

## PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

# Contents

Contents page	3
Introduction	4
Previous Planning	5
Site analysis	
Location	6
Context	7
The Proposals	
Layout	8
Appearance	9-11
High Weald AONB Plan	12-15
HWAONB & National Design Guides	16
Submission	17

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## Revision History

Rev P04 - Revised Issue

**Proposed 30 dwellings  
Land south west of Strand Meadow,  
Burwash, East Sussex, TN19 7BP  
For Park Lane Group**



**Pre Application Enquiry Supporting Statement**



# PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

## Introduction

MH Architects Ltd have been commissioned by The Park Lane Group to prepare and submit a Pre-Application planning enquiry for the land at Strand Meadow, Burwash, TN19 7BP.

Part of the land is allocated for housing in the adopted Rother District Local Plan and has outline planning permission for 30 dwellings (RR/2017/582/P) although a subsequent full planning application (RR2018/1787/P) was refused by the District Council and a subsequent appeal was dismissed in July 2019. The Appeal Inspector concluded that while the cumulative benefits of the proposed were notable matters in favour of the scheme, the proposed house design would harm the character and appearance of the area and fail to conserve its part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Following an intensive feasibility study process and careful consideration given to the Appeal Inspector's specific design reasoning for rejecting the appeal, this Pre-Application Enquiry Supporting Statement details a revised scheme for 30 dwellings with associated landscaping.

It is intended that MH Architects Ltd and the applicant enter into discussion with Rother District Council as part of the enquiry to determine the acceptability of the revised scheme to address concerns related to design, scale and massing.



Location plan showing the site

## PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

# Previous Planning

A previous application was submitted on the 28th June 2018 (Ref RR/2018/1787/P) for the erection of 30 dwellings together with access, parking and open space which was refused by notice on 22nd January 2019. An appeal was made by Park Lane Homes (SE) Ltd against the decision of Rother District Council, which was subsequently dismissed.

Following the appeal refusal we have taken into consideration all of the inspector's suggestions and comments received, in particular when developing the design and layout. The comments received from the appeal inspector are detailed below (in italic) followed by our responses.

- *The scheme would not build sympathetically upon the distinctive features and architecture in Burwash or the wider landscape.*
- *The proposal would not enhance the architectural quality of the village or the High Weald.*
- *An appropriate design response at the appeal site would be one sympathetic to the traditional cottage style prevalent within the wider landscape of the AONB and evident in the historic core of Burwash.*

The inspector raised concerns about the aesthetics of the previous scheme, and the need for greater consideration and understanding of the character of Burwash and the surrounding area. This proposal adopts a new design approach, in taking inspiration from the draft HWAONB Design Guide and the Burwash High Street Survey, prepared as part of the previous submission, to deliver a scheme which respects and enhances the character of the site setting. The revised scheme incorporates a variety of elevational treatments to reflect the traditional aesthetic of the High Weald AONB, including: Tile hanging, red and brown clay tiles, bay/oriel windows, chimneys, hipped and half-hipped roofs, catslide roofs, varying roof

