



Planning, Design and Access Statement

**The Erection of 10 Dwellings
Land Adjacent to The Potato Barn, Mill Lane
Fownhope.**

March 2018

Julie Joseph Ba Hons TP MRTPI

1.0 The Proposal

1.1 The application is seeking outline planning permission to erect 10 dwellings on land to the western edge of the village allocated in the adopted Fownhope Neighbourhood Plan for residential development. The proposal is for a mix of dwelling types comprising 4 x 3 bedroomed semi detached units, 1 x 3 bedroomed detached house and 5 x 4 bedroomed detached properties.

1.2 The application site consists of an agricultural shed and farmland & woodland located to the south of the B4224 in Fownhope, Herefordshire. The site is referred to locally as the 'The Potato Shed', it is proposed to access the site to the north from the B4224 via the existing access. A public footpath runs through the site giving good connectivity to the centre of the village.

1.3 The application is supported by:

- A Transport Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Ecology Report
- Landscape Assessment
- Tree Report

1.4 There is an existing planning application on the site planning reference 142815/F which is yet to be determined. This application proposed development on only part of the site and whilst there are various issues to be resolved, the proposal raised no in principle objections on the basis of Landscape Impact, ecology or drainage. Since the submission of this application in 2015 the allocated site on the land to the north of the site has been approved for 15 dwellings planning reference 163707/F

2.0 Contextual Analysis

2.1 The site lies in the village of Fownhope on the edge of the village adjoining the conservation area. The application site consists of an agricultural shed and farmland & woodland located to the south of the B4224 in Fownhope, Herefordshire. The site is referred to locally as the 'The Potato Shed'. Fownhope is located in central south-eastern Herefordshire, lying on the eastern side of the River Wye and the south-western edge of the Woolhope Dome. Hereford lies 8km to the north-west and Ross-on-Wye 11km to the south-east of Fownhope.

2.2 The site is located to the west of Fownhope village centre and is bound to the north by the B4224, the east by Lower House Gardens, agricultural farm land to the south / southeast and greenfield land to the west / north-west. There are a number of local services and amenities within a reasonable walking distance of the application site including a newsagent / post office, primary school and public houses. Services and facilities are located between 100m and 900m to the east / southeast of the proposed application sites access. A list of local services and the distance from the application site is provided below:

i) Bus Stop - 130m (1-½ minute walk);

- ii) Local Newsagent / Post Office - 150m (2-minute walk);
- iii) Leisure Centre - 360m (4-minute walk);
- iv) Local Public Houses - 440m (5-minute walk);
- v) Village Hall - 550m (6-½ minute walk);
- vi) Primary School - 580m (7-minute walk); and
- vii) Fownhope Medical Centre - 900m (11-minute walk).

2.3 Surface water drainage is proposed via soakaways and sustainable drainage systems and foul drainage by a private water treatment plant.

3.0 Planning Policy

3.1 The starting point for planning policy is set out the National Planning Policy Framework which has the presumption in favour of sustainable development running through as the main thread but reiterates that Local Authorities should determine planning applications in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The current development plan is the recently adopted Core Strategy Herefordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031 and the Fownhope Neighbourhood Plan adopted March 2016.

3.2 The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012 to set out the principles for determining planning applications and plan making. At the heart of this document is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. The Government recognises that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions. Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life.

3.3 Para 47 requires that Local Authorities identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

3.4 Following the adoption of their Local Plan, Herefordshire Council have acknowledged following several appeal decisions that they are unable to

demonstrate a 5 year supply of land plus 20 %. In addition, sites for development in the Rural Areas have yet to be identified.

3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework requires that the planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions and states that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including widening the choice of high quality homes. It sets out 12 core principles including the requirement of the Local Authority to always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings and to take account of the different roles and character of different areas, by promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it.

3.6 It states further that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as the exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling. Such a design should amongst other things help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas, reflect the highest standards in architecture; significantly enhance its immediate setting; and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

3.7 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF requires that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- 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; respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

3.8 The NPPF requires that Local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

3.9 Furthermore it requires planning policies to support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.

3.10 The adopted Core Strategy for Herefordshire proposes that approximately 5,300 houses should be developed across all rural Housing Market Areas during the plan

period. The Councils SHLAA indicates that there is potential for this level of development in Herefordshire's rural villages. The primary focus for this housing will be in the villages which are the most suitable and sustainable to accommodate such new development.

