



PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

**Development of a Retirement Village
comprising circa 60 Park Homes,
Access Road and Associated Infrastructure
At Land North of Willow Farm,
Great Dunmow, Essex CM6 1HU**

**On Behalf of
Harriet & George Legal Consultants**

Our Ref: 1507b
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Harriet & George Legal Consultants have instructed Evans Banks Planning to submit a formal Pre-Planning Application Enquiry to Uttlesford District Council. The purpose of the formal enquiry is to seek the Council Officers formal opinion as to the potential for a future application for full planning permission for a Retirement Village of 60 Park Homes, with associated Access Road and infrastructure. The site forms part of Willow Farm, being a grouping of residential caravans, stables, agricultural sheds and three field enclosures, set off Braintree Road, south-east of Great Dunmow, Essex.
- 1.2 This Supporting Statement has been prepared to supplement and provide detail of the potential development, and its contents should be read in conjunction with the following accompanying plans and supplementary reports:
- Site Location plan
 - Indicative Site layout plan
 - Typical Park Homes elevations and floor plans
- 1.3 The Pre-Planning Application proposals have been prepared based on the nature and type of the above proposal, and the proposed scheme has been assessed against the following key areas, as well as the site's context:
- Evaluation of site constraints, planning history and availability of services
 - Evaluation of National & Local Planning Policy and procedures
 - Pre-application discussions on scheme with specialist accommodation providers
 - Pre-Application meetings with local elected representatives at Great Dunmow

2.0 SITE ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The subject site comprises of a level to gently undulating grazing field enclosure, which has been split into three distinct areas of grazing, together with a Traveller's caravan site and associated range of former agricultural outbuildings. The whole site is some 3.0 hectares (7.3 acres) in size. Willow Farm lies off a surfaced access farm lane which runs for some 120 metres east off an access with the B1256 Road, set some 150 metres south of the prominent road junction with Braintree Road at the south-eastern outskirts of the town of Great Dunmow. The access is set off the eastern flank of the B road at a point where the River Chelmer is bridged. The farm lane extends parallel with the narrow river channel before turning north-east where a grouping of Traveller caravans is to be found enveloped by very high and uninterrupted rows of leylandii trees. Those trees act as a complete natural screen to an open arable field set fronting the B road, as it arches about the Braintree Road junction.
- 2.2 The Travellers site also contains a number of modest portal framed metal sheds being part of an existing farmyard. To their immediate east lie three open field enclosures which extend east and south-east for some 115 metres to a continuous eastern perimeter of high hedgerows and occasional mature tree. That eastern perimeter is afforded a field drainage ditch linking to the main river. To the north, lies an unkempt paddock with public footpath to its northern perimeter, set just outside the long rear garden space of a row of residential properties which front the B1256 road along its eastern flank and extending east from the town.
- 2.3 The land to the east and south of the site is in agricultural use, however the land to the south has the benefit of planning permission for an extensive Commercial Development, comprising Offices, Classic Car Workshops and Businesses, Refuse Lorry Depot, together with significant surfaced car parks and landscaped open areas stretching to the banks of the River Chelmer. **Planning Permission UTT/19/1219/FUL refers.** The approved development has had the effect of extending the built envelope of Great Dunmow east of the B road and to the Chelmer, and thus the potential development at Willow Farm can be seen to encompass the area between that proposed site and residential properties to the northeast at Braintree Road.
- 2.4 The subject field is currently grazed with several horses which act to suppress any vegetation other than semi-improved grassland, whereas the access lane tends to be tree-lined with existing mature trees forming the riverside banks of the Chelmer which is well camouflaged in the context of this edge of town setting. The "Saffron Trail" public footpath is designated along this access track before turning south to run parallel with the Chelmer to higher ground south. The public footpath crosses over the B road to an open field off the opposite flank of the road and runs in a north-westerly direction to link to Braintree Road at a point opposite the Cricket Ground and junction with St Edmunds Lane.

2.5 Figure 1 illustrates a wider OS Map of the south-easter part of Great Dunmow to highlight the position of the land at Willow Farm in relation to the town centre and nearby facilities at Braintree Road. Figure 2 provides a “Google Earth” image of the site, with the above features identified. Figure 3 below depicts an Ordnance Survey map extract with the potential application site edged in red.

