

FAIRTHORN
CONSULTANCY

Statement of Community Involvement
Land at Woodgate Nurseries,
Woodgate, West Sussex

Prepared for
Hanbury Properties

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Executive summary

Hanbury Properties is committed to consulting with the community regarding its proposals for developing land at Woodgate Nurseries, Woodgate, West Sussex.

The local community and other important stakeholders were invited to consider and provide feedback on the draft scheme via a host of different channels. A freephone information line along with a project email address were both made available throughout the process for interested parties to receive further details and to submit comments. Additionally, a virtual exhibition was held from **Thursday 6th June to Sunday 23rd June 2024**.

The virtual consultation was promoted in advance via a community flyer, which also included details on how residents and other important local stakeholders could request paper copies of the plans along with a feedback form and return postage if they were unable to access the internet. This was to ensure everyone was able to comment who wished to do so.

Despite wide promotion, the consultation only received a total of **23** responses. The feedback included some positive features, such as support for infrastructure improvements in the village that could be unlocked by the development.

Concerns were raised regarding the principle of more housing in the area and of developing the site, and the impact on the village's existing infrastructure. It should be noted that in the event of planning permission being granted, payments would be made by the developer to fund improvements via the local authority to address any such issues which could also provide the opportunity to resolve pre-existing problems.

The project team has carefully reviewed all the feedback received, and the main comments raised have been addressed within this document and the wider material submitted as part of the application. This document also provides a chronological account of the pre-application consultation undertaken and a review of the feedback received.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hanbury Properties is bringing forward development proposals for land at Woodgate Nurseries, Woodgate, West Sussex.
- 1.2 From the outset, Hanbury Properties has been committed to consulting key stakeholders with regards to its proposals. They have included locally elected councillors, businesses, and residents living near the site.
- 1.3 This document has been produced to clearly and concisely detail a chronological account of the community engagement undertaken by the applicant in respect of its proposals.
- 1.4 To assist with the community engagement, Hanbury Properties brought Fairthorn Consultancy, a specialist communications agency, into its wider project team for the proposed development.
- 1.5 All the feedback received is accounted for and represented within this document.

2. Background

2.1 Proposal site

2.1.1 The application site at Woodgate Nurseries, Woodgate, comprises a mix of developed and undeveloped land with numerous redundant horticultural nursery buildings and other structures to the western side of the A29, just to the south of the railway line and behind the Thakeham Homes development of Wings Nursery.

2.1.2 The site is currently occupied by the redundant nurseries, and the proposals provide an ideal opportunity to regenerate the land and meet local housing needs. It is a logical extension to Woodgate.



A current view of the proposal site at Woodgate Nurseries, including its redundant buildings

2.2 Proposals

2.2.1 Hanbury Properties is bringing forward proposals for a development of up to 130 sustainable homes, of which 30% will be affordable, complying with the policy specified by Arun District Council.

2.2.2 The project team has given careful consideration to developing its vision for the site, and the proposals feature:

- A sustainable new development with a mix of up to 130 homes and policy compliant 30% as Affordable Housing
- Homes and public spaces that are of high-quality design, reflecting local character and which is sympathetic to its context
- An appropriate mix and density of 2 and 2.5 storey housing including detached, semi-detached, and terraced homes as well as some apartments
- A good range including 1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom properties
- Sustainable construction with modern-specification housing
- Circa 3 hectares (7.4 acres) of Green Infrastructure with extensive new landscaping and planting providing a biodiversity net gain via green wildlife corridors and other features that enhance ecology within the site
- Safe access from the A29/Lidsey Road using the junction arrangements approved in recent adjacent housing
- Integrated sustainable drainage systems to successfully manage, attenuate, and control surface water and ground water on the site
- Substantial contributions towards local infrastructure demands and needs arising from the proposals via the Community Infrastructure Levy (c. £0.8 to £1million) and other section 106 contributions as required

Though in outline at this stage, the scheme will also ensure provision of:

