**Report of the Guildford Strategic Sites
Design Review Panel**

Wisley Airfield,
Third Review

15th June 2021

The design review meeting workshop

Reference number	1589/280521
Date	28th May 2021
Meeting location	Online via Microsoft Teams
Panel members attending	Lindsey Wilkinson (Chair), Landscape Architecture, Historic Environment Andrew Cameron, Urban Design, Transport Planning David Ogunmuyiwa, Architecture, Regeneration Michelle Tomlinson, Architecture, Housing Marcus Wilshere, Architecture, Urban Design, Regeneration
Panel manager	Kieran Toms, Design South East
Presenting team	Rachel Bell, Atkins Isabelle Smith, Atkins Mike Murray, Causeway Land Kelly Lippett, CBRE Alison Tero, CBRE Mike Davies, Davies Landscape Rob Miller, Greengage Graham Kime, GSA Hannah Shopland, GSA Alex Chapman, Hallam Land Charlie Reynolds, Hallam Land Charlie Collins, Savills Jonathan Pillow, Taylor Wimpey Antonis Pazourou, Taylor Wimpey Lee Davis, Taylor Wimpey Camille Soor, Taylor Wimpey Nathan Edwards, Urban Wilderness John Waterfield, Vivid Homes Toby Thornton, WSP Colin McKay, WSP
Other attendees	John Busher, Guildford Borough Council Paul Fineberg, Guildford Borough Council Martin Knowles, Guildford Borough Council Cllr Christopher Barrass, Guildford Borough Council Cllr Colin Cross, Guildford Borough Council

Cllr Liz Hogger, Guildford Borough Council
Cllr Catherine-Anne Young, Guildford Borough Council
Richard Cooper, Surrey County Council
Chris Lamb, Design South East

Site visit

This review was carried out during the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020. Independent site study including desktop research prepared by Design South East and a digital walk-around (in a similar fashion to that which would have been conducted on-site) was carried out prior to the review, as a refresher virtual site visit to follow on from the first two site visits. Additionally, two panel members were able to undertake a supervised in-person site visit on a separate date, prior to the session.

Scope of the review

As an independent design review panel, the scope of this workshop was not restricted. However, as one of the four strategic sites identified in the Local Plan, discussion was centred around the vision and the six established design principles: community, sustainability, connectivity, green framework, innovation and sense of place.

Panel interests

Panel members did not indicate any conflicts of interest.

Confidentiality

This report is confidential as the scheme is not yet the subject of a detailed planning application. Full details of our confidentiality policy can be found at the end of this report.

The proposal

Name   Wisley Airfield, Hatch Lane, Ockham, GU23 GNU

Site details   This is a circa 135 Ha site located 8.6 miles north east of Guilford town centre. The site is a former airfield and is dominated by a tarmacked runway 2.5km traversing the site in an east-west direction with arable land either side. The landscape conditions are varied, with the most notable features being the remnant hedgerow trees to the south east and west, a Tree Protection Order (TPO) woodland bordering Elm corner to the north, a strip of young woodland between the airfield and sunken hangar area, a wet wooded stream corridor along Stratford Brook that extends towards Hyde Lane and Ockham Lane to the south, fine mature trees around Bridge End Farm (to the south) and a Great Crested Newt breeding pond to the south of Bridge End Farm. The Surrey Hills AONB is located south and within view of the site. A series of small settlements surround the site and RHS Wisley is located north west of the site, across the A3 road.

A National Air Traffic Services (NATS) beacon is located to the east of the site and is due to be decommissioned. Highways England's proposed Wisley Lane Diversion will cut through to the site to the northwest and is due to be completed early within Highways England's delivery programme. A number of Public Rights of Way (PROW) traverse the site.

Taylor Wimpey owns the majority of the site, 115 of 135 Ha, and CBRE and Hallam Land represent smaller parcels of land at the southern end of the site. Together, all form part of the masterplan proposal.

Proposal   Mixed use residential-led new settlement, comprising approximately 2,000 C3 homes, plus 8 gypsy and traveller pitches and 100 extra care units, commercial and retail floorspace, a primary/secondary school and SANG.

Planning stage   Pre-application stage with intent to submit an outline application in July 2021.

Local planning authority   Guilford Borough Council

Planning context

The site makes up the A35 Former Wisley Airfield site identified in the adopted Guildford Local Plan. The western end of the site and the northern boundary are designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), forming part of a wider ecological network together with other offsite SNCIs.

