

Plans in pipeline for 120-home 'hamlet'

PLANS have emerged for a new 120-house 'hamlet' on a densely wooded 42 acre site in the countryside south of Farnham.

Boyer Planning, on behalf of London-based property developer CEG, has formally requested Waverley Borough Council's opinion on the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed development.

It represents the first step towards an outline planning application for the site, which is sandwiched between Frensham Vale to the north, Gardener's Hill Road to the west and Hillside Road and Edgeborough School to the south and east.

Mandy Owen, a principal planner at Boyer, said in a letter to the council: "Our client intends to submit an outline application for a residential development of up to 120 dwellings with a mix of house types including starter homes and affordable homes."

Full details of the proposed development are not yet available, but Ms Owens confirmed the application will incorporate:

- On-site Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace to offset the development's impact on the Wealden Heaths Special Protection Area - including a health and fitness trail, central hamlet green and a natural

play area.

- A small local 'core' which could include a shop, community hall or pub/cafe.

- Vehicle connections to Frensham Vale as well as pedestrian and cycle links to the surrounding area.

- And drainage infrastructure, including "sustainable drainage systems".

The application site is just half a mile from Baker Oates Stables, where plans for 43 homes were allowed on appeal by the Secretary of State last December despite the objections of 184 residents and Waverley's western planning committee.

These objections, shared by councillors and residents, included fears the appeal decision would "open the floodgates" to development in Farnham as well as grave concerns for the safety of homeowners using the narrow roads and often non-existent pavements in Gardener's Hill Road.

A further application, for up to 46 new homes at 35 Frensham Vale directly opposite CEG's proposed 'hamlet', is also awaiting an appeal decision by the Secretary of State following refusal by Waverley last January - with 297 residents objecting.

And like 35 Frensham Vale, the site of CEG's proposed hamlet was given a worst-possible red 'RAG'

score in Waverley's 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

The SHLAA, forming part of the council's emerging Local Plan, describes the land surrounding the hamlet site as having "a very strong semi-rural character" adding there is limited capacity to accommodate development there "without having a negative landscape impact".

It also states the site has poor access to a town centre, local centre, schools and a train station, as well as being prone to flooding.

However, with Waverley not expected to submit its new Local Plan for examination until this July, areas of the borough not protected by the Green Belt or Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) remain vulnerable to speculative developers - Frensham Vale included.

Recognising this, Boyer's principal planner Ms Owen continued: "The site is not located within the Surrey Hills AONB, any designated Area of Great Landscape Value or an Area of Strategic Visual Importance. Much of the land surrounding Farnham is subject to one or more of these designations."

She added: "Waverley Borough Council do not have a five year housing

land supply and this application will contribute towards the council's five-year housing land supply, as well as making provisions towards affordable housing, local infrastructure and SANG provision."

Ms Owen also expressed her belief the development does not meet the criteria for an EIA, arguing the proposed hamlet does not comprise a "major development...of more than local importance".

Waverley has set itself a decision target of Monday, February 29, to respond to Boyer's request. To view the application visit the website www.waverley.gov.uk/planning and search for planning application reference SO/2016/0002.

- An application for 120 homes on a 15-acre greenfield site west of Folly Hill is also forthcoming after Waverley deemed an EIA was not required.

The request, submitted on behalf of Turley Associates Ltd, suggested building the homes opposite Grade II listed Farnham Park with a new roundabout connecting the development with Folly Hill and Drover's Way and on-site Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace.

To view this application visit the website www.waverley.gov.uk/planning and search for reference SO/2015/0011.