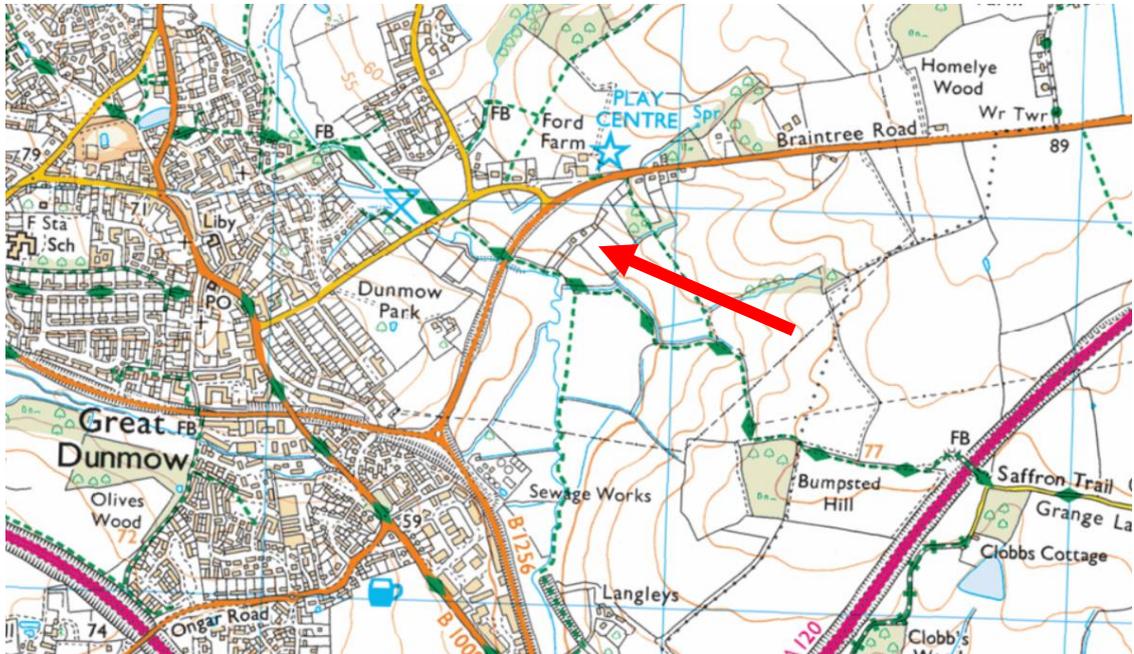


Figure 1 – OS Explorer Map with Pre-Application Site identified



Figure 2 – Google Earth image – July 2021



Figure 3 – Ordnance Survey Map Extract with site edged in red

- 2.6 Photographs below illustrate the current site frontage off the B road which is set off a wide highway verge, with the aforementioned open, neighbouring frontage field providing an undeveloped buffer from that busy main road. Further photos within the actual site also provide an indication of the existing physical features in evidence on the Travellers' yard and surroundings.



Photo 1 – extent of Braintree Road junction looking east to application site



Photo 2 – extent of open enclosure viewing south-east across site



Photo 3 – view at entrance to Travellers' site upon access track



Photo 4 – Travellers' caravans presently bordering the western site boundary



Photo 5 – view of typical agricultural outbuilding on western part of site



Photo 5 – existing site access off B1256 road



Photo 6 – view to north across site from adjacent Saffron Trail public footpath

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The site has been subject previous applications for planning permission associated with a Travellers' Caravan modest agricultural outbuildings, which can be itemised as follows:

UTT/1356/94/FUL – Erection of Livestock Barn – Full approved – December 1994

UTT/0438/97/FUL - 1. Retention of barn (permitted under UTT/1356/94/FUL) in revised position 2. Retention of rear extension – Full approved – August 1997

UTT/1703/08/FUL - Change of use to residential. Retention of converted mobile home for an extended gypsy family – Full approved – January 2009

UTT/0335/02 – Change of use of Barn to Dwelling – Refused – July 2002

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 National Planning Policy

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was last updated in July 2021. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 states that “*for decision-taking this means:*

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”*

4.1.2 The NPPF indicates that a key factor in the delivery of new development is its ability to ensure that the most appropriate use of land is at the forefront of all decision-making, and the consequences of delivering new development are not at the expense of any adverse effects upon the environment nor places a detriment on a locality’s character and setting. It indicates under Para. 124 that: “*Planning.....decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:*

- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;*
- b) local market conditions and viability;*
- c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;*
- d) the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and*
- e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.*

4.1.3 It indicates that “*Planning decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

- 4.1.4 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that development is appropriate for its location taking into account various factors such as pollution, living conditions and the natural environment. Consideration needs to be given to:
- Noise impacts on health and quality of life
 - Protection of tranquil areas prized for their recreational and amenity value
 - Limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation

4.2 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

- 4.2.1 The development plan in form for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compensation Act 2004 is the **Uttlesford Local Plan**, which was adopted in January 2005. The Secretary of State directed in December 2007 that the majority of planning policies in that Plan be “saved”. It could be argued that a Local Plan, which was adopted some 17 years ago, could be considered “out-of-date” under the provisions of paragraph 11 the NPPF.
- 4.2.2 The “**Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan**” was made and adopted as local planning policy in December 2016. The Plan sets out the aims and objectives for guiding new development up to 2032. The site at Willow Farm lies outside the “*Town Development Area*” as defined by Policy DS1, and thus lies in countryside.
- 4.2.3 GDNP Policy LSC1 relates to landscape, setting and character. Developments are required to be visually attractive, informed by the defining characteristics of its location character areas, and respect the key positive features of the approaches to Great Dunmow. These policies could be considered more in line with the NPPF, and we note from recent application decisions in the locality, that have been found to be sound and are therefore up-to-date and carry more weight.

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- 4.2.4 Policy LSC3 relates to the Chelmer Valley where this site sits. Development is required to enhance and protect the floodplain and setting of the Chelmer Valley. The policy states that *'planning permission will be refused for proposals that adversely affect the character, the floodplain function and associated open spaces in the Chelmer Valley.'*
- 4.2.5 In terms of saved Uttlesford Local Plan policies, Policy S7 indicates that for new proposals outside of defined settlement limits, *"planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place there, or is appropriate to a rural area.....Development will only be permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there."*
- 4.2.6 Policy GEN 1 "Access" is applicable where new development generates additional traffic and requires all proposals to be able to access the local highway network safely and without detriment to those motorists associated with that development and all other road users. The policy also requires new developments to promote access by non-car modes of movement. Policy GEN8 "Vehicle Parking Standards" indicates that *"Development will not be permitted unless the number, design and layout of vehicle parking places proposed is appropriate for the location."*
- 4.2.7 Policy ENV3 "Open Spaces and Trees" indicates that *"the loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens through development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value."*

4.3 HIGHWAY CHARACTERISTICS IN RELATION TO ACCESS & PARKING STANDARDS

- 4.3.1 Local Plan Policies GEN1 and GEN8 require all new development to have regard to allowing access and facilities for all; provide satisfactory car parking, and; be accessible to cyclists, pedestrians and users of public transport.
The subject site benefits from an established access with the B1256 road, at a point some 150 metres south of the principal junction with Braintree Road. It is noted that this section of the B1256 road is subject to a 50-mph speed limit, and from a site inspection, it is clear that vehicles are travelling closer to such speed limits. In accord with Manual for Streets, in such circumstances it is apparent that a visibility splay of 2.4 metres x 160 metres will be required.
- 4.3.2 The B road carriageway is found exhibiting a width of 7.0 metres, with chevron spacing to the centre line. There are no dedicated footways off either flank, however a wide and level grassed verge is found which enables egressing vehicles to have good sight of oncoming vehicles, as demonstrated in Photos 7 and 8. Furthermore, forward visibility

on this stretch of B road is good, affording existing motorists travelling north to have adequate sight of any vehicle turning right into the existing access.