3.11 The parish of Fownhope is identified as being suitable for residential development and is expected to accommodate a minimum of 18% growth in housing numbers up to the year 2031. In real terms this means a minimum of 70 new dwellings within the plan period including windfalls and completions. The application site is one of four allocated sites in the village.

3.12 Policy RA1 states that development should ideally be located within or adjacent to the main built up area(s) of the settlement. This will ensure that unnecessary isolated, non-characteristic and discordant dwellings do not arise which would adversely affect the character and setting of a settlement and its local environment. New housing will be expected to contribute to the housing needs of the area by providing an appropriate mix of dwelling types to reflect the lifelong housing needs of the community.

Policy RA1

In Herefordshire's rural areas a minimum of 5,300 new dwellings will be provided between 2011 and 2031 to contribute to the county's housing needs. The development of rural housing will contribute towards the wider regeneration of the rural economy. New dwellings will be broadly distributed across the county's rural areas on the basis of seven Housing Markets Areas (HMA) and as illustrated in Figure 4.13 This acknowledges that different areas of Herefordshire have different housing needs and requirements. The 5,300 dwellings will be delivered throughout the rural HMAs as set out in the table below. The indicative housing growth targets in each of the rural HMAs will be used as a basis for the production of neighbourhood development plans in the county. Local evidence and environmental factors will determine the appropriate scale of development.

3.13 In effect this policy puts the focus for new development on the development of Neighbourhood Plans. In February 2015, there were 88 designated neighbourhood areas in the county. These plans will be the principal mechanism by which new rural housing will be allocated. The proportional growth target within policy RA1 will provide the basis for the minimum level of new housing that will be accommodated in each neighbourhood development plan. The target represents a level of growth for parishes, as a percentage, that is proportionate to existing HMA characteristics. The main focus for development will be within or adjacent to existing settlements and the relevant neighbourhood development plan will have appropriate flexibility to apportion the minimum housing requirement between the settlements concerned. This will allow for a locally flexible approach that will respect settlement characteristics, the distribution of local facilities and other local factors. This approach will accord with paragraph 55 of the NPPF which indicates that where there are groups of smaller settlements in rural areas, the development in one location may support services in a location nearby. The adoption of this approach will allow distinctive solutions which reflect the varied geographies in the county. However, where Parish Councils are not producing a Neighbourhood Plan the Local Authority will be required to identify suitable sites through the production of Rural Areas Sites Allocation DPD

3.14 2 Policy RA2 states that housing growth will vary between villages in a proportionate manner and will be permitted where the development proposal is considered appropriate by;

- ensuring the proposal reflects the size, role and function of the village is located within or adjacent to the main body of the village
- giving priority to suitable brownfield sites
- reflecting the character of the village and surrounding environment
- providing an appropriate mix of dwelling types including affordable housing and by demonstrating community support either through a Neighbourhood Plan or undertaking community consultation.

Policy RA2 – Herefordshire's villages

Housing in settlements outside Hereford and the market towns. To maintain and strengthen locally sustainable communities across the rural parts of Herefordshire, sustainable housing growth will be supported in or adjacent to those settlements identified in Figures 4.14 and 4.15. This will enable development that has the ability to bolster existing service provision, improve facilities and infrastructure and meet the needs of the communities concerned. The minimum growth target in each rural Housing Market Area will be used to inform the level of housing development to be delivered in the various settlements set out in Figures 4.14 and 4.15. Neighbourhood Development Plans will allocate land for new housing or otherwise demonstrate delivery to provide levels of housing to meet the various targets, by indicating levels of suitable and available capacity.

Housing proposals will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- 1. Their design and layout should reflect the size, role and function of each settlement and be located within or adjacent to the main built up area. In relation to smaller settlements identified in fig 4.15 proposals will be expected to demonstrate particular attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the site and its location in that settlement and/or they result in development that contributes to or is essential to the social well-being of the settlement concerned;*
- 2. Their locations make best and full use of suitable brownfield sites wherever possible;*
- 3. They result in the development of high quality, sustainable schemes which are appropriate to their context and make a positive contribution to the surrounding environment and its landscape setting; and*
- 4. They result in the delivery of schemes that generate the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular settlements, reflecting local demand. Specific proposals for the delivery of local need housing will be particularly supported where they meet an identified need and their long-term retention as local needs housing is secured as such.*

3.15 Where appropriate, settlement boundaries (or a reasonable alternative) for those settlements listed in Policy RA2 will be defined in either neighbourhood development plans or the Rural Areas Sites Allocation DPD.

