of local demand. A large green open space has been incorporated on a flat part of the site within the first phase of development which can accommodate a new cricket pitch and pavilion should a local cricket club require it. This has been designed as a community green, with dwellings fronting onto it, and offers scope to accommodate a wide range of day-to-day activities such as kicking a ball around, dog walking, having a picnic or providing a venue for a summer fayre. The pavilion also offers a potential space for community events and groups to meet.



An example of a Multi-Use Games Area

In the northern part of the site, an open space has been designed across the Potters Spring tree group which is a key view along the main street when entering the development from Meadway. This will be a level area suitable for an informal kick-about and picnics. It will also incorporate seating, formal play equipment and woodland play features near to Potters Spring.

Amenity

Will the development increase noise and air quality issues on local roads?

As noted above in relation to transport considerations, a comprehensive package of mitigation measures is proposed to ensure congestion is not increased as a result of the proposed development.

That so, the impacts of construction noise and vibration and changes in road traffic noise due to the development have been carefully assessed.

Noise surveys were undertaken to feed into these assessments; all were completed before COVID related reductions in traffic flow and related noise levels. Further data on traffic flows has also been considered based on the transport modelling work referred to above. The assessments themselves use a 3D computer model, which the consultants can use to determine noise levels at any point to inform their findings. No significant effects have been identified through this modelling process.

Air quality modelling has also been undertaken, utilising local monitoring data at several locations in close proximity to the site and within Stevenage. Impacts on existing pollution levels at worst case locations are not expected to be significant following the addition of traffic associated with the proposed development. To ensure a worse case assessment was conducted, the anticipated emissions drop off associated with the uptake in electric vehicles has been disregarded and current vehicle emission levels have been utilised.

What impact will the development have on the residents of the Dyes Lane Caravan Park?

In preparing the planning applications, careful consideration has been given to the amenity of residents of the Dyes Lane Caravan Park. The Caravan Park is not directly affected by the proposals and will remain where it is.

The residents have been kept informed of the proposals and the application survey work that has been taking place through newsletters and by visits from the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer. Mitigation measures have been built into the design to respect to privacy of the Caravan Park residents, including appropriate buffer zones and landscaping. The access to the Caravan Park via Bessemer Drive will also not change.

Construction Phasing

What is the construction programme for the development and how will it be phased?

The application includes full details of all the housing proposed in the first phase of development which is located in the southern part of the site, adjacent to the Bessemer Drive access. This first phase will incorporate approximately 390 houses and will also deliver the main street up to the Meadway access so to allow for the early delivery of the primary school and a bus service through the site.

The anticipated timescales are summarised in the table below:

Winter 2020	Submission of Planning Application
Summer 2021	Determination of Planning Application
Winter 2021/22	Discharge of Pre-Commencement Planning Conditions
Summer 2022	Start on construction of first phase of development on site

Following the commencement of the first phase of development, further planning applications will be submitted to seek approval of the detail of subsequent phases.

The development is expected to take 10 to 12 years to complete.

Design

What approach has been taken to the design of the proposed dwellings?

The appearance of the proposed dwellings and density of development have been informed by a comprehensive assessment of the character of existing neighbourhoods in Stevenage and of the surrounding villages. This outcomes of the process have been discussed with Urban Design Consultants appointed by Stevenage Borough Council. The process has been very helpful in identifying 'pros' and 'cons' which have informed the identification of proposed character areas across the site. Further detail on this assessment will be set out in the Design and Access Statement that will accompany the planning application.

Ecology

What consideration have been given to potential impact upon wildlife, including habitats and protected species?

A full suite of habitat and protected species surveys have been undertaken and where required mitigation has been proposed for the loss of habitats and to ensure protected species (breeding birds, great crested newts, badger etc) are adequately protected.

Most of the site is arable land, but where more sensitive habitats are to be lost, proposals are being made to provide replacement habitat across the site.

All woodlands on-site are to be retained and protected, with improvements for management of these habitats recommended. Sensitive landscaping will provide protective buffers for existing wildlife sites and woodlands as well as enhancing these habitats. Additionally, the provision of open space and green ways across the site will lessen the recreational impact on surrounding wildlife sites as well as providing a green network and connectivity across the site

Summary of Proposals



1,500 new homes, including a wide mix for all generations



30% of the new homes will be available for rent or shared ownership as affordable housing



A residential care home



A new primary school



A local centre with retail and café



An employment zone and further job opportunities across the site



A new community centre



A potential GP Surgery



Community event space



Sports facilities, including a potential new cricket pitch



Formal and natural play equipment



Community orchard and gardens



Extensive tree planting and habitat creation



A network of walking and cycling routes and play trails



A mobility hub for electric vehicle charging and other sustainability measures.



Artist impression of the local centre of Potters Green