



# PLANNING STATEMENT

Land at Reily Close, Long Hanborough

*Change of use from grassland and arable field to playing field for Hanborough Manor School*

**Pye Homes Ltd**

**September 2015**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by West Waddy ADP, on behalf of Pye Homes Ltd
- 1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings and the following document: 'Ecological Considerations to Create Playing Field at Reily Close in 2015,' by BSG Ecology.
- 1.3 The application is being made because there is insufficient space at the Hanborough Manor School site to construct the necessary school extension to accommodate the increase in pupils that would arise from constructing up to 169 dwellings on the land south of Witney Road, which is subject to two applications, namely 14/1234/P/OP, currently at appeal, and application 15/02687/OUT, which is currently with the Council for determination. The provision of the replacement playing field on land south of Reily Close would thus provide additional space at the existing school site to enable the school extension to be constructed, while also enabling Oxfordshire County Council's standards for playing field provision to be met close to the Hanborough Manor school site.

## 2 CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site is located at the southern end of Reily Close adjoining the development of eighteen dwellings recently completed by Westlea Housing Ltd and permitted under planning permission 14/0050/P/FP.
- 2.2 The current use of the site consists of grassland on the northern part of the site and an arable field on the southern part. A permissive path crosses the site, which, with the agreement of the landowner will be diverted round the southern edge of the proposed playing field.
- 2.3 The playing field will be accessed by pupils from Hanborough Manor School via the existing pedestrian footways in Reily Close. This road has very little vehicular traffic as it is a cul de sac serving a small number of dwellings, so it is considered that it would provide a safe route for schoolchildren to use to access the playing field. It is understood the pitch will be used for formal sports, rather than informal play and it is expected that the children would walk from the school to the playing field under the supervision of a teacher. The primary school have confirmed that this is achievable from their perspective.

### 3 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The northern part of the proposed playing field site was shown within the red line boundary for application 14/0050/P/FP, the recently completed development for eighteen dwellings. However, no part of the development, including public open space, is on the area of land proposed for the playing field and there is now a double fence separating it from the new development.
- 3.2 An access way approximately 6 metres wide will need to be created through this double fence in order to create a pedestrian and maintenance vehicle access route to the new playing field. This would connect into the existing driveway at the southern end of Reily Close as shown the accompanying plan no. SK010.

### 4 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 This section outlines relevant national and local planning policies, showing how these provide support for this application.

#### National Policy

- 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2012 sets out the Government's planning policies for England.
- 4.3 The NPPF emphasises the importance of expanding schools, stating that: '*The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools;*' (para 72).
- 4.4 Similarly with regard to playing field provision the the NPPF states that: '*Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: ...the loss resulting from the proposed development would be*

*replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location;*' (para 74). In this instance the new pitch will be 100 metres by 60 metres, which is substantially more than the current school pitch which is approximately 50 metres by 25 metres.

- 4.5 The principle of sustainable development is the 'golden thread' running through both plan-making and decision-taking (paragraph 14, NPPF). There are twelve core planning principles that should underpin decision taking one of which is to '*deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.*' The provision of a new playing field for Hanborough Manor School fully accords with this planning principle.

#### **Planning Policy at the local level: District Council**

- 4.6 West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 TLC1 policy, which relates to new tourism, leisure and community facilities states that: '*planning permission will be granted for...the recreational and cultural use of land on a small scale to meet local needs,*' provided it would not '*have an adverse impact on the character or environment of the countryside or on towns and villages within the District or would generate unacceptable levels of traffic on the local highway network.*' Although 'saved' this policy is now time expired and should therefore only be given weight according to its consistency with the NPPF (para 215).
- 4.7 In this case the proposed playing field adjoins an existing recreation ground and would be a grass pitch serving local primary school pupils and would not be located on an area of high environmental interest. It would not have an adverse impact on local character. Traffic generation would be minimal being limited to grounds maintenance vehicles.
- 4.8 The new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 has a positive draft policy E5, which states that: '*The Council will support the development and retention of local services and community facilities to meet local needs and to promote social well being,*

*interests, interaction and healthy inclusive communities.'* The current proposal fully accords with this policy.

## 5 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 5.1 Other policy issues

5.2 The northern part of the application site contains an area of grassland dominated by false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). Other grasses include cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*). Within the grassland are areas of tall herb and scattered scrub, consisting of a few hawthorn bushes and sycamore, ash, elm and elder saplings.