- Good levels of car parking and cycle provision for homes and visitors that meet Arun's adopted standards
- Dedicated footpaths and cycleways that encourage healthy lifestyles
- Comprehensive provision of EV charging points to future-proof homes
- Significant informal public open space, play spaces and community growing facilities
- A 'walk and play' trail forming a green corridor
- Routes that connect Woodgate through the site to the existing public rights of way network (to the west)



This diagram shows our proposed development in context with the other housing schemes currently taking shape in Woodgate

3. Community engagement

3.1 Statement of community involvement

3.1.1 The Localism Act 2011

Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011 outlines that a person proposing to make a planning application on land in England should carry out consultation on the proposed application. This should include publicity considered likely to bring the application to the attention of a majority of the persons who live at, or otherwise occupy, premises in the vicinity of the land.

3.1.2 National Planning Policy Framework (2012, updated 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2023)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for England and outlines how these policies should be applied. The applicant has had regard to the NPPF at Paragraph 39 when it states that *"early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties."*

3.1.3 The NPPF goes on to highlight at Paragraph 40 that *"Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications."*

3.1.4 Paragraph 41 outlines that the Local Planning Authority should encourage other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage, noting that *"the more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits."*

3.1.5 Arun District Council

Engagement activities have been undertaken with due regard to the expectations laid out in Arun District Council's latest Statement of Community Involvement, which was adopted in January this year (2024). Based on that document, in conjunction with developing the plans, Hanbury Properties undertook a programme of community engagement, as outlined in this report.

3.2 Engagement with statutory bodies

- 3.2.1 Before the proposals were shared with the community, appropriate steps were taken to discuss the principle of development with statutory bodies and other experts. The detail of this is included within the planning statement.

3.3 Stakeholder engagement

- 3.3.1 Hanbury Properties recognised it was important to engage proactively with key stakeholders regarding its proposals at Woodgate. As a result, the project team reached out to local politicians shortly before the wider community consultation began. This ensured they had early sight of the proposals ahead of residents raising any queries or comments with them about the scheme.

- 3.3.2 The stakeholders contacted shortly before the wider public consultation included:

- Leader of Arun District Council
- Relevant cabinet members at Arun District Council
- District Councillors for Barnham ward (which covers the proposal site)
- West Sussex County Councillor for Fontwell division (which covers the proposal site)
- Clerk and Members of Aldingbourne Parish Council (which covers Woodgate)

- 3.3.3 It should be noted there was no Member of Parliament covering the site during the consultation period as Parliament had already been dissolved ahead of the General Election on 4th July 2024.

3.4 Wider community engagement

- 3.4.1 After reaching out to key stakeholders, Hanbury Properties launched its wider community consultation on **Thursday 6th June 2024**.

- 3.4.2 To commence the process, a community flyer was circulated in the area surrounding the proposal site. It outlined the vision for the land and how to take part in the virtual consultation. It also included the freephone information line number and project email address.

3.4.3 A total of **1,000** copies were sent via Royal Mail first class postage on **Thursday 6th June 2024**, and the distribution area included residential and commercial properties.

3.4.4 A map of the distribution area for the community flyer is shown below.



A map depicting the community flyer distribution area; the location of the proposal site is marked with the red 'x'

3.4.5 The community flyer contained the following:

- ✦ Background to the site
- ✦ An overview of the proposals
- ✦ Information on how to take part in the virtual consultation
- ✦ Details of the project team's freephone information line and email address

3.4.6 A copy of the invitation flyer can be found in the appendix.

3.5 Virtual consultation

- 3.5.1 In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Hanbury Properties recognises that the way in which community consultations are carried out has fundamentally changed, and hosting a virtual engagement is now considered a vital component of any such exercise.
- 3.5.2 As a result, a virtual consultation regarding the proposals was hosted on the project website. This allowed the local community and other key stakeholders to explore the proposals in detail and respond to them with their views, comments, and suggestions.
- 3.5.3 As opposed to traditional events which are open for a short period (i.e. single day events) the well publicised virtual consultation was open for comments on the project's website for 18 days between **Thursday 6th June 2024** and **Sunday 23rd June 2024**.
- 3.5.4 The website was hosted at <https://woodgate.your-feedback.co.uk/> and is still live at the point of submission of this outline planning application.
- 3.5.5 The information displayed on the website included:
- Welcome and overview
 - Details about Hanbury Properties
 - Background information about the site
 - Details about the proposals, including the affordable housing
 - Details about landscaping and greenspace
 - Information about transport, access, and ecology
 - Key benefits of the scheme and how to provide feedback



A screenshot of the Home Page of our project website for the Woodgate development

3.6 Dedicated project email address

- 3.6.1 A specific project email address – [REDACTED] – was made available to receive feedback and answer any queries both during and after the consultation period.