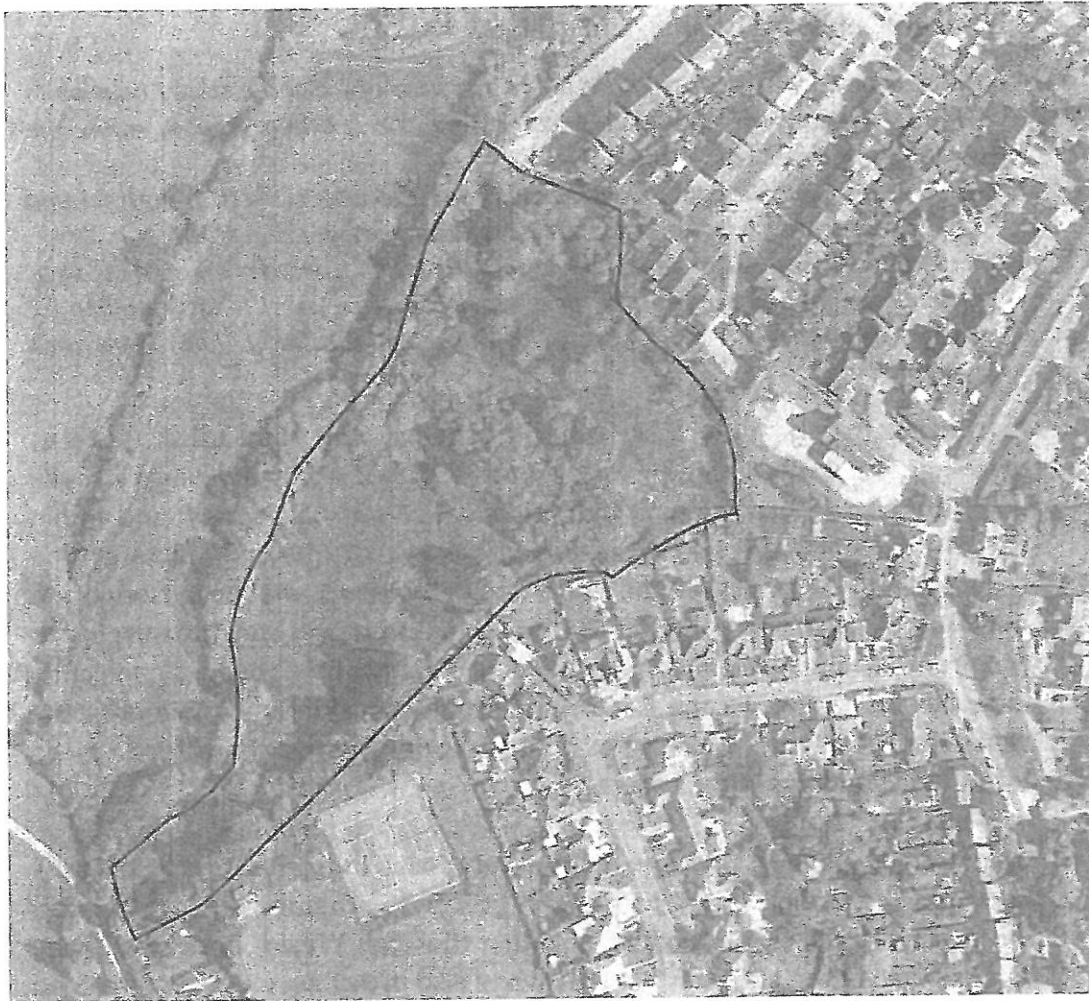
orientation and eave heights, and gablets.

- *The new development should not follow the lead of the three-storey housing in Strand Meadow, as this would compound the existing impact upon the landscape and settlement edge.*
- *The dwellings would appear overly large and the development a harmful and locally prominent suburban intrusion into the landscape of the AONB.*
- *The ground floors would be dominated by the blank frontages created by areas of 'under build' and the front gardens would be given over to hardstanding for vehicles as opposed to soft landscaping. This would result in a hard, semi-urban appearance.*

In contrast to the previously refused scheme, which included 3 storey dwellings, the revised scheme now proposes only 2 storey dwellings so as to be much more in keeping with the traditional vernacular forms found within the High Weald. The steeply sloping nature of the site dictates the requirement for a degree of under-build, however we have sought to minimise the visual impact of this through planters and soft landscaping to the front of the dwellings. The building heights have been significantly lowered and the roofscape has been carefully considered to minimise the visual impact of the dwellings, as well as respecting the character of more traditional buildings in the village.

We strongly believe that the current proposal mitigates the inspector's concerns regarding the previously refused scheme, and that this development will sit harmoniously within the High Weald, both conserving and enhancing the surrounding area while also providing vital much-needed housing for Burwash, as required in the Council's adopted core strategy.

## Site analysis - Location



Aerial map of the site location (application boundary shown in red)

The site is located at the South-West end of Strand Meadow, a cul-de-sac towards the northern edge of Burwash.