3.16 As stated previously Fownhope has a Neighbourhood Development Plan adopted in March 2016. Policy FW9 identifies a need for a minimum of 70 additional dwellings in the NP area. To accommodate this growth 4 sites have been allocated to provide for a minimum of 39 dwellings. The application site is one of these allocated sites

The plan allocates four housing sites, one of which encompasses the application site. This states;;

Land at Potato Barn/ Mill Farm is allocated for approximately 10 dwellings subject to the proposed development meeting the following requirements:

f) addressing the significant environmental effects on the AONB and the Conservation Area

g) achieving highway access either by existing farm access (which will need to be retained), or by shared access with Lowerhouse Gardens. Access from the drive to Mill Farm is not considered acceptable.

h) achieving safe pedestrian access to village facilities, other than by the main road

i) Contributing to meeting local housing needs

3.17 Policy FW16 of the Neighbourhood Plan sets out the design criteria for proposed residential development

3.18 It should be noted that the absence of the 5 year land supply is a strong material consideration and NPPF clearly states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.t

4.0 Principle of Development

4.1 The site is allocated for residential development in the adopted Neighbourhood Plan and lies within a sustainable village location. As such the principle of development is acceptable. The NP requires the application to demonstrate that the proposal should

- address the effects on the proposal on the AONB and the Conservation Area
- achieve highway access either by existing farm access (which will need to be retained), or by shared access with Lowerhouse Gardens. Access from the drive to Mill Farm is not considered acceptable.
- achieving safe pedestrian access to village facilities, other than by the main road
- Contribute to meeting local housing needs

4.2 These issues are addressed below. It is important to note however in adopting the Neighbourhood Plan Herefordshire Council and the Examiner have accepted that the plan, and by virtue of this the allocated sites, have met the relevant tests and are deliverable.

5.0 Impact of the Proposal on the AONB

5.1 The site lies within the Wye Valley 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment identifies that the key landscape characteristics relevant to the planning application for this site are the mature boundary trees at and along the entrance track, mature hedging to the east, views in and out to the Wye river floodplain, views in and out to elevated Cherry Hill Wood, and the sites function as part of the setting to Fownhope Conservation Area

5.2 It is recognised that the proposals will significantly affect existing tree cover, particularly at the entrance to the site and along the west boundary. The west boundary line of poplar is incongruous, and the entrance block of trees requires management. Therefore the loss of these trees is not considered to be significant.

5.3 In terms of impacts on the AONB, the proposals are small in scale and given the location will clearly be physically and visually part of the settlement of Fownhope. Utilising a site currently used for farm storage, the proposals will not adversely affect the intrinsic beauty of the AONB landscape. The key characteristics of the AONB (for the area and relevant to the site) are the hedgerow structure and tree cover. Existing native hedgerows will be conserved, enhanced by new native mixed hedgerow planting. Tree cover will be affected but will remove incongruous species to the landscape and provide replacement planting using locally native species.

5.4 The building line will extend beyond the southern line of the village but does reflect the Neighbourhood Plan and the context for the site will change, with residential development proposed to the east and west. The layout has a similar density and plan form to neighbouring sites. Material selection for house and garage elevations, roofs, and hard landscape will be in keeping with the character of the adjacent Conservation Area to help the development blend into the landscape.

5.5 The public right of way through the site will be retained and enhanced to provide a more attractive route. The existing road access from the B4224 will be used. Road widening is required to accommodate full width footpaths to both sides including a new linking footpath into the village along the B4224.

5.6 Proposals will not adversely affect the setting of the conservation area (which includes recent building at Lower House Gardens). The site is well screened from the Lower House Gardens by a high evergreen hedge lying outside ownership boundary, although will be opened up to views from the B4224. New woodland planting is not proposed as this would be contrary to the river valley character.

5.7 The site serves as a gateway to Fownhope. The existing tree mass at the entrance will be removed. Replacement planting with advanced nursery stock will better reflect tree cover through the village which is characterised by individual specimens set in grass verges.