The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) lies north of the site and it is proposed that harm to this will be mitigated by the on-site SANG. A number of Grade II buildings lie in close proximity to the site's southern boundary and the Ockham Conservation Area abuts the same boundary too. Also, there are a number of TPOs around the site boundary.

Planning history

Two associated applications have been submitted: "Detailed application for roundabout and stub road" (Application reference: 20/P/01708.) and "Detailed application for enabling works (engineering operations) to facilitate part phase 1 SANG works." (Application reference: 20/P/01709).

An application was submitted in 2014 for a proposal of approximately 2,000 residential units, schools, employment area and associated services and landscape work. The land was under different ownership at the time and the current local plan had not been adopted yet.

Planning authority perspective

Local authority officers were keen to get the panel's view of form, character and identity for this scheme, covering in particular the August and December 2020 panel report comments

Community engagement

There has been consultation with the local community (July 2020, November 2020 and May 2021) and Members briefing (14 July, 18 November and scheduled for w/c 24th May 2021).

Meetings/conversations have been held with a number of stakeholders including Ockham Parish Council, Ripley Parish Council, West Horsley Parish Council, RHS Wisley, Surrey Chamber of Commerce, The Guildford Society, Enterprise M3 and local GP surgeries. There have been bi-weekly Community Liaison Group meetings and bi-monthly neighbourhood meetings.

Previous reviews

This scheme has previously been reviewed by the Guildford Strategic Sites Design Review Panel on the 18th August and 18th December 2020. Following the last review our report stated that the design had progressed but needed further refinement. The panel commented that landscape and movement strategies in particular needed testing in detail and that more work was needed to make this a sustainable development by refining strategies around parking, energy and low-carbon movement.

Summary

There are a number of positive aspects to the proposal and there has been some improvement since the last review. However the scheme is still not sufficiently place specific, primarily because it fails to adequately respond to, and draw on, its exceptional setting. There is also a lack of information for this stage in the process, both in terms of the various elements of the design, particularly the housing, and the process by which design quality will be ensured.

We would like to see this proposal again in order to review design development and focus on the design code.

Key recommendations

1.   Create a place specific response that demonstrably draws on the outstanding setting of the site for its form, architecture and landscape.

2.   Develop the scheme as three villages, each with their own character and identity, with their form, landscape and architecture underpinned by contextual analysis.

3.   Develop clear, definable, specific and measurable design outcomes as part of the Design Vision.

4.   Add specificity about how buildings look and relate to each other and their surroundings, with variety across different villages and building types.

5.   Ensure that the green gaps are both distinctive and accommodate open amenity space.

6.   Resolve the specifics around cycling and movement outcomes to ensure local connectivity with safe, quality routes.

7.   Ensure that both existing and future residents of the local area can influence the proposal before, during and after completion.

8.   Include measurable targets for sustainability to encourage lifestyle and behaviour shifts.

Detailed comments and recommendations

1.   Sense of place

1.1.   At the moment the proposal misses the opportunity to create a unique place with a built form that responds to its special surroundings.

1.2.   The Neighbourhood and Village Study does not seem to have influenced the approach to the different parts of this development. At the moment the proposals are too diagrammatic. Without more detail and evidence of how the analysis has informed the urban design and architecture, it is not clear how the proposal will work as a place or fit into the network of local villages. The risk therefore is that this development feels like it could be anywhere, undermining the potential of the attractive setting and landscape framework.

1.3.   A key feature of the proposal is that there are three separated settlements. However, there is no sense of whether these three parts should be considered as one place, or as three separate villages. We recommend the latter, for three reasons: it is in keeping with the scale of existing local development; there is the provision of separate centres each with a 'village green' and shops; and the separation of these villages by the green gaps already makes them begin to feel like three separate places. This means they need to have their own separate identities and characters. Detailed design variety should ensure the site does not read as three consecutive housing estates, but instead three complimentary places. We recommend developing the scheme as three distinct villages, drawing on the form, architecture and material of local villages, together forming a coherent place. Giving each village its own name should be considered.

1.4.   The feeling of arriving in and moving through different villages is important for the proposal's character. At the moment the linearity of the runway remains dominant. Moving through the site therefore risks feeling like a long journey through a set of very similar housing estates. Reducing this linearity and making the boundaries of each village more distinct is an important step towards creating separate identities.