Photo 6 – visibility to right / north for emerging vehicles from existing access



Photo 7 – visibility to left / south for emerging vehicles from existing access



Photo 8 – extent of forward visibility of 160m along B1256 road

- 4.3.3 National Planning Policy on highway considerations to be found in “Manual for Streets” advocates the introduction of residential scheme single junctions to cater for schemes which could range up to 150 dwellinghouses, and therefore these pre-application proposals, although only containing 60 units, can be designed to fall within the threshold of that national requirement.
- 4.3.4 The site at Willow Farm lies within a 10-minute walking distance of Great Dunmow’s retail and commercial centre, which provides a range of food convenience stores, post office, public houses, restaurants, leisure centre and community hall & facilities. Footpath 58, being part of the Saffron Trail, lies upon the existing access lane and exits the site and crosses the B1256 to follow a path across an open enclosure to reach the town centre.
- 4.3.5 Primary public bus routes operate along Braintree Road, with bus stops located near the junction with the B1256 road. Services 133 operate every hour between Great Dunmow and Braintree.

5.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT LAYOUT AND FORM

5.1 Development Need & Concept

- 5.1.1 Willow Farm is proposed to be developed as a joint venture by the Applicants and current landowner for the purposes of developing a site of Park Homes. The development will be specifically geared to the retirement market, but also to retired ex-arms service personnel, and particularly those forced to retire due to injuries sustained during active service. The scheme has had initial in-principal support from nationally renowned Servicemen's Charities in this respect.
- 5.1.2 The area has been specifically chosen for its rural setting, but also given its immediate linkage to the town centre and established commercial activities at Braintree Road, immediately off its junction with the B1256. The scheme includes for an indicative total of 60 "Park Home" units, which are lawfully defined as "**twin-unit caravans**" under the provisions of the Caravan Acts. The scheme will see the **removal of the Travellers' site** and formation of a Retirement Park set to respect the prevailing contour levels, but the wider semi-rural landscape off the B1256 road. The southern part of the agricultural fields will be retained as open plan allotments and devoid of any physical structures to take account for the defined extent of the flood zone of the River Chelmer as contained within the Environment Agency Flood Map.
- 5.1.3 The Applicants have noted that the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan makes reference to a growing elderly population in the town, which appears indicative of Uttlesford, and northern Essex and surrounding counties. The GDNP reveals there is a high level of home ownership (66.3% in Great Dunmow, 71.6% across the district, including mortgaged properties), with correspondingly low proportions of social and private rented housing when compared with urban areas. The GDNP Steering Group's research which led to the plan's formulation revealed that *"consultation with local people has revealed concerns about the affordability of housing in Great Dunmow, particularly for young people and families. People are also concerned about there being a range of housing types available – the perception is that many new developments are skewed towards larger dwellings."*
- 5.1.4 The GDNP reveals that *"a quarter of residents living in the parish are aged over 60. This will put pressure on local services including: social and healthcare (greater likelihood of long term illness); public transport (through decreased mobility); recreational facilities (people are living longer and have more spare time); and changing housing needs (smaller properties, adaptations and a dependence on others to provide care and support)."*
The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's research revealed *"concerns were also raised about the scarcity of bungalows, and the unacceptability of assuming that old people will, or should, take the route of moving into care homes."*

The Steering Group's consultation with medical practitioners also specifically highlighted a pressing requirement for bungalow provision to cater for Great Dunmow's ageing population.

- 5.1.5 The GDNP indicates that Uttlesford District Council's Housing Strategy 2012-15 requested that 5% of all housing to be 1- or 2-bedroom bungalows for older people. It highlighted in the UDC Housing Strategy that **44% of older residents** (according to survey) would consider **downsizing in the next 10 years, and 32% would look to downsize into affordable accommodation**. *"However, UDC recognises – and this finding is supported by this Neighbourhood Plan – that there is insufficient and inadequate stock to facilitate this. Downsize accommodation (affordable where appropriate) must be of the high quality expected by the older residents concerned."*
- 5.1.6 The Applicants' attention has been drawn to a very pertinent statement made in the GDNP at page 70, which states: *"The situation at the moment is that there is insufficient stock, and that which there is is of inadequate quality, and the effects of this have implications for the entire housing market, causing problems in the turnover of stock, as people are not downsizing when they might: **"Uttlesford does not currently have the type of accommodation that older people in Uttlesford are looking for"***.

The conclusion of the Steering Group in 2016 was that *"there remains a deficiency in the number of units coming forward suitable for downsizing."*

- 5.1.7 It is under this Neighbourhood Policy Framework, that the need for a Retirement Village at Willow Farm has evolved. The scheme will create an exclusive "gated community" for relocating / downsizing individuals and couples **ALL over the age of 60 years**. The needs of those new residents will be fully catered for on site, with the ability for those residents to live in a rural setting enjoying their later years, but with the reassurance of being within walking distance of the town centre to provide their daily needs.