5.8 to summarise the LVIA concludes that the visual sensitivity of the receptors to change is assessed as **High** as the site is within the Wye Valley AONB, within the setting of the Fownhope Conservation Area, and as the main receptors are adjacent residents. However, the **magnitude of change** is assessed as **Small**. The change is long term, but the geographical extent is contained as the site is reasonably well

screened even following tree removal. The change will only adversely affect immediately adjacent properties, and views from the footpath down from Cherry Hill Wood and these are assessed as minor. Good design following the principles outlined in mitigation measures section 10 will reduce impacts immediately with effects decreasing as planting mitigation takes effect and no residual effects forecast by year 5 assuming planting establishes successfully with the exception of the more open views where careful design layout will help reduce impacts.

6.0 Achieving satisfactory access

6.1 Policy FW9 clearly states that the proposed access to the site should be via the existing access or via a shared access with Lower House Gardens. It also clearly states that access to the adjacent allocation to the west at Mill House Farm is not acceptable from the drive. In providing the access it is important that the adjacent allocated site to the south east to the Rear of Lower House Garden is not compromised.

6.2 On this basis the access is proposed in accordance with policy via an upgraded access from the B4224. This will take the form of a give-way priority junction with the B4224 with a continuous 2.0m footway along the eastern of the carriageway. In accordance with the requirements of the Highway Authority an ATC survey was carried out. The results of this can be found in the Transport Statement. Taking into account the 85th percentile speeds recorded in the ATC survey the required splay looking left (north) at a setback of 2.4m is 106m, whilst looking right (south) it is 48m.

6.3 The access road into the site is 5.5m wide with a pedestrian footpath running parallel which upgrades the existing public footpath link within the site. There is a turning head provided within the site for refuse and delivery vehicles. Satisfactory parking is provided to meet the Local Authorities requirements.

.

7.0 Achieving safe pedestrian access to village facilities, other than by the main road

7.1 the applicant has been in lengthy and detailed discussions with the Highway Authority to find the most satisfactory solution to improving pedestrian access other than by the main road. It should be noted that there is an existing public footpath which runs from the site to the rear of Lower House Gardens to the centre of the village. The footpath is flat and well policed and as such the fall back position is that strictly speaking this policy can be met without improvements to the existing footpath on the main road. Attention is drawn to the Appeal decision on the land at Mill Field opposite which was also required to meet a similar requirement. In assessing the case the Inspector clearly

accepted that the adjacent public footpath link met the need to provide safe pedestrian access . Notwithstanding this situation, it is recognised that the current pedestrian facilities create a degree of difficulty to road users and there are various alternative solutions which have been put forward to the Highway Authority.

Option One :Provision of Footway on Northern Side of B4224

7.2 The option of introducing a footway on the northern side of the B4224 has previously been presented to Hereford Council. However, this option has been resisted due to comments received from the Tree Officer in respect of a range of TPO'd trees, which would in their opinion be detrimentally affected by any proposed works to the northern verge which would result in damage to the stability, and in one case the root, of these trees.

Option Two: Road Narrowing Scheme to Facilitate Widening of the Footway (Drawing SK01_A)

7.2 **Drawing SK01_A** proposes to narrow the B4224 within the vicinity of the site to 5.05m (at the narrowest point), which would permit the existing footway to be widened to a minimum width of 1.2m (where there is a natural pinch point due to a boundary wall), but for the most part a footpath of at least 1.8m, if not 2.0m, in places.

7.3 **Drawing SK01_A** has been presented to Hereford Council, culminating with a meeting on site with officers to discuss the benefits and constraints of the arrangement. However, the response from HC indicated that they would not be supportive of this arrangement, which led to a short narrowing of the highway below 5.5m in width, which is generally noted to be a minimum width for permitting two large vehicles to pass each other.

Option Three: Drawing Road Narrowing with Traffic Calming

7.4 **Drawing SK03** proposes to narrow the B4224 carriageway to a point where it would provide only single-way working, as part of an overall traffic calming scheme to aid in slowing vehicle speeds entering south-east bound into Fownhope. The arrangement set out on **Drawing SK03** would facilitate widening of the existing footway to a minimum 1.2m width. This provides the preferred option by the applicants Highway Consultant which offers the following benefits:

- Establishes a fully usable footway connection between the site and the local shop on the B4224, and beyond this to the wider footway network in Fownhope;
- Provides an opportunity to calm traffic speeds of vehicles entering eastbound into Fownhope, which have been identified by the speed data of being in excess of the speed limit;
- This route could also be used by future residents of the Mill Field development who could walk out of the main site access, across the B4224, and onto the new footway.

