



Hambledon

Land

Further submission to the
Neighbourhood Plan

Stoke Mandeville Retirement and Care Community

Zero carbon living integrated
with nature

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Our ambition has grown

The vision for a new retirement and care community and nature reserve on Risborough Road, Stoke Mandeville, was first presented in April 2018 to Stoke Mandeville Parish Council. In February 2019, we submitted a response to the Neighbourhood Plan consultation on our vision that provided a strong justification for a site-specific policy in the Plan.

Since then the proposals have evolved further to reflect a much more ambitious vision that seeks to address pressing issues that go much wider than the need for care and specialist housing for the elderly. The evolving proposals now seek to deliver **the most sustainable retirement and care community in the country** through a zero carbon development that is harmoniously incorporated within its natural environment. This paper provides an update for consideration in the ongoing Neighbourhood Plan process.

This more ambitious mission to deliver a fully integrated scheme that addresses the impending climate challenge head on has been inspired in part through working with Chiltern Rangers and in recognition of the increasing impetus to seriously address the climate emergency. Our project team now includes the technical experts able to develop such a scheme and demonstrate that it can be delivered.

Chiltern Rangers is a social enterprise, based in High Wycombe, that works with government bodies, other relevant agencies and local communities to provide advice and practical habitat management of the woodlands, chalk grasslands, commons, ponds and chalk streams in the Chilterns area. The Rangers also work with landowners and developers to ensure the built development incorporates the best possible environmental and ecological principles and practices.

Zero carbon development is only one part of a holistic approach to delivering a sustainable place to live that encompasses a wide range of interconnected environmental issues. Our proposal will set standards that are a seismic shift in the industry approach to tackling climate change, while achieving a net environmental gain, not just in biodiversity.

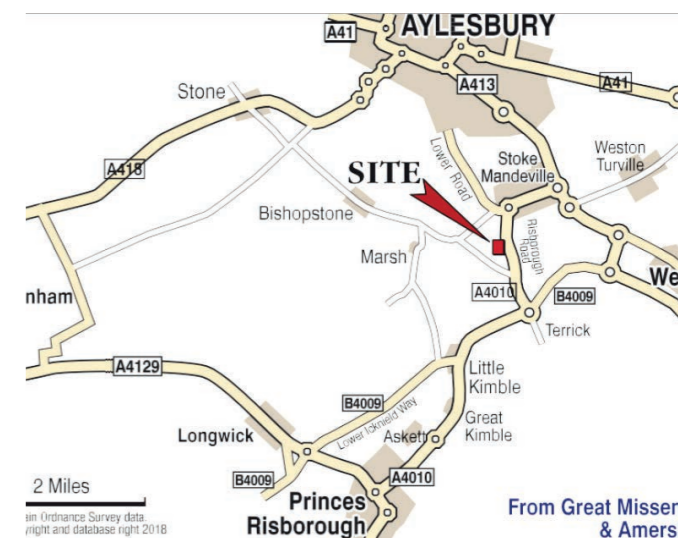
'We can't be a bit sustainable' – Greta Thunberg 2019

The site

The development site comprises land to the north-west of Fremantle Court Care Home. This land is in the same ownership as the proposed 17-acre nature reserve to the south-west of Fremantle Court.

Land to the south-east of Fremantle Court, which is owned by Fremantle Trust, could deliver a second phase of specialist housing accessed through the existing entrance to Fremantle Court, should the Trust decide to bring it forward.

On the north eastern side of the existing care home site is a single dwelling house plot which is not part of the site.



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Evolved proposals

The updated proposals comprise:

- Approximately 100 homes for the elderly on land to the north west of the existing Fremantle Court Care Home and the potential for 50 units in a later phase to the south east.
- A 17-acre nature reserve integrating and blending with the areas of built development – dedicated in perpetuity through a deed of covenant.
- Communal facilities including restaurant/snack bar, education/hobby suite, fitness suite, health clinic, swimming pool and bowling green.
- Full access to all communal facilities and the nature reserve for new residents, Fremantle Court residents and the wider village community.
- Exceptionally designed energy efficient buildings and on-site renewables to assist in achieving zero carbon performance across the site.
- The creation of a wildlife habitat with a fully integrated environmental management plan to deliver a biodiversity and wider environmental net gain across the site.
- Footpath links to encourage recreational experiences with nature and to link with important routes such as the Stoke Mandeville Way.