5.2 Proposed Development Layout

- 5.2.1 The proposals have sought to utilise the gentle contours of the site to form a circulatory form of Retirement Village about the majority of the field enclosure. The single point of access is retained some 120 metres east of the B1256 road junction. The existing access track will be widened to be 5.5 metres wide and equipped with a 1.8m wide footway to one flank. The internal road will not be offered for formal adoption but comprise 4.5 metres wide shared accessway allowing Park Home units to be positioned primarily with rear plot boundaries to the existing vegetative perimeters of the site, and with plots formed about an internal core of the site.
- 5.2.2 The proposed site layout as shown below at Figure 6 has been formulated with the designated flood zone of the River Chelmer at the forefront of the scheme. The lower southern field at Willow Farm falls into Flood Zone 3 and accordingly is left free from

physical development. This part of the site will be allowed to be left for passive horticultural purposes, potentially as allotments for use by on-site residents only. The sustainable disposal of surface water has been considered at the lowest point of the site outside the flood zone and an attenuation basin can be provided. A final discharge to an existing drainage ditch can be provided at this point, as it flows to the Chelmer.



Figure 6 – Proposed Site Layout Plan

5.2.3 The proposals illustrate for a mix of Park Homes, being detached and consisting of “twin-unit” caravans, in the form as shown in Figures 7 and 8 below. The proposals illustrate for each unit to be equipped with a surfaced parking driveway capable of accommodating one or two cars for residents and their visiting families. Each Park Home will be equipped with a personal amenity space, which will be lawned as an external garden space. Plot boundaries can be marked with native species hedgerows or low-lying perimeter fencing.

5.2.4 New Park Homes off the existing eastern, western and northern boundaries of the site utilise the respective existing boundary features as rear perimeters, being the mature tree line to the west, with leylandii tree line cut back dramatically to allow a greater sense of natural sunlight to rest upon the western sectors of the site, but still perform a natural screening role when viewing the site from Braintree Road. The new southern perimeter will be formed against the edge of the defined flood zone and comprise of new hedgerow planting, beyond which will give way to on-site allotments in that flood zone.

5.3 DEVELOPMENT FORMATION, MASSING AND SCALE

5.3.1 Proposed units will be “single-storey,” being mobile structures rising to a very modest height **above existing ground of less than 4.0 metres**, which includes a void under the floor to accommodate a twin axle chassis system resting on a base, supported by steel adjustable axle stands. Detached twin-unit types being the sole choice across the site, but with variety in scales and finishes. The proposed Park Homes are legally classed as caravans, with the legal definition defined by the Caravan Sites and Control Act 1960, which reads: “*Any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another (whether it be towed, or being transported on a motor vehicle so designed or adapted, but does not include a) any railway, rolling stock which is for the time being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer; and b) any tent.*”

5.3.2 The Caravan and Sites Act 1968 provides definition of a twin-unit, stating that: “*A structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is composed of not more than two separate sections separately constructed and designed to be assembled on a site by means of bolts, clams or other devices; and when assembled, physically capable of being towed by road from one place to another (whether by being towed, or physically transported on a motor vehicle or trailer.*”

The Caravan Sites Act 1968 amended the definition of a caravan by providing dimensions:

Length (exclusive of any drawbar) – **20 metres**

Width – **6.8 metres**

Height of overall living accommodation (measured internally from floor level at the lowest level to the ceiling at the highest level) – **3.05 metres**

5.3.3 The Park Homes at Willow Farm will be constructed to meet these definitions, bolted together as the last act of development, and thereafter can be moved from one place to another. Figures 7, 8 and 9 below illustrate indicative twin-unit types, where a skirting screen comprising of brick, timber cladding or stonework can be formed to “hide” the chassis / twin axle support beneath each caravan unit.

The Park Home types can be two or three bedroomed in scale ranging from a width of **5.0 to 6.0 metres**, and length of **10.0 to 12.0 metres**, and therefore considerably below the maximum threshold of length permitted under the Caravan Acts.