7.5 The application site benefits from a footpath link between the site and Ferry Lane, plus a footway along the B4224, which the site access can appropriately tie into. It is

noted that the narrowing of the footway down to a c.600mm pinch point is not desirable for all potential pedestrian users, such as parents with small children, or wheel-chair users. However, this link would be suitable for able-bodied pedestrians and should not be disregarded of being usable, particularly relative to a number of routes in Herefordshire which are situated in the main carriageway due to no footways being provided at all.

7.6 Nevertheless, the applicant has explored a number of opportunities to further enhance pedestrian access between the site and the services and amenities in Fownhope. These have generally been met with resistance due to either other non-highway related constraints, or in-principle objection over concerns of impact on the general operation of the local highway network. It is the view of the applicants appointed Transport Consultant that the preferred option (shown on **Drawing SK03**) presents a sound opportunity to enhance the local footway provision without resulting in any unacceptable impacts on the safe operation of the local highway network, whilst providing benefits to both existing and proposed users of the highway.

7.7 In determining this application paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Network clearly states that Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. It is considered that the proposal does not create a severe or unacceptable cumulative impact.

8.0 Drainage

8.1 A detailed Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out which clearly identifies the site as lying in Flood Zone One. As such the proposed development is unlikely to raise significant flood risk issues on the basis that:

- a) it does not have an adverse effect on a watercourse, floodplain or its flood defences;
- b) it does not impede access to flood defence and river management facilities; and,
- c) it does not have a significant effect on local flood storage capacity or flood flows.

8.2 It is proposed to minimise surface water run off by using wherever possible permeable surfaces and the introduction of SUDS. In addition, any run-off from the site will be restricted to that equivalent to the green-field run-off rate

8.3 Research has shown that there are no public sewers in the locality and as such foul drainage is proposed in the form of a single package treatment plant

shown on the south eastern edge of the development with tail drains running into the adjacent field which is within the applicant's ownership.

9.0 Ecology

9.1 A detailed Ecology Report was carried out in June 2014 by Swift Ecology for a previous submission on the site. Proposed development of the site at that time was judged to involve the permanent loss of an area of improved grassland; a small area of plantation woodland; a large modern industrial style building and associated areas of hardstanding; a pile of aggregate; and patches of scrub, tall herb and ephemeral short perennial vegetation. These habitats are common and widespread in the UK and are of relatively low biodiversity value.

9.2 The appraisal revealed some limited potential for the site to support protected species, including bats, dormouse, reptiles and nesting birds. However, no specific protected species surveys were deemed necessary because the likelihood of presence of such species on the site was considered relatively low, and any potential impacts upon them could be minimised by ongoing site management prior to development (e.g. keeping the grass sward short), preworks inspections (e.g. of trees) and precautionary working methods during site clearance. The building has low/negligible potential to support roosting bats; precautionary working methods were recommended during the dismantling of the building, in order to minimise impacts in the unlikely event that roosting bats are present

9.3 The secondary Inspection carried out in February 2018 identified that there has been negligible change to the habitats on the site, and thus no change in the floral biodiversity value of the site, which remains relatively low; the habitats and species are common and widespread in the UK. The habitat composition has not changed, and thus anticipated impacts upon protected species, including bats, dormouse, badgers, otter, reptiles, great crested newts and nesting birds remain the same, and adverse effects are highly unlikely if the precautionary measures recommended in the 2014 report are adopted

9.4 The report recommends that a variety of options for biodiversity mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be implemented within the development area and could be secured by planning condition, to help to offset any negative impacts of the development upon biodiversity. Appendix 3 in the report outlines appropriate options.

10.0 Conclusion

10.1 It is considered that the proposal delivers an appropriate mix of dwelling types in a sensitively designed scheme to accommodate the policy requirements of the adopted Fownhope Neighbourhood Plan by bringing forward an allocated site without compromising adjacent allocations but offering a suitable opportunity for improving the footpath link into the village for both proposed and existing users. This proposal will also have the benefit of slowing down traffic when both leaving and entering the village and creating an effective gateway into the village.

10.2 Both the Ecology Report and the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment address the issues relating to the impact on the AONB and the Conservation Area and offer enhancements to both the landscape setting and flora and fauna through appropriate mitigation methods