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PDA GROUP

PRICE DINSDALE ASSOCIATES LTD

CHARTERED ARCHITECTS

DESIGN STATEMENT

For

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

At

BROWN EDGE ROAD, BUXTON

March 2012

Proposed Residential Development

At

Brown Edge Road, Buxton

Supporting Design Statement – March 2012

Introduction

Brown Edge is a prominent north – south ridge on the northern side of the town of Buxton, and visible in part from various locations on the A6 approach to the town. The southern end of the ridge, nearest the town centre, is also the lowest end of the formation, and residential development commenced there approximately a hundred years ago.

During the first half of the twentieth century, residential development spread northwards, right along the Edge for the better part of a mile, with the quality of property reducing with increasing distance from the town.

Brown Edge Road is a classic case of ribbon development at its worst, as development took place lineally along the crest of the ridge, which from some viewpoints, is also the skyline. The architectural quality of the ridgeline development is poor, and unsympathetic to traditional vernacular building styles in the area.

The application site comprises a northerly extension to existing development on the east facing slope of Brown Edge. Whilst not previously designated for residential development, it is, however, a natural infill site, lying between the residential development of Ladycroft to the south and the existing dwellings at Low Croft to the north, and between residential development along Brown Edge Road to the west, and the rail line and disused sidings area to the east. The infill nature of the site has been strengthened in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) by the identification of site HP61 to the immediate east of the Application site.

The main visual drivers of residential development on this site will be the absolute imperative of not breaking the skyline as viewed from the A6 north of Buxton, and the need to avoid an unnatural geometric imposition on the eastern slope of Brown Edge.

Insofar as it is practical so to do, any development on this hillside should seek to soften the transition between built-up area and open countryside. If, in the process, it is possible to mitigate the visual intrusion of the existing skyline development when viewed from the A6 to the north of Buxton, such an opportunity should be taken.

Type of Development

The proposed development focuses on current and near future perceived private housing needs in the town of Buxton. Due to the prevailing economic climate, which is unlikely to alter radically within the next five years, consumer demand is for homes offering high value for money (typically offering substantial accommodation on a relatively small footprint): affordable prices, and, as ever, viable for access and occupation by the elderly and/ or infirm, and those with mobility issues.

This has determined the proposed offering of a mix of dwelling designs. All offer three or four bedroom accommodation, integral garage parking, and a variety of floor areas. Whilst, in order to retain a compact footprint, accommodation is spread over three levels, the dictates of local topography imply that all the dwellings are two storeys only in height on their uphill elevations.

The entry point to the development is fixed by the access already established at 72 Brown Edge Road, and off which five detached houses have recently been constructed. The present scheme proposes the widening and continuation of this access road across the eastern flank of Brown Edge in an organic and non-geometric manner. The proposed dwellings would not be of the same scale or as high a value as those previously constructed, in response to the present economic climate that will prevail for the foreseeable future.

In total, 21 new detached dwellings are proposed, of which 6 would be offered on an affordable basis, for administration by a local Housing Association or other approved RSL.

Sustainable Development

National Planning Policy now strongly favours sustainable development. The concept of sustainability, of course, embraces far more than simply the design and engineering of dwellings – the entire location must also be sustainable in terms of the availability of supporting public amenities and facilities, viable public transport provision etc.

In this instance, the factors relevant to sustainability, but external to the development site, are already in place – public transport services, proximity of schools, shops etc. Therefore, if the physical development itself commits practically and irrevocably to the concept of sustainability, the project as a whole may be defined as sustainable development.

The accepted means of tying a residential development into a total commitment of sustainability, is via registration of the site, and the undertaking of a pre-assessment report in accordance with the provisions of the Code for Sustainable Housing. The site owners are in any event committed to the principles of sustainability, also running a green energy enterprise. Once the CSH Assessment has been carried out, this may then be incorporated as a Planning Condition, ensuring that the resulting development maintains its truly sustainable credentials.