Beyond green

The project will be exceptionally energy efficient and will achieve zero carbon, through intelligent design and build and the generation of on-site renewable energy.

The new retirement and care community is being designed to Passivhaus standards. Passivhaus buildings provide a high level of occupant comfort while using very little energy for heating and cooling, thereby reducing energy use and carbon emissions from buildings. They are built to rigorous design and construction standards and can be certified through an exacting quality assurance process.

Passivhaus buildings achieve a 75% reduction in space heating requirements, compared to standard practice for UK new build. This is achieved primarily by adopting a "fabric first" approach to the design by specifying high levels of insulation to the thermal envelope.

Passivhaus can result in reductions to energy demand that enable all energy to be supplied from on-site renewable energy sources.





Connecting built form with the environment

The building and immediate external landscape would be inter-connected to the adjacent nature reserve and arable hinterland beyond. Outside and inside spaces, particularly in communal areas, would be blended to make them multi-functioning, easily accessible and maximise the connection with the surrounding environment. This would be achieved with features such as step-less access and the use of bi-fold doors.

Buildings would have integral bird and bat boxes e.g. bird brick houses – targeted at key species (swifts, house martins, house sparrows, blue tits and great tits) to maximise the interaction between humans and wildlife. All these species are facing decline owing in part to the gentrification of buildings and would welcome this habitat provision.

The grounds would include sensory gardens that would be of particular benefit for residents with dementia and other long-term health and well-being conditions. This has the dual benefit of providing multi-sensory stimulation and wildlife

habitat. Features would include water, herbs, visually bright flowers, crunchy gravels, edible plants and audible stimulation such as wind chimes and bird feeders. Some areas should be shaded, some partially shaded and others in full sun so there are a range of conditions.

A good network of recreational paths would be provided for residents and the local community, and would link to the wider public footpath network, including the Stoke Mandeville Way. Bike racks covered with a green roof and invertebrate blocks would be provided for staff and visitors, together with charging points for electric cars and bikes.

Water supply and drainage are critical in the Chilterns and associated water catchment areas. There would be a range of measures including sustainable drainage and rainwater harvesting to protect the aquifer and reduce/limit abstraction to protect internationally rare chalk streams.

Full integration with nature

The provision of neat, formal planting will be balanced with the long-term delivery of wildlife-rich grounds, creating living links to the nature reserve. This would include a balanced mix of well-manicured short turf lawns, together with wildflower margins and meadow areas. Management of these areas will tie into the work on the nature reserve.

The previous proposals for a nature reserve will be expanded to deliver wildlife-rich grassland with hedgerows and scrubby areas with some mixed woodland planting to include coppices. Trees and shrubs of local landscape character – predominantly butterfly food plants such as blackthorn, buckthorn, wych elm or oak – would be planted across the scheme.

The inclusion of pollinator-friendly species of plants and flowers – such as bird’s foot trefoil, kidney vetch and horseshoe vetch – would reflect species found in the wider Chilterns landscape and provide a source of food for a range of invertebrates, especially Chiltern speciality butterflies such as small and chalkhill blues.

The opportunity for on-site food production would be provided through the inclusion of allotments and the planting of edible plants such as fruit trees, which would be promoted in conjunction with local community groups and schools. An apiary would be included to provide honey, working with the local beekeepers’ association. Composting and wormery would be designed into the system to use green waste as a resource.

An integrated environmental management plan would ensure consistent, long-term, appropriate management and after-care of all the natural elements of the proposals, both formal and informal. A biodiversity calculation of the proposals and environmental management plan has been undertaken by specialist consultants. This confirms that there would be a net increase in biodiversity value at this site in excess of current planning policy and Government advice.

