**Becky Matravers**

Senior Development Officer - Major Projects

Economy & Infrastructure

Development & Regulatory Management

Solihull MBC

Council House

Manor Square

SOLIHULL

B91 3QB

24th January 2025

 **Re PL2024/2987/PPRM 85 dwellings on Site of Oak Farm CdeB**

 We are writing in response to the planning application referred to above. Disappointingly the applicant has not made contact with the Association prior to the submission of the application ,We feel a number of the points made in this response could well have been addressed had there been some prior dialogue. Our concerns are outlined below:

**Lighting**

1. There appears to be no lighting in any of the cul de sac and associated parking areas which we believe result in possible personal and vehicle safety issues
2. There is no lighting along the pathways accessing the canal towpath

and the open space areas. We suggest low height bollard lighting would be appropriate.

**Boundary Treatment**

1. We feel the brick walls bordering plots 13-20 creates an imposing visual appearance in the area and believe the 1.8m timber fencing would be more appropriate.
2. It is difficult to assess from the drawing what the boundary treatment , if any is bordering both #254 and Oak Farm or how or if these properties are/aren’t intended to integrated in to the development .
3. Are brick walls really necessary around plots 82-85 and plots 78/79- would timber fencing lessen the visual impact of brick walls.

**General Layout**

1. We feel there is insufficient distribution of the affordable homes throughout the site.
2. In particular we feel the layout design of plots 82-85 where the homes front the highway is poor . The adjacent property 254 is set back from the highway and properties to the left on 254 are set behind a significant landscaped area. No landscaping is proposed in this area which is contrary to the drawing previously seen and certainly the drawing in the Planning Statement document .Homes should be given larger front gardens as most of the dwellings have in the area .
3. The development should have appropriate landscape screening along the total frontage to Hampton Lane
4. We are concerned that many of the front entrances access directly on to pathways. The majority of properties in the area have moderate front garden areas which creates a much more ‘open street scene’ The current design has negative implications re on street parking which we will mention again later.
5. Parking areas to the rear of the respective properties is we feel, a poor concept and encourages the more convenient on street parking which would create cluttered streets with potential long term degeneration of the development .
6. The 3 storey homes have been situated so that they border/face the canal. Bearing in mind the current design materials to be used we feel these homes will have an overbearing impact on the canal area more associated with the canal areas in the centre of Birmingham not the rural aspect currently enjoyed by users of the can and local residents living on the opposite bank . Possibly the plots designs to be reversed with the garden areas closes to the canal . We understand that for these homes to overlook the canal to be attractive but believe the negative impact this has on the canalside to outweigh the potential benefit for a limited number of homeowners. Incidentally we see no real difference between the 2.5 and 3 storey homes so suggest all homes be made 2.5 storey .
7. We note there is **no** street scene diagram for the side of the development bordering Hampton Lane which is a significant omission which would if supplied show the visual impact of the current layout on the street scene.
8. We refer to the Boundary Treatments Plan and in particular to 3 areas adjacent to plots23, 28,55 and 58 bordered with a blue line .These areas are what can only be described as narrow alley ways bordered by timber fencing . We believe these areas provide areas of risk to personal safety, especially during Autumn and Winter months and the fact they are unlit increases that risk .

9) It is unclear whether the Bin Collection Points(BCP) are designed for the bins are to be stored there on a permanent basis or taken each time a collection is expected. There appears to be no diagram /drawing as to the appearance of these areas. We feel the general layout for bin collection to be poor.

10) We feel the affordable dwellings ought to be more evenly distributed throughout the development rather than be set in 3 groups as they are currently.

**Car Parking**

11) with a significant number of plots designed with car parking at the rear of the properties we believe this will in reality, unfortunately, encourage vehicles to be parked on the roadside. This will already occur if properties have more than 2 vehicles which is not uncommon in this locality where homes have teenage children. As these homes have no front gardens there is no opportunity for front garden areas can be converted to car parking hereby keeping streets relatively car free.

12) We note that there are only 15 garages included in the development which again encourages on street parking. Today’s vehicles are generally significantly larger than they used to be yet, garage sizes do not appear to have increased. We take it that the illustrations presented in the garage drawings reflect the true vehicles/garage sizes which should enable most current vehicles to actually use the garages as garages and not just storage.

13) Where do visitors to plots 61 and 62 park? We forsee issues with visitor parking in group parking areas where there are vacant plots associated with other plots . No allowance for visitor parking seems to have been provided.

 9)Para.8b Social Objective states:” *to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs* *of present and future generations; and by fostering* ***well-designed, beautiful and safe places*,……….” The current layout does not meet these criteria and has been conceived so as to achieve 85 dwellings**. We do not believe the layout as envisaged, meets the recommendations as set out in the document “Secured by Design”- Section 5.59 of the design and access statement for the outline planning application PL/2023/01173/PPOL refers to creating a safe place -we do not believe this has been achieved in the current layout.

**Climate Change**

1)We do not feel the current layout and designs take sufficient account of the criteria contained in Policy P9 Climate Change Solihull Local Plan 2013. Has the use of solar tiles, centralised heat pump, providing heat to the development rather than using gas boilers been considered**.** Have the homes been designed to provide safe battery storage in the event that solar energy sources are ultimately used?

**Landscaping and Planting**

1)We have a major concern in the lack of landscaping on the right hand side#254 Hampton Lane. Here plots 82-85 are directly facing on to Hampton Lane . Current vegetation, trees, shrubs etc should **not** be removed and the layout re-designed to accommodate the existing hedges/shrubs etc. Both #254 with front hedging and the homes to the left hand side of it are well set back from Hampton Lane and the open area at plots 82-85 is unacceptable.

2)We note that in the planting specification it specifies that the contractor is only responsible for maintaining the planting for a period of 12 months from practical completion. We suggest that in view of the substantial variety and nature of the planting being undertaken, a longer period of responsibility would be more appropriate -say 2/3 years.

3) The layout should allow for tree planting on the street containing to the front of plots 34-38.

4)We note that 3 girth sizes of semi mature trees are being proposed. We suggest that in order to achieve a more mature feel to the development, bearing in mind the number of existing mature trees etc that are being retained ,it would be appropriate to plant trees with the widest girth 400-450mm throughout the development were species types allow.

5)We do not feel the development adequately reflects para136 of the NPPF Dec 2024 which states” *Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments……..”*

6) Hedging adjacent to the access road running adjacent to the canal should be retained in order to encourage wildlife and birdlife activity and the visual aspect of the area.

**Design, Style and Materials**

7) If the colours represented by the various home styles and street scenes are accurate we feel the use of red brick with red roof tiles to create an sense of overbearingness particularly where homes in this style are together and overlook front properties similarly styled on the opposite side of the road.

 **Planned Pedestrian Crossing on the Hampton side of the canal bridge**

1)We appreciate this was dealt with under the approved outline planning application nut wanted to register that it is absolutely vital is a pavement is installed commencing at the top of the canal access road to the crossing – currently most of this area is narrow and contained rough grass – impossible to walk on.

**Summary**

In summary we do not feel the current design, layout of this development reflects the criteria outlined in NPPF Dec 24 para 8b

b) *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering* ***well-designed, beautiful and safe******places****, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land****, improving biodiversity****, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution mitigating and* ***adapting to climate change****, including moving to a low carbon economy.”* 1

Based on this we feel the application as it stands today should be refused on the basis that it fails to meet Policy P9 Climate Change, Policy P15 Secured by Design of the Solihull Local Plan 2013 and the recommendations of para 8b and para 136 of the NPPF Dec 24 .

For and on behalf of the Catherine de Barnes Residents Association

 1My highlighting