3.7 Freephone 0800 comment facility

- 3.7.1 During and after the consultation, access to a freephone telephone information line – [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] was offered to those who wished to find out more about the proposals, or register comments via the telephone.

4. Consultation responses

4.1 Feedback

The community consultation generated **23** items of feedback, which comprised **20** forms submitted via the project website, **two** messages received via the project's email address, and **one** phone call. Given that 1,000 flyers were distributed, the project team has taken it that those who opted not to engage had no strong feelings about the scheme, indicating they were relaxed about the proposals. Though the interest/response rate was low (at just 2.3%), this was consistent with other windfall schemes in and around Woodgate and notably lower than for large scale development comprised by applications for the Barnham Eastergate Westergate strategic allocation site. This suggests it is the latter (much larger scale) development which is of significant interest to the local community in Woodgate and the other surrounding villages, not least because of the local infrastructure its allocation in the Arun Local Plan promises to deliver. Despite the response rate, the project team has very carefully taken on board the comments received.

The first question we asked on the feedback form was:

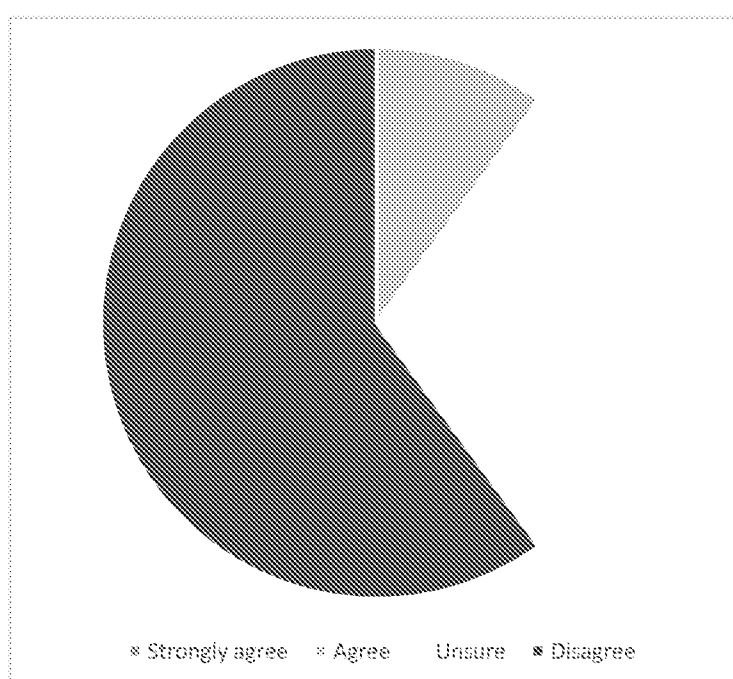
Q1: Do you feel more homes are needed for local families, especially affordable housing?

In total, 60% of respondents did not support more housing, including affordable homes, for local families, while 30% were unsure, and 10% agreed there was unmet demand.

Strongly agree:	0	0%
Agree:	2	10%
Unsure:	6	30%
Disagree:	12	60%

Total replies: 20

The project team then looked into the comments in more detail and all the issues raised by respondents have been catalogued in the table that follows. Some respondents ticked one of the four options, but then left no further feedback.