A naturally caring environment

Living within a natural and sustainable environment will have huge well-being benefits for elderly residents. The proposals cater for those prospective residents who would wish to live in a semi-rural environment and those residents of the adjacent care home that would have access to the nature reserve and communal facilities.

To overcome social isolation, community cohesion would be promoted through events in the outside spaces run with residents and community groups. Facilities such as the pool and gymnasium would be open for use by the wider community, which is encouraged by many retirement operators to promote inclusion of older people in the local community.

The scheme would promote inter-generational contact and help repair the current disconnect between older and younger people. There is the opportunity to work with local schools and youth groups to bring the community into the nature reserve and formal gardens to help with maintenance and attend to the needs of older people.



Our response to the Neighbourhood Plan

The proposals are consistent with national policy, local need and the Inspector's interim findings on the VALP but go well beyond policy in respect of energy and the environment.

They are also consistent with the draft vision for Stoke Mandeville Garden Parish by creating a healthy, sociable community set in a beautiful green natural environment; and through the delivery of high-quality, publicly-accessible facilities and specialist housing. The proposals will realise some of the Garden Town principles by providing opportunities for local employment, together with health and community facilities alongside green open space and access to the wider countryside.

It is legitimate for neighbourhood plans to include specific land allocations for development. Stoke Mandeville is associated with innovation and a specific policy in the Neighbourhood Plan for these proposals would help to continue the association.

Requirements for a neighbourhood plan – General Conformity with Strategic Policies and Delivering Sustainable Development

A neighbourhood plan must satisfy a number of basic conditions in order to proceed to referendum, such as being in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area. This does not mean conforming with all policies but, for example, those policies that should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for identified needs.

The VALP (particularly through the potential main modifications) provides for housing for older people through Policy H6. In order to support the delivery of a sufficient quantum of accommodation, that policy should not set a 'cap'.

A neighbourhood plan must not plan for less development than required by the VALP but can be prepared so that it contributes towards the overall levels of development required in the District (including the needs of older people as established by the strategic objectives of Policy H6). Accordingly, inclusion of our proposals within the

Neighbourhood Plan could contribute towards the needs of older people and the objectives of the policy, which could help ensure it is in general conformity with the relevant strategic policies for the area.

A range of elderly accommodation is required to meet market demand, both in urban and semi-rural locations, and Stoke Mandeville has an immediate undersupply of accommodation. Older people should have a choice of accommodation in their later years and those living in larger villages or more rural communities may wish to continue living in such an environment.

The basic conditions also require that the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development through three interlinked objectives: economic, social and environmental. Our proposals can deliver significant benefits against each of these objectives:

- Economic: providing job opportunities and additional local expenditure
- Social: meeting the accommodation needs of older people and providing care for those that need it; reducing social isolation; delivering significant health benefits for residents and cost benefits to the NHS and adult social services
- Environmental: delivering a zero carbon scheme and the creation in perpetuity of a substantial area of nature reserve

Conclusion

We believe our proposals should be included in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan through a specific policy as:

- The proposals go far beyond current policy targets for energy efficiency and environmental management and fully address climate change and wider environmental issues.
- There is a recognised need for such accommodation through the Bucks CC Market Position Statement (2018-2022).
- Our market advice highlighted an immediate undersupply of accommodation in the Stoke Mandeville area.
- The VALP Inspector has recommended that the Local Plan should include additional measures to provide for the accommodation needs of older people and encouraged allocations for this type of accommodation.
- A specific policy would ensure the community aspects of the proposals and reference the delivery of the nature reserve.
- The proposals are site-specific in being able to deliver the nature reserve and in providing access to this and the communal facilities to residents of the care home and the village.
- The land is available and deliverable.
- Inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan should be seen as a positive approach, in general conformity with the relevant strategic policies and other 'basic conditions' (including the need to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development).



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