The area to the North-East and South-East is predominantly residential in character, with the recreation ground and sports facilities to the south and views out into the countryside to the west

The application site comprises of 30 two storey dwellings with the following proposed mix:

- 1 x 1 bed flat
- 1 x 2 bed flat
- 6 x 2 bed 2 storey houses
- 22 x 3 bed 2 storey houses

The surrounding properties are of a similar scale, varying from single storey, on the ridge above the site, to 3 storeys on the South-Eastern side of Strand Meadow closest to the site entrance.

## PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

## Site analysis - Context

This part of Burwash is principally residential in character, with the street scene formed by a variety of semi-detached and small terraces of dwellings. The building heights range from single through to three storey dwellings, with small front gardens facing onto the road and in some cases, steps leading up, or down, to front doors.

The surrounding dwellings are primarily of a 1960s appearance, out of keeping with both visual character and a connection to the historic aesthetic of the High Weald AONB.

The dwellings do not display the same range of ages and styles reflected through the gradual development of the wider area.

The site is located within a well established neighbourhood with a broad range of amenities and services necessary to respond to key government criteria for well-being. The site is located at the northern end of Burwash approximately 7 miles from the town of Heathfield to the West.

Much of the site boundary is screened with mature trees and vegetation, with particular density along much of the north and west boundaries, and contains a small spring fed stream.

The valley bottom has a sloping topography falling to the northern boundary; this forms the lowest point topographically, with the fields opposite the site rising steeply to a hedged boundary. Beyond this boundary is a public right of way which has limited views towards the site.



Current site image



Dwellings of the end of Strand Meadow

## PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

# The Proposals - Layout

In accordance with the previous outline approval, the proposal seeks the construction of 30 dwellings alongside associated parking and amenity space.

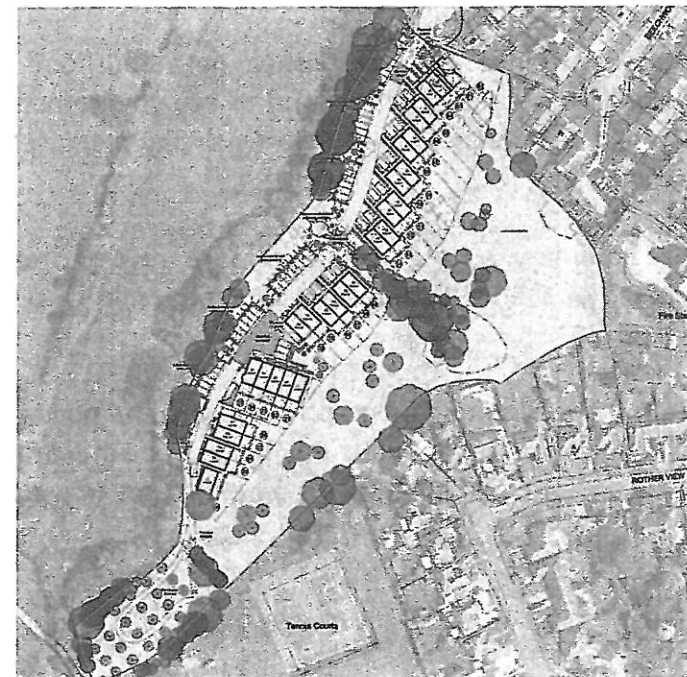
The scheme effectively extends the existing road, Strand Meadow, with the new dwellings continuing along the valley bottom with a publicly accessible footpath connecting to the sports facilities and recreation ground beyond. As previously approved a large landscape buffer area is proposed on part of the hillside that extends between the proposed and existing housing area to the South.

The proposed site layout has been informed by a draft Landscape Impact Assessment and has been largely influenced by the steeply sloping nature of the site with particular consideration given to the position of the existing mature landscaping. Existing trees are retained where possible, with new planting of native species to reinforce boundaries and help to preserve the natural sense of place. In accordance with the previous Arboricultural assessment, trees which show signs of disease or are of non-native species will be removed and replaced where necessary.

The scheme retains the existing stream as a landscape feature and a small pond area is proposed which will be further enhanced with the planting of native species. A shared vehicle/pedestrian bridge to be constructed with a traditional appearance, is proposed crossing the stream creating a key visual feature within the site.