Figure 7 – typical Park Home example



Figure 8 – typical Park Home example



Figure 9 – typical Park Home example

5.3.4 Gentle saddle roofs with respectful of very modest pitches and with roofs with grey “replica tile” finishes. Unit types offer a semi-rural theme, with use of a pastel, light finish, with elements of timber cedar cladding detailing, which would not appear out of character as an external finish in this rural environment and setting.

5.3.5 **Development Density** is based on 60 residential units, and it is patently evident from the submitted site layout that the scheme is compact in land take. Each Park Home is afforded side or front driveways with rear garden depths of modest proportions. Habitable distances between units within the site itself can be in compliance with Caravan Act spatial standards.

5.4 FLOOD RISK

5.4.1 The site is gently sloping down to the south-eastern corner and has to allow for elements of surface water disposal measures within the site. All the above features are contained within a developed area of the site which refrains from any incursion into the designated flood zone as reproduced in Figure 10 below. That part of the site is left over from allotment use, without altering ground levels and contours.



Figure 10 – Extent of Flood Risk reproduced from UDC Constraints Map

5.4.2 Vehicular access to the site is derived through the existing access, which will be **preserved at the current ground levels**, without any raising of levels which otherwise displace those extreme floodwaters to third parties, currently outside of the floodplain. Notwithstanding such extreme flood levels, it is noted that existing levels at this location are comparatively level with little discernible differences, which would suggest that flood depths are modest, amounting to no more than millimetres and thus allowing emergency vehicles to continue to have access and egress to the site even in an extreme flood event.

6.0 ECOLOGY & TREES

6.1 An Extended Phase 1 Ecological Survey will be undertaken by a licenced Ecologist at the site. However, it should be noted from the above Google Earth imagery and ground level photographs that the field has been heavily cultivated and grazed. It forms semi-improved grassland, with no individual areas of vegetation other than the eastern hedgerow line. It is unlikely that any protected species will be discovered on the site, other than potentially within the eastern hedgerow, which will be suitably buffered from new development in that part of the site.

6.2 Indeed, a desk-top search of the “Magic” ecological website reveals no known habitats of protected species, nor areas of important flora features within proximity of the application site, as reproduced in Figure 11 below.

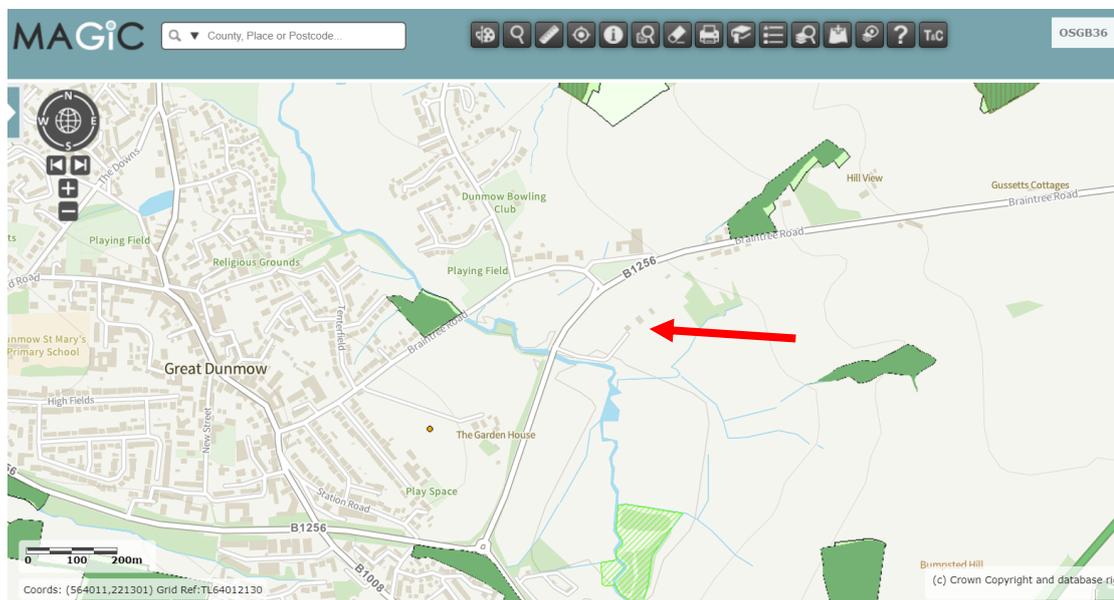


Figure 11 – extract from MAGIC website revealing known biodiversity interests

6.3 The proposals illustrate the complete retention of all hedgerow and individual specimens overspilling the east and west perimeters of the site, with a healthy separation distance, accounted for by new Park Homes rear garden space.