1.5.   The differentiation of the three 'village greens' is a helpful start, and this approach could be extended to the architecture that surrounds each green.

1.6.   The images and text provided do not give enough specificity about what the buildings will look like and how they will relate to each other and their context. There is scope for buildings to be innovative and distinct, whilst still referencing and engaging with their surroundings. The design development and coding needs care, as the translation of the architectural language needs to be sensitive, responsive to the surroundings, appropriate to this scale of development, and to avoid too much

duplication. The quality of the architecture needs to be locked in, to avoid the risk of a mundane standardised approach being introduced at later stage in the development of this scheme.

1.7. The design and detailing present in surrounding villages does not seem to inform what is being proposed here. We support some of the subtle shifts in the approach to the building, as shown in the diagrams, such as eave lines and variations in geometry. However, there needs to be different building character areas and a curated set of design approaches, with different focuses in different areas, to avoid monotony. There needs to be more specificity about the articulation and materiality of buildings.

1.8. To achieve some variety within a pattern, individual buildings such as the school, the energy centre, and the employment centre could have different approaches to articulation and materiality, and could all be led by different architecture practices. A panel of architects would make sense, with a clear design code to act as the control, bringing coherence to the three different villages and their different buildings.

1.9. There are long frontages without expressed gaps. These frontages are much longer than in other villages and are also very formal and inorganic. Instead, there should be moments of variation and generous gaps in the frontages, bringing relief and space to breathe. Mixing up the type and size of frontages will help to create some variety and help to set a village feeling.

1.10. The sentinel buildings on the entrance to the village do not currently work at the moment. Having two makes this moment feel very urban and like a gateway. Having one would work better. Having one taller element here, with another taller element elsewhere would feel more organic and more in keeping with a village feel.

1.11. Only some elements of the highway are quantified. Having variable street widths is good for providing variation, but there should be more information about setbacks and heights. There needs to be more co-ordination across different disciplines, and a relationship between the architecture, highways and landscape.

1.12. There is some reference to surrounding materials which is good. This could go further both in specificity but also in considering flexibility if the market or availability of materials or technology changes.

2. Vision and concept

2.1. The Design Vision lacks clear, specific and measurable design outcomes.

2.2. There is a lack of hierarchy to the vision and strategies proposed. A hierarchy of approaches should be set out for the wider masterplan, and specific use types should

be identified to form a structured narrative, setting out specific targets in dialogue with the council.

2.3.   For the design code to be successful, the outcomes of the Design Vision need to inform the code. Without clear, specific and measurable design outcomes in the Design Vision, the design code cannot enforce anything and therefore cannot ensure the quality of the scheme as it progresses. These outcomes therefore need to be included in the vision and need to be specific. Given the lack of specificity at the moment the proposal is not sufficiently advanced to warrant the introduction of a design code. There is therefore little to stop the scheme being badly implemented in future, and thus undermined.

2.4.   The vision is well developed in relation to greenery and landscape, where it has the potential to lead to a genuinely landscape-led development, although more specificity is required to ensure this remains embedded as the scheme progresses. The vision is much less developed in other respects, particularly around built form, urban design, movement, and sustainability.

2.5.   The language in the design code is not specific nor definitive enough. Use of phrases like 'should be investigated' and 'wherever possible' are meaningless and are easily overridden. Some usages of 'must' are undermined by the addition of 'where appropriate.' A more precise use of language is required to shift the promises to guarantees. The design code needs to explain how stated principles are embodied in the design, and to translate the vision into tangible, measurable and instructional design outcome. For example, rather than making parking on the front of dwellings one of many options, it could instead be stated that it could only be present on a certain percentage of residential buildings.

3.   **Green framework**

3.1.   There are many positive features of the approach taken to landscape. We are pleased to see green and blue infrastructure integrated well at a strategic level across the site, making it easily accessible to residents. However, the approach to landscape still needs to be improved.

3.2.   The landscape gaps between each development play an important and complex role in creating character and distinction between the different parts of the site, whilst accommodating amenity facilities and being attractive and usable in their own right. These feel most successful with the enclosures opening up to the southern landscape and the views it offers. The interface with northern SANG works less well. These spaces need more definition in relation to how they are used, how they will look, how people will move through them and how they will differ from each. This all needs to be set out in more detail than has currently been provided.