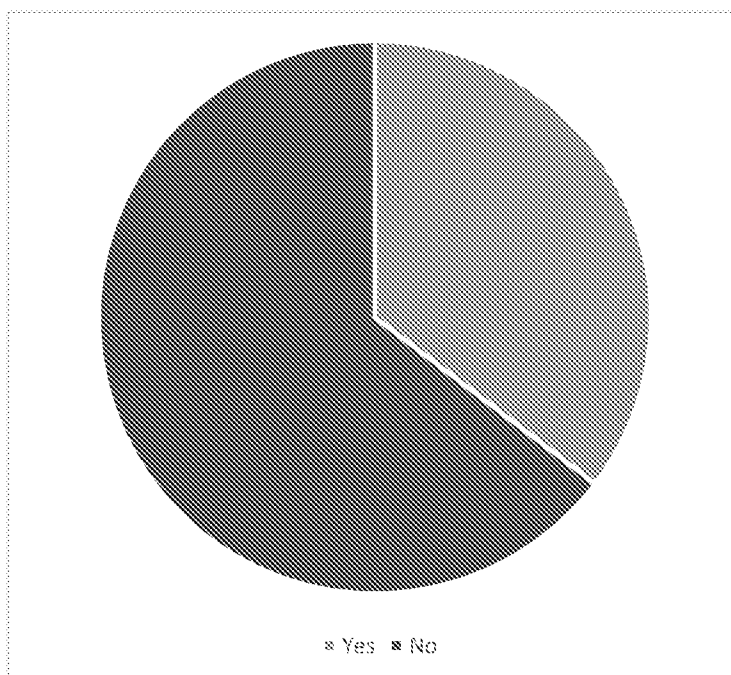


Issue	Frequency of being raised
There is inadequate infrastructure to support the development	4
The local road network has already reached capacity	4
The affordable homes will not be affordable	4
Permission already exists to build lots more homes in Woodgate, so this scheme is not needed	4
Woodgate already has enough homes	3
Affordable housing will not go to local people	2
Woodgate is becoming overpopulated	2
The site should not be built on because that will worsen the current drainage problems in the village	2
Development will exacerbate delays at the level crossing	1
Local people are being priced out of the village	1
All of the development should be affordable housing	1
The development will turn the village into a town	1
Do not believe affordable housing will be delivered	1
Woodgate cannot cope with more housing	1
The council is only interested in how much money developers will pay to obtain planning permission	1
The development will harm the character of Woodgate	1
There is no demand for affordable housing in the village	1
The development will lead to a reduction in air quality	1
The village's sewer network will be unable to cope	1
More housebuilding will reduce the value of existing properties	1
The proposal site is below sea level and floods	1

Q2: Do you know any local families that would benefit from affordable housing, and are struggling to remain in the area?

Regarding this question, 35% of respondents stated that they knew local families that would benefit from affordable housing, which might enable them to stay in the area. The remaining 65% said they did not.

Yes:	7	35%
No:	13	65%
Total replies:	20	



The project team then looked into the comments in more detail and all the issues raised by respondents have been catalogued in the table that follows. The majority of the respondents ticked one of the two options, but then left no further feedback.

Issue	Frequency of being raised
The affordable homes will not be affordable	2
Areas of the village, including the proposal site, are prone to flooding	1
The affordable housing will be "overpriced boxes"	1
Families would prefer to buy homes outright rather than shared ownership properties	1
Affordable homes will be allocated to people from outside the area	1

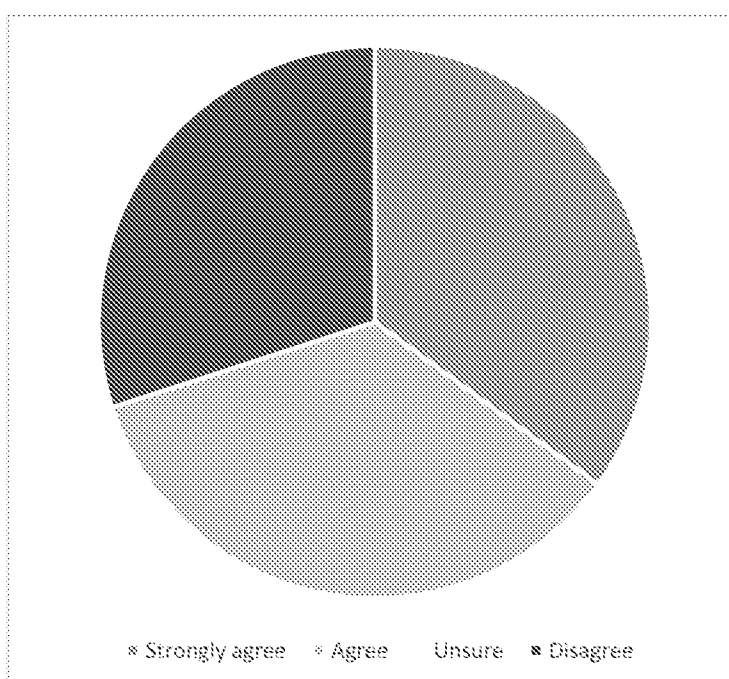
Q3: We have designed our scheme to promote community interaction, including features such as walking trails. Should we consider incorporating other community facilities?