5.3 While the grassland is not of botanical value it is known to support reptiles (slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) and common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and has potential to support great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*).

5.4 Details are provided in the accompanying letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015 from Laura Grant of BSG, which also outlines the intended mitigation strategy, which involves translocating the great crested newts and common lizard to another area of suitable habitat within the same field. The turf removed from the area of rough grassland will be distributed adjoining the receptor site to extend it. The grassy turfs and the seed bank within the soils will establish rapidly, providing crevices and structural diversity which is optimal for reptiles.

5.5 The very limited mitigation required for great crested newts will be carried out under a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence.

5.6 There is a mature hedgerow on the western boundary of the application site, which will be retained and will be unaffected.



## 6 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

6.1 During the processing of application 14/1234/P/OP Pye Homes Ltd put forward the proposal of creating a replacement playing field on land owned by the Vanbrugh Unit Trust south of Reily Close.

6.2 Oxfordshire County Council stated in their comments on the application that:

*'The applicant proposes that a further application to provide the playing field and pedestrian link is submitted as part of the reserved matters application for the Witney Road development; in order to provide sufficient certainty that such a playing field could be delivered, any s.106 agreement for the Witney Road development would need to include a provision whereby the applicant developer would need to have secured the land & planning permission for the playing fields in order to mitigate the impacts of the development on necessary education place provision. The land would need to be free of costs to the public purse.'*

6.3 The County Council therefore concluded that: *'In order to allow for the necessary expansion of school capacity as a direct result of the Witney Road development, it would be required to:*

*1. Provide, prior to implementation, (freehold and free of charge) a satisfactory supplementary site area for the primary school, with a secure, safe, wheelchair accessible linking pedestrian route, to include a primary school playing field meeting the County Council's required standards;*

*2. Contribute proportionately towards the capital costs of expanding primary, secondary and SEN school capacity as set out on the county council's detailed response.'*

6.4 It is to comply with the first of these requirements that this application is being submitted.

- 6.5 The proposed playing field will be 100 metres x 60 metres in size which is the size stipulated by the education officers of Oxfordshire County Council. A wheelchair accessible linking pedestrian route is available on the existing footways on Reily Close (shown in red on drawing SK010). The school intends to create a new pedestrian access through the hedgerow adjoining the existing vehicular entrance to the school as shown on plan SK010. This would provide a link onto the adjoining hard surfaced path, so that pupils would not be at risk from vehicles entering the school site and there would be a route for wheelchairs right from the school. There are also two potential alternative pedestrian routes (shown in blue and green on plan SK010), though these are not wheelchair accessible.
- 6.6 Discussions have taken place with officers from the Education Department of Oxfordshire County Council and Eynsham Partnership Academy, of which Hanborough Manor School is a member, and the Academy is supportive of the plans for the proposed replacement playing field.
- 6.7 There is agreement on the level of contribution to be paid, which amounts to Primary School (Hanborough Manor): £625,428; Secondary School (Bartholomew): £721,235 and Special Education Needs: £33,722.
- 6.8 The officers of West Oxfordshire District Council also considered the proposal to provide a replacement playing field on this land to be acceptable in principle, though they considered that further details were needed before a definitive view could be taken. Paragraph 5.31 of their report on application 14/1234/P/OP to the Upland Area Committee on the 2.3.15 that: *'Whilst this may present a solution to both the current shortfall of space on the school site and potential growth of the school in line with potential population increase, there is still some way to go before this option is truly viable and would of course be subject to a whole fresh planning application and consultation process, and on-going maintenance issues. This has been a common theme in comments received in relation to this amendment and whilst those issues*

*are not insurmountable, they do indicate the solution would be some way off before the school would be at a capacity to be able to cope with an increase in intake, in any sustainable way. This indicates that the wider sustainability issues of a site for this size are yet to be fully addressed, notwithstanding there is no technical objection to the application on the grounds of education.'*

- 6.9 The playing field would be laid out by the applicant at no cost to the school and then handed over to Oxfordshire County Council for subsequent maintenance by the school.
- 6.10 At the time when this proposal was first made it was proposed to provide access to the replacement playing through the adjoining recreation ground. Hanborough Parish Council stated that: *'While this may seem the least bad of the options put to the school, HPC has serious doubts about its practicability: either lesson time or organised sports and informal games time would have to be sacrificed to allow for inter-site movement; playing field and pathway security would be difficult to achieve and, if both were fully enclosed, general public users of surrounding recreational space would find their way barred.'* (para 2.47 of officers' report to the Uplands area Committee on 2.3.15 in relation to application 14/1234/P/OP)
- 6.11 With regard to these points, the problems of providing an enclosed path to the playing field through the recreation ground have been overcome by the present proposal, which involves providing access via Riely Close, which provides a safer route as it is overlooked by residential properties and there is very little traffic in this cul de sac.
- 6.12 While a certain amount of time would be lost walking too and from the playing field this would be limited as the playing field would be only 250 metres from the school. To put this in perspective the school site itself is 125 metres long. It is likely that the new playing field will be used for formal sports and not for play and dinner times.