- 6.4 The existing northern fenced boundary with open unkempt pasture will be retained and enhanced with new hedgerows and close-boarded fencing where appropriate.
- 6.5 The proposed surface water attenuation scheme to the lower, south-eastern edge of the site will be conspicuously landscaped with aquatic planting, hedgerows and new tree planting within and about its form.
- 6.6 The proposals also involve forming pockets of landscaping within the site itself, being maintenance strips along the surface water drainage routes down to the southern attenuation basin.

7.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

- 7.1 The site at Willow Farm offers no intrinsic, individual value to the open space east of Braintree Road. The site is set over 120 metres east of the main distributor highway and thus beyond the setting of Dunmow Park, a prominent Grade II Listed Building set off the western flank of the B road. Views from the B road are curtailed by heavy planting to the western perimeter of the site. The existing trees to the neighbouring northern enclosure near Braintree Road properties provide an effective barrier to views towards the site. The existing western perimeter leylandii trees can be reduced in height by half their volume but would also still provide an effective, year-round screening of new Park Homes rising to less than 4.0 metres in overall height, as shown in Photos 7, 8, 9 and 10 below.



Photo 7 – view from Braintree Road looking southeast with views to site completely screened by mature tree cover



Photo 8 – internal view within the site looking north-west to Braintree Road



Photo 9 – view from prominent road junction to north-west of site, with frontage field acting as a green buffer to site



Photo 10 – view from B1256 near access point looking north-east with mature trees to River Chelmer obscuring all views to the site

7.2 Policy: LSC3: “The Chelmer Valley” of the GDNP states that “*Development will always, where appropriate, seek to enhance and protect the floodplain and the setting of the Chelmer Valley, including the GHQ Line pillboxes.*

General open spaces in the area of the Chelmer Valley are shown on the following map.

Planning permission will be refused for proposals that adversely affect the character, the floodplain function and the associated open spaces in the Chelmer Valley as shown on Figure 31.” Figure 31 from the GDNP is extracted and reproduced below as Figure 12 as it affects the eastern part of the town and Chelmer.

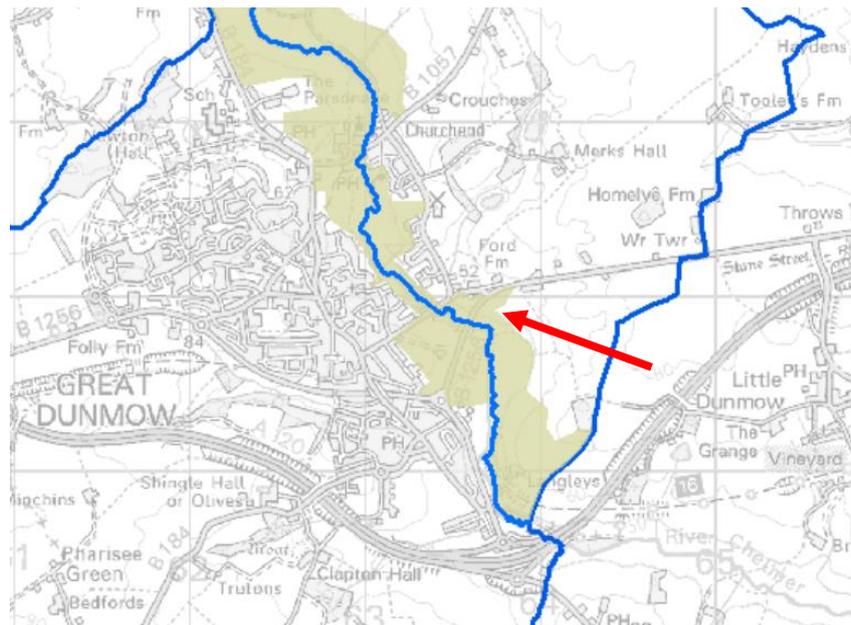


Figure 12 – extract from Policy LSC3 – Open Spaces Map from GDNP

7.3 The above plan defines that the site is contained in an identified “Open Space”, however as evidenced above by the above photographs taken at prominent public vantage points, the effect that the proposed development will have upon that rural landscape will be negligible. The existing Traveller’s site will be removed and replaced with a compacted Retirement Park wholly contained **within established high natural boundaries, at a respectful distance from the main highway, thus enveloping the site from short- and long-range views.**

7.4 The rural character of that open space, and associated open spaces to the east, will accordingly be preserved, as will the floodplain function as required by Policy LSC3.