A full CSH pre-Assessment Report has been commissioned for this development, and it is submitted as part of the Planning Application. It will be noted that the proposed development achieves at least CSH Code 3 status.

Sustainability may now also be at the point in public perception where it is considered to be a plus point by intending purchasers, and it is the aim of the Developers to advertise this as the first genuinely sustainable housing development in Buxton.

The specifications will include, among other elements:-

- Rainwater Harvesting
- Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS)
- Biodigester Waste Water Treatment
- Reed Bed Waste Water Dispersal
- Built-in Energy Monitoring to Dwellings
- Water Use Optimisation
- High Insulation Standards
- Solar Energy Panels
- Sustainably Sourced Building Materials
- Advanced Recycling Provision

Proposals:

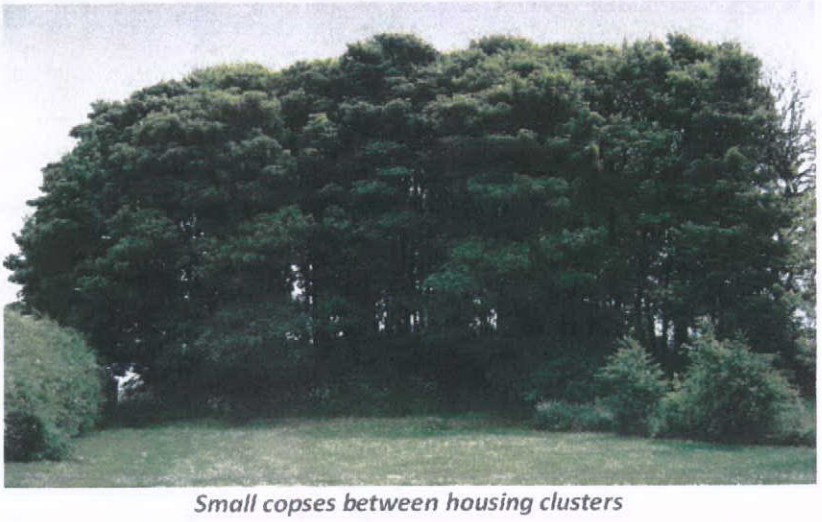
Introduction

This present Application is for Outline Consent only, with most matters of detail reserved for later determination. However, due to the perceived prominence of the site, and it's adverse topography, sufficient detail accompanies this Application to demonstrate that it is entirely feasible to undertake the development in this form, and to address any concerns regarding the practicality of the proposed layout, or of adequate access being provided for those with mobility problems. Therefore, and for the avoidance of doubt, drawings of the proposed dwelling types are overstamped as "Indicative Only".

Layout

The first feature of note would be protection of the visual amenity of existing residents on the east side of Brown Edge Road by means of the establishment of a substantial landscape belt/ wildlife corridor along the western boundary of the application site. This will enable the establishment and permanent retention of an effective screen of indigenous shrub, hedgerow and trees of moderate scale, which will also give a substantial collateral benefit of growing to screen the existing dwellings on Brown Edge Road from the A6 north of Buxton. Whilst not, of itself justifying the proposed development, the establishment of this natural screen represents a considerable visual enhancement of the approach to the town.

The proposed dwellings themselves would be split into definable groups by small areas of indigenous shrub and woodland, rather than being uniformly distributed along both sides of a highway.