3.3.   The entrance sequence for each of the three villages is indistinct. It is not clear where the threshold of each village is. The landscape gaps have an important role in achieving a clear demarcation of where each village ends and begins, as does the approach to landscape character in these villages themselves. Each village should be distinct from the others in terms of landscape character, whilst retaining commonalities both with each other and with other existing local villages. How this is achieved needs to be set out in detail.

3.4.   There has been a positive design development on the response to existing hedgerows. However, at the moment the greenery feels too confined within the Green Infrastructure sections of the scheme. The opportunity for the development as a whole to integrate and reflect the existing and local pastoral character is not currently being taken. Greenery and landscape should be a part of the granular detail of the plots. For example, the sequence from the front door to open spaces and movement network passes through a significant amount of hard standing. These spaces should be made softer, with more greenery integrated throughout.

3.5.   There needs to be more consideration of the specifics around the introduction of trees. For example, root protection considerations need to fit in with the approach to street layout. There needs to be an indicative number of trees per hundred metres of street. There needs to be clarity on who will look after the trees. Without these details being guaranteed, the images that the panel were shown cannot be delivered.

3.6.   There needs to be more specificity around what trees and plants are used and where, and specifically how they will contribute to character and biodiversity. The specifics should be much more developed. For example, copses of birch trees in some areas would achieve both visual interest and would improve biodiversity.

3.7.   The site sits in a special landscape with attractive outward views. Because of the linear orientation of the site, there needs to be more thought about the relationship between the site and the landscape and the trees. Site sections need to be used to demonstrate and define how this relationship will work, including what trees will be visible from where, and how the height of the land across the site will impact the light that trees receive.

3.8.   Different approaches (and even different landscape architects) could also be used to differentiate between the settlements, within the overall strong Green Infrastructure framework. The East and West SANG should have their own individual characters, to provide visual interest and also a wider range of habitats, benefitting biodiversity.

3.9.   There is a risk of noise within the SANG areas and elsewhere in the scheme. More detail should be provided for the wind and noise assessments for the scheme.

4. Community and stewardship

4.1. The proposition and the vision should be clearer about the offer to local villages and residents, whose involvement and influence should be sought. Information on amenities and facilities for both the existing and new residents should be published. There is no information on local doctors, for example, but there should be. Deeper conversations about the kind of place people would like to see should take place. Community groups should be sought out online, and new groups for residents established and supported.

4.2. A body in charge of the stewardship of the design code should review proposals against the code and address any required changes. The community should have a role in overseeing the evolution of the design code as well

4.3. The proposal should demonstrate how resident behaviour will impact the scheme and how in turn the scheme can influence behaviour. This is particularly relevant to the movement and sustainability elements of the proposal, which can easily be monitored and managed. A charter to which residents sign up will help to encourage sustainable behaviour, whilst embedding these qualities in the identity of the proposal.

4.4. A sense of community could also be encouraged through the provision of services and subscription models such as gardening, laundry, handypersons, that residents can draw upon.

4.5. There should be more consideration of the needs of different demographics. For example, accommodation for later living should be spread around the whole development, to avoid 'grey ghettoes.' Consideration of social value should be demonstrated, and there should be a clear outline of the distribution of workspaces and employment opportunities with specific areas, including measurable targets.

4.6. A digital community could be encouraged, with a group engagement to set a 'manifesto' – a principle of rules to encourage different behaviour and engender a sense of community. This could include the provision of services and subscription models such as gardening, laundry, handypersons. A manifesto like this would clarify the overall vision, which should be included in the design code.

5. Connectivity

5.1. We welcome the introduction of dedicated cycle routes. As with other elements of this scheme, the specifics are crucial to the success or failure. At the moment there are not enough details, nor are the details conveyed clearly and simply. Cycle routes on main streets need to be safe, well-lit and fully segregated, with measures taken to ensure that cars do not park in cycle lanes.

5.2.   As a linear site, there is a risk that traffic speeds will be high. More specificity about how the traffic will be calmed and slowed is required. This should include the use of greenery as traffic calming, and also the removal of white centre lines to slow down traffic. A 20mph speed limit is appropriate.

5.3.   The materiality of road surfaces and kerbs needs to be detailed. These will have an important impact on both the character of the proposal, but also on the hierarchy of movement and whether sustainable or motorised transport is perceived to be prioritised. For example, at junctions there needs to be an implied pedestrian and cycle priority and we would therefore encourage continuous pavements. The scale and quality of the materials should be specified.