8.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Applicants are fully aware that in making a planning application, that a submission should undergo early engagement with the public, and in this respect the concept of the scheme has been presented before a meeting of the Great Dunmow Town Council.
- 8.2 The Applicants presented the scheme to the Town Council at their meeting held in March 2022, and the draft scheme was warmly and unanimously welcomed. A subsequent on-site meeting was conducted in early September 2022, where a cohort of Members and the Town Clerk were able to view the site at close quarters in order to gain an understanding of the site parameters and scale. Members were also able to appreciate the seclusion of the site, and that it was physically possible to view the site from the B1256 road, nor any other nearby residential property, given the breadth of tree cover across the northern extent of the site near Braintree Road properties.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 This Statement has sought to examine the attributes of this established Traveller's site and its removal and subsequent development with a Retirement Village comprising of 60 Park Homes. Local Planning Policy can be found to revolve about the Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan, given that the Uttlesford Local Plan can now be considered out-of-date for the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 9.2 The site lies within an enclosure bounded on all sides of high mature trees and hedgerows which act to wholly envelop the site and screen it from the B1256 road, some 120 metres distant. The site lies within part of a defined Open Space within the Chelmer Valley, but its form and character offer little to the intrinsic character of that attractive shallow river valley. Indeed, the proposals are submitted can be seen to be buffered away from the river channel and its bankside vegetation, as a result of new development being steered away from a defined Flood Zone. That separation distance can be considered crucial in avoiding any visual or physical incursion into this attractive river valley.
- 9.3 Notwithstanding, GDNP policies which seek to preserve the Open Spaces character of the Chelmer, it did not place obstacles to the granting of planning permission for an exceptionally large commercial development in the neighbouring southern fields to Willow Farm. Planning permission UTT/19/1219/FUL remains extant and will have a profound effect upon the appearance and form of the south-eastern road approach to Great Dunmow. Unlike that neighbouring development, the development of a Park Homes site at Willow Farm will not front and dominate the principle highway but lie at an inconspicuous and discreet position away from public vantage points, as evidenced by ground level photographs in this Statement.

- 9.4 The GDNP places great emphasis on the need to create homes for the growing elderly population in the town and this part of Uttlesford. The scheme will provide the opportunity for residents over 60 years to relocate and downsize to accommodation which will be fit for their needs in latter life, but retain good sustainable links to the town centre and public transport nodes in the neighbourhood.
- 9.5 Preliminary discussions have taken place with the Great Dunmow Town Council, who has responded with kind and warm support for the concept of such a specialised residential scheme at this location.
- 9.6 The Applicants are aware of the requirement to provide satisfactory sustainable drainage and will address new development run-off, whilst preserving the existing water environment. Critically, the scheme preserved the floodplain function of the River Chelmer, with no new buildings, nor Park Homes placed near the edge of the extreme fluvial flood zone. No changes in ground levels will be proposed as part of the widening of the existing vehicular access onto the B1256 road. Consequently, there will be loss of flood storage as part of the scheme, and no resultant effects upon third parties.
- 9.7 The site is unlikely to have potential for habitats for protected species, given its well grazed use. All perimeter hedgerows and trees are to be retained, with no felling of individual specimens to the extremity of the site. Compensatory tree and hedgerow planting will be introduced within the site and roadside frontage following generous carriageway improvements and footway provision.
- 9.8 The proposal will provide for a retained vehicular access to the site, with an improved carriageway width and footway retained for the Saffron Trail public footpath, meeting all highway standards, and ensuring that highway safety will be fully retained along this stretch of the B1256 Road.
- 9.9 The proposals will assist in meeting the GDNP policy objectives, demand and needs to provide Specialist Elderly Housing into Great Dunmow and the local community. In doing so, the proposals also meet the local housing land supply identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.