Regarding this question, a total of 70% of respondents agreed that more community facilities were needed in Woodgate, of which half strongly agreed. The project team recognises that developing the proposal site could unlock infrastructure upgrades and deliver improved local facilities, for which there is a clear demand, with only 30% of respondents disagreeing with this statement. Owing to the adoption of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule, the scheme would be liable to deliver payments towards infrastructure on a tariff basis (per sqm) on all market housing.

Strongly agree:	7	35%
Agree:	7	35%
Unsure:	0	0%
Disagree:	6	30%

Total replies: 20

The project team then looked into the comments in more detail and all the issues raised by respondents have been catalogued in the table that follows. Some respondents ticked one of the four options, but then left no further feedback.



Issue	Frequency of being raised
The village's current infrastructure is inadequate	4
More school places and doctors' surgery places are required	4
Request for indoor sports facilities / a leisure centre	3
Woodgate needs a bypass to reroute the A29	2
Do not believe any community benefits will be delivered	2
The land should be left undeveloped to soak up rainfall	1

General opposition to the scheme without citing any reasons	1
The developers are only interested in making a profit	1
Build somewhere else that already has infrastructure in place	1
Do not want to see the proposal site developed	1
Existing walking routes in the village are fine as they are	1
The local road network cannot cope with more housing	1
Calls for a bridge over the railway to replace the level crossing	1
Woodgate needs better public transport, including more buses and a railway station	1
The village needs more shops	1
Providing extra walking routes is "just a gimmick"	1
Woodgate does not need more homes	1
The village is becoming overcrowded	1

Q4: Our proposals are still at an outline stage, with more detail to come. However, do you have any further comments at this stage?

As this question was an invitation for residents and other important stakeholders to cover any points not already raised, these responses were not grouped into categories as with the previous three questions. However, the project team paid close attention to the replies, and all the issues raised, and their frequency, is detailed in the table below:

Issue	Frequency of being raised
General opposition to the scheme - no reason given	6
Concerns about traffic congestion	5
More school places and doctors' surgery places are required	4
The proposal site is prone to flooding	3
The village's sewer network is already unable to cope	2
Public transport is inadequate	2
There is already too much traffic and railway noise in the village	1
Development will leave Woodgate without enough greenspace	1
Woodgate does not need more homes	1

The village does not have enough community facilities	1
Development will harm the character of Woodgate	1
There are very few local jobs, so most people would have to commute	1
Building new homes will devalue the existing ones in the village	1
Concerns that development will exacerbate queues at Woodgate's level crossing	1
The new housing will harm the environment	1
Would prefer to see a brownfield site developed	1
Proposals are being driven purely by profit	1
The village's sewer network has reached capacity	1

4.2 Email feedback

4.2.1 As previously highlighted, a dedicated project email address was provided in case residents or other important local stakeholders preferred to send comments to the project team without completing a feedback form.

4.2.2 During the consultation period, **two** messages were received via the project's dedicated email address. Both were from residents who had also completed feedback forms, and largely duplicated the points they had already raised, which have been recorded in the previous section.

4.3 Phone messages

4.3.1 During the consultation period, **one** phone message was received via the project's freephone line. It was from a resident requesting more information about the scheme, which was duly supplied.