The proposed development would be respectful to the private outlook from the neighbouring dwellings to the north and east, with substantial distance maintained between built forms. Due to the sloped nature of the site the houses will not appear intrusive upon the views from the bungalows of Rother View.

There is ample space for private and shared amenity as well as parking for the required number of vehicles to meet the car parking standards, with 65 spaces serving the 30 units.



The proposed site layout (not to scale)



# The Proposals - Appearance



Images from Burwash High Street Survey the showing the traditional vernacular of High Weald AONB

## PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

## The Proposals - Appearance

The revised scheme proposes to use a variety of elevational treatments to reflect the traditional aesthetic of the High Weald AONB, including:

- Tile hanging
- Red and brown clay tiles
- Bay/oriel windows
- Chimneys
- Hipped and half-hipped roofs
- Catslide roofs
- Varying roof orientation and eave heights
- Gablets



Indicative elevations proposed materials and styles (not to scale).

# The Proposals - Appearance



Indicative elevations proposed materials and styles (not to scale).

# The High Weald AONB Management Plan

The revised scheme has been informed by the High Weald AONB management Plan 2019-2024. The specific considerations and mitigations are detailed in response to the points of the plan below.

**Objective G1: To restore the natural function of rivers, water courses and water bodies.**

The scheme retains the existing stream feature and a small pond area is proposed which will be further enhanced with the planting of native species. A shared vehicle/pedestrian bridge of a traditional appearance, is proposed crossing the stream creating a key visual feature.

**Objective G2: To protect and enhance soils, sandstone outcrops, and other important landform and geological features of the AONB.**

No exposed outcrop will be affected, however some compaction of soil will occur in the construction area. The construction of the houses will involve cutting into the sloped landscape, with the excavated soil being relocated on-site in order to minimise the environmental impact of the development by minimising the need to dispose of

**Objective G3: To help secure climatic conditions and rates of change which support continued conservation and enhancement of the High Weald's valued landscapes and habitats.**

The proposed houses will incorporate features of sustainable design for energy efficiency and reduction of water usage.

**Objective S1: To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.**

The development will provide a publicly accessible footpath providing an important new connection from Strand Meadow to the sports facilities and recreation ground beyond in accordance with the adopted Local Plan Policy.

Due to the sloped and concealed nature of the site the houses will not appear intrusive upon the views from the bungalows of Rother view above the site. The previously submitted scheme was criticised for the inclusion of split level three storey buildings, something which this revised scheme now addresses through use of two storey dwellings cut into the slope. The proposed dwellings will not harm views within the AONB landscape setting beyond the site, either through their physical mass or visual appearance.

# The High Weald AONB Management Plan

**Objective S2: To protect the historic pattern and character of settlement.**

The design of this scheme has been driven by and responds to the High Weald AONB Design Guide and the Burwash High Street Survey prepared as part of the previous submission.

**Objective S3: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure development reflects the character of the High Weald in its scale, layout and design.**

The previously rejected scheme sought to take its lead from the 3 storey properties within Strand Meadow and the immediate vicinity which are primarily of a 1960s style with little connection to the historical aesthetic of the High Weald. In contrast the form and visual appearance of the proposed dwellings in the revised scheme now respond to the wider historical context of the High Weald AONB through the inclusion of traditional materials and building techniques. The material palette chosen demonstrates a strong connection with the local area providing a robust sense of place.

**Objective R1: To maintain the historic pattern and features of routeways.**

There is no current public footpath through the site. The proposed footpath will not only be of benefit to the new residents, but will also provide an important connection between Strand Meadow and the recreation ground and sports facilities and Burwash village centre beyond.

**Objective R2: To enhance the ecological function of routeways.**

Existing trees are retained where possible, with new planting of native species (subject to ecological report) used to reinforce boundaries and help to preserve the natural sense of place. Any trees of non-native species will be removed and replaced where necessary.

**Objective W1: To maintain the existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.**

The site is currently grassed with trees around the stream and screening much of the boundaries.

**Objective W2: To enhance the ecological quality and functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.**

Tree removal will be minimal and only where necessary, with boundaries reinforced with native species where required. The site will benefit from planting associated with the new pond. The southern edge of the site is offered as a landscaped ecological buffer and will be able to sustain a varied and enhanced ecological environment.

## PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

# The High Weald AONB Management Plan

**Objective W3: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.**

The scheme will have no impact on historic features in woodland.

**Objective W4: To increase the output of sustainability produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.**

There will be no harm caused to woodland access.

**Objective FH1: To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.**

The proposal will have no impact on local agriculture.

**Objective FH2: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.**

The site is of an irregular shape, and the current treed boundaries will be retained and strengthened with planting where necessary. As the site is not currently in use, this development will provide an opportunity to better protect and manage the boundaries.

**Objective FH3: To enhance the ecological function of the field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.**

There will be no loss of species-rich grassland.

**Objective FH4: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.**

There will be no impact upon historic assets of field or heathland.

# The High Weald AONB Management Plan

**Objective LBE1:** To improve returns from, and thereby increase entry and retention in farming, forestry, horticulture and other land management activities that conserve and enhance natural beauty.

The proposal will have no impact on local agriculture, forestry or horticulture.

**Objective LBE2:** To improve amenities, infrastructure (including the provision of affordable housing), and skills development for rural communities and related sectors that contribute positively to conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

There will be no impact on community skills development.

**Objective OQ1:** To increase opportunities for learning about and celebrating the character of the High Weald.

The proposed public footpath connecting Strand Meadow to the recreation ground will improve access for local residents to the High Weald.

**Objective OQ2:** To increase the contribution of individuals and communities to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

There will be no impact on areas conserved or enhanced through public or private contributions.

**Objective OQ3:** To develop and manage access to maximise opportunities for everyone to enjoy, appreciate and understand the character of the AONB while conserving its natural beauty.

The proposed public footpath connecting Strand Meadow to the recreation ground will provide views out over open fields to the north-west.

**Objective OQ4:** To protect and promote the perceptual qualities that people value.

A lighting strategy is yet to be defined, however the design will be suitable for the site and will minimise external lighting and light pollution.

## PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY SUPPORTING STATEMENT

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# National Design Guide & Draft HWAONB Design Guide

Throughout the development of the revised scheme, we have also continually referred to both the National Design Guide and the draft HWAONB Design Guide “Building for the High Weald”. The content and guidance provided within these documents have informed every stage of the design process, from the initial site analysis through to the design of the site layout and the scale and appearance of the dwellings, which has resulted in a revised scheme that respects the natural surroundings of the High Weald AONB and positively contributes to the built environment.

The HWAONB Design Guide highlights the need to consider the wider landscape, topographical setting, key historic features and essential character of the area. The context and history of the site has been thoroughly examined through a detailed feasibility study, which has ensured that the revised layout is sensitive to the character of High Weald, with mature site boundaries and the spring-fed stream retained and developed into a key visual feature. The key design principles underpinning the appearance of the dwellings respond strongly to the existing local character and identity, and the spacing between the units and the roofscape created by the dwellings have been carefully considered in order to allow views through and out to the wider landscape.

The scale, massing and grouping of dwellings have been carefully considered to allow the scheme to sit harmoniously within the site, while providing ample amenity and access to the surrounding area. The revised scheme will deliver high quality buildings and places, identified as fundamental in the National Design Guide and the National Planning Policy Framework.

A previously completed scheme in Burwash by MH Architects is featured in the draft HWAONB Design Guide. The scheme is offered as an exemplar for high quality design within the High Weald, receiving the following praise

“(the scheme) successfully used steep roof pitches, stepped terraces responding to the site’s topography, a strong building line and a variety of unit frontage widths.”



# The Submission

The proposed development of the site improves the locality and the context of the area. The proposal accords with national, regional and local planning policies in the local area as well as contributing to the provision of much needed housing.

The new properties will be to a high quality design using construction methods and materials which reflect the style and appearance of the High Weald AONB. The objectives of the draft High Weald AONB Design Guide have been considered extensively throughout the development of this proposal, resulting in a revised scheme that will contribute positively to the overall character and visual amenity of the area. The full application will be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, with this submission incorporating the initial findings.

The design team hope that the Local Authority and its members agree with the principles set out in this statement, and will look favourably and supportively at the application.