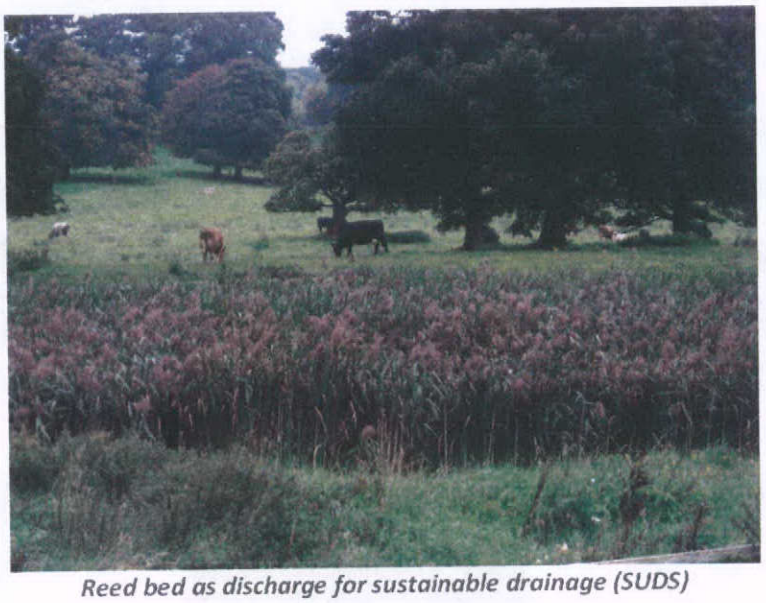


Small copses between housing clusters

This is intended to break up the visual impact of the development, the concept being rooted in the traditional small, isolated clumps of trees that form a feature of the open countryside around Buxton, and which are thought to be connected with the long-defunct lead mining industry. These copses will soften the development and provide additional and varied local wildlife habitats.

The highway has deliberately been designed to be organic in form. This is to avoid the imposition of inappropriate orthogonal geometry on the hillside.

The planted habitats will also be enhanced by the provision of a self-contained sustainable drainage system (SUDS) for the development, comprising of a full bio-digester discharging into a new reed bed in the lowest area of the site (subject to the approval of Network Rail).



Reed bed as discharge for sustainable drainage (SUDS)

Additional car parking spaces as required by DCC standard specifications are generally provided adjacent to the substantial planting areas, to reduce the visual impact of standing vehicles.

Engineering

Local Planning Officers have recently expressed a wish to avoid "over-engineered" residential development, where, as in this instance, a site presents adverse topography, leading to exaggerated road gradients and prominent retaining walls.

In this case, it is proposed to work with the topography in providing vehicle garaging underneath properties on the "upbank" side of the carriageway, and locating garages to houses on the "downbank" side of the roadway at the intermediate floor level.

In order to minimise the appearance of retaining structures, these are positioned so as to run through the lowest floor level of all the dwellings, leaving only short connecting lengths visible, and these could be of the "crib" type, fully planted, if desired. Overall retaining wall lengths are restricted by the breaking up of the dwellings into small groups.



Planted "crib" retaining wall

Appearance

It might be supposed that the Application site is highly visible from the public domain, (the A6 trunk road to the north of Buxton, viewed to the west across Nunsfield Farm and High Peak Golf course). In reality, as is illustrated by the photographs in the document entitled "Planning CoOperative – Annex 1", accompanying this Application, the reverse is true.

Very little of the Application site is visible from the A6 – principally, in fact, only the low quality existing development on the ridge of Brown Edge, which would be largely obscured by the screen planting scheme envisaged as part of the proposed development.



Tree and shrub planting behind existing Brown Edge road gardens

However, the development will be visible from the existing residential properties on St Peter's Road and to a lesser extent, Nunsfield Road, hence the principles of non-geometic layout, and division of development into small groups.

The prevailing topography will influence the internal layout of the dwellings in that some will have principal living areas at first floor level, and others will feature integral garages underneath the living spaces.

However, in terms of external appearance, it is intended that all dwellings should draw from a limited palate of materials, including blue slate roofs, and either natural limestone or high quality grey, pitched face reconstructed stone walls, with gritstone dressings, and window surrounds. Some limited areas of rendering may be deemed to be acceptable by Officers, but detailed appearance will be a matter for later approval. In any event, it is suggested that the colour palate should lean more towards the grey limestone of the indigenous field barns and dry stone walls, rather than the more visually prominent buff of the local gritstone. It may also be appropriate to use small feature areas of dark stained timber boarding or vertical slate hanging in some elevational treatments.

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