4.4 Response to comments

4.4.1 All comments received during the process have been reviewed and the project team has attempted to respond to the most recurring themes that have been raised.

4.4.2 The project team noted there was support for some elements of the scheme, such as the need for infrastructure improvements in the village that could be unlocked by the development.

4.4.3 Concerns were raised regarding the principle of developing the site, and the impact on the village's existing infrastructure. It should be noted that in the event of planning permission being granted, payments would be made by the developer to fund improvements via the local authority to address any such issues which could also provide the opportunity to resolve pre-existing problems.

4.4.4 Detailed points raised through the exercise are expected to be fully addressed by the suite of technical assessments and reports that accompany the planning application. In total, the scheme is supported by;

- Air Quality Assessment – Phlorum
- Agricultural Land Appraisal – Reading Agricultural
- Arboricultural Assessment and Method Statement – Barrell Tree Consultancy
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment – DAS
- Design and Access Statement – Davies Landscape Architects
- Ecological Impact Assessment – The Ecology Co-op
- Geotechnical Assessment – Ashdown SI
- Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy - FortRidge
- Landscape Visual Appraisal - Davies Landscape Architects
- Noise Assessment – 24Acoustics
- Planning Statement – Luken Beck MDP
- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan – Highgate Transportation
- Waste Infrastructure Statement – TetraTech

- 4.4.5 To provide further context, matters of planning principle, spatial suitability and accessibility to services, facilities, and other infrastructure are picked up by the Planning Statement alongside a summary of most other matters. Concerns about flooding and sewerage capacity are dealt with by the Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy. Traffic congestion and public transport access are addressed by the Transport Assessment and so on. Such matters are of clear relevance, and will need to be carefully evaluated and balanced by the determining authority against responsibilities to provide sufficient housing and tackle affordability issues (including by maximising affordable housing opportunities). The Council, as the Local Planning Authority, will also pay regard to the planned investment and growth of infrastructure in the area through strategic developments including new schools, community facilities, and commercial development as part of the Barnham Eastergate Westergate proposal.
- 4.4.6 The applicant is seeking to continue its dialogue with residents and other local stakeholders as the scheme moves forward, and has been grateful for the input received during the process.

5. Appendix

- Copy of the community flyer

Land at Woodgate Nurseries, Woodgate, West Sussex

CONSULTING THE COMMUNITY

Hanbury Properties is seeking to redevelop the former nurseries site and its adjacent land.

Our proposals would deliver a high quality residential scheme of up to 130 homes, with substantial new public open space and green infrastructure including biodiversity enhancements.

The site would use a new access granted permission under application AL/129/21/OUT.

The existing nurseries entrance from Lidsey Road would be prioritised for cyclists and pedestrians.

Our proposals would help Arun District Council (ADC) to meet their housing supply requirement to deliver new homes and tackle unaffordability by providing affordable housing.

Before taking our plans to the next stage, the project team is keen to receive feedback from local residents and other important local stakeholders.

As a result, we are holding a virtual consultation, with paper copies also being made available for those without internet access to ensure everyone can register their views.



Our illustrative proposal is shown adjacent to the previously approved Wings Nursery scheme

HAVE YOUR SAY

We are hosting a virtual consultation on our website, woodgate.your-feedback.co.uk, which will run until **Sunday 23rd June 2024**.

On the website you can learn more about our proposals and comment on the scheme.

Printed copies of the materials are available for request for those without internet access and our contact details are shown at the foot of this flyer.



Visit our project website

HAVE YOUR SAY

KEY BENEFITS

Our proposed development on Land at Woodgate Nurseries will deliver a host of significant benefits, which include the following:



New housing for local families, including 39 much-needed affordable homes



Biodiversity improvements



Informal play spaces



New footpaths connecting to existing footpaths to improve connectivity



Promoting greener travel with cycle paths and cycle parking



Electric vehicle charging points



Breathing new life into the derelict Woodgate Nurseries site



Creating jobs during the construction phase



Investing in the local economy, including circa £0.8 - £1million in Community Infrastructure and Section 106 agreements