## **7 IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSAL**

- 7.1 The proposal would not have any significant impacts. It would be a grass pitch and so would not affect drainage. It is not at risk of flooding and there are no mature trees that would need to be felled.
- 7.2 The playing field will be surrounded by a 2.1m weld mesh fence as requested by Oxfordshire County Council. The fence could be accompanied by a native species hedge if this is considered to be necessary to provide an attractive landscaped edge.
- 7.3 There is a permissive path that crosses the site of the proposed playing field, courtesy of the landowner. This permissive path provides a link from the Hanborough Recreation Ground to the public right of way which connects the main road (A4095) in Long Hanborough with Church Hanborough. It is proposed to relocate this permissive path along the western and southern boundaries of the new playing field as shown on drawing SK010, so there would be no loss of accessibility for pedestrians although we would stress that this is a permissive path and not a public right of way and as such and by the very nature of such paths can be altered or removed at any time.

## 8 BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSALS

- 8.1 Provision of the new playing field will provide a very significant benefit to Hanborough Manor School. It will provide a large new playing field that is nearly as large as the whole current Hanborough Manor School site.
- 8.2 It will also enable the school to expand and provide modern new facilities for the extra pupils arising from new development in the village.
- 8.3 Long Hanborough has been identified in the submission West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 as a Rural Service Centre which is *'suitable for development of an appropriate scale and type that would help to reinforce [its] existing service centre role.'* (Policies OS2 & EW2). Further development in Long Hanborough will, however, only be acceptable in educational terms if the school is able to expand, as it is already at capacity, and this requires extra land to be provided in the vicinity as the adjoining uses mean that there is currently no opportunity to expand onto adjoining land.
- 8.4 Local plan 2031 Policy EW2 which relates to the Eynsham-Woodstock Sub Area Strategy, within which Long Hanborough is located, states that: *'Proposals for development in the sub area should be consistent with the strategy which includes...ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for necessary supporting infrastructure, including education, leisure, green infrastructure and other community facilities.'*
- 8.5 This is precisely what this proposal would do and therefore it is considered that it should be granted planning permission.

## **9 THE PLANNING BALANCE**

- 9.1 The NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. This proposal would contribute to all three.
- 9.2 The proposal would support the economic role by enabling the Hanborough Manor School to expand, thus providing more employment and also enabling further development to take place in the village supporting local services and thus its role as a Rural Service Centre.
- 9.3 There would not be any detrimental environmental effects as an effective mitigation strategy will be implemented to relocate the reptiles and any great crested newts currently found on the site.
- 9.4 It would have a valuable social role by providing a much larger playing field than currently exists for the primary school pupils to use. Potentially this could also be made available to other members of the local community if the school agrees to this use. It will therefore contribute to the health and well-being of the local community. By also enabling the school to expand it will also contribute towards providing better educational facilities for the local community. The existing informal path will be retained and diverted and so will still continue to perform its existing recreational function.
- 9.5 There would therefore be substantial benefits arising from the proposal and there are adequate solutions to address the potential negative effects. On balance the proposal would therefore have substantial positive effects.

## 10 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 Long Hanborough has seen much ad hoc development of recent years delivering some housing but very limited, if any associated infrastructure improvements, resulting in huge strain on already “at capacity” service providers such as the school and doctors surgery. This proposal gives Long Hanborough the opportunity to address these issues not only to accommodate the proposed Witney Road development, but also to address the impact of other recent developments in Long Hanborough AND any future developments that may result from the emerging Local Plan and the Districts requirement to deliver housing numbers over the life of the plan.
- 10.2 The proposals are fully sustainable and accord with existing development plan policies. The proposals constitutes sustainable development, and is in accordance with paragraph 14 of the NPPF and therefore should be approved ‘without delay.’
- We urge officers to recommend to members that they support this proposal.