5.4.   Rain garden drainage solutions are supported but frequent breaks are required to allow pedestrians to safely and conveniently cross the road.

5.5.   The approach to residential parking feels very much like 'business as usual' with 2 or 3 spaces per dwelling. This should be reduced, with alternative solutions considered, such as car clubs and remote parking. This may need flexibility from the local authority in relation to minimum standards. We would also support the future-proofing of car parking to allow for changing mobility patterns in the future. Across the site, both with parking and in all elements of mobility, there needs to be a flexible approach to allow for future reductions in private car usage in the future.

5.6.   It is good that there will be cycle routes to neighbouring villages and towns. But there more detailed drawings are required to show how the routes will work and that cycle lanes can be provided, or that quite lanes can be introduced. We would recommend investment up front to implement movement routes early in the overall process, in order to establish active travel modes and the whole site as a destination.

5.7.   The perimeter track is not attractive enough. This needs to be a genuinely attractive and legible route, to avoid peripheral areas becoming too car dependent.

5.8.   The street layouts and designs need to be agreed with Surrey County Council to ensure that all elements can be introduced. There needs to be more detail and consideration of core factors such as bin storage, refuse collection and turning circles. Cross site sections and diagrams need to demonstrate the plans can work, and that levels work in terms of DDA compliance, accessibility, and access. This will inform cut and fill strategies, sustainability and earthworks costing. There is a risk that if some core elements of the street design cannot ultimately be adopted, the knock-on effect of changing them could undo other elements of the scheme.

6. Sustainability

6.1. Generally, the approach to sustainability is positive and has advanced from previous sessions. There are some positive strategies for future proofing energy resource. However, like much of the rest of the proposal, needs more detail to ensure quality in delivery. In particular, there needs to be clarity on the objectives, with specific quantified targets, both at the wider scale and the micro scale. There should be more on the monitoring and management of energy use and behaviour, and a plan for post-occupancy modelling, to ensure these targets are met. More information is needed to lend credibility to some of the strategies being proposed.

6.2. The focus on 'fabric first' buildings to reduce energy demand is supported but comes with challenges. A key issue is likely to be overheating. Managing solar gain should be embedded into the strategic design at the masterplan, buildings scale, and landscape strategy level. In particular, tree planting within the new villages has the potential to help with solar gain and heat management.

6.3. Sustainability needs to be linked to other elements of the master plan and firmly embedded in each part of the approach, rather than considered as an 'add on.'

6.4. More details on ventilation and heating and shading of homes should be provided. There will be a relationship between this and the form, materiality and layout of buildings, and so there is a need make sure these are developed concurrently and in conjunction with each other.

6.5. Ideas around low carbon concrete, waste during construction, modern methods of construction and post occupancy monitoring were discussed in the previous review, yet this has not been developed further. There are potential opportunities in these areas that could be explored further. If modern methods of construction are to be adopted, they need to be considered at this stage and be specified in more detail, as this could affect the plot widths and layouts for parameter plans.

6.6. The heat island effect was discussed as if this were an urban setting, rather than a village setting. This also applies to an urban strategy for approach to locate PVs on apartment rooftops. There needs to be more of a reflection of the rural nature of this site in an innovative, integrated approach to sustainability.

6.7. The proposals and code should set out specific sustainability benchmarks and targets for each specific building use type, with net zero buildings as exemplars. This is a special site that should be delivering an attractive offer to its community and surroundings. There is a lack of hierarchy to the vision and strategies proposed. A clear hierarchy to the proposed strategies should be set out at both the wider and micro scale, and specific use types to form a structured narrative, setting out specific targets in dialogue with the council.

6.8.   There needs to be a standalone strategy for health and wellbeing and a demonstration of how this will be a part of the lifestyles of residents in the future. This strategy should cover the buildings (both external envelope and internal comfort,) the streetscape, and the landscape designs.

6.9.   More detail for the enclosure of the Air Source Heat Pumps and the employment space adjacent to the motorway are required, such as elevations and materiality.

6.10.   The range of expertise within the design team is welcomed but needs to be coordinated and focused towards supporting the developing design framework at this stage. Results of environmental studies specific to the design proposals, such as air pollution and acoustics, need to demonstrably inform the design.

7.   Innovation

7.1.   We support the variety of species used nearer to the RHS to improve the greenery's relationship with its setting.

7.2.   There are some details in the approach to movement which are forward-thinking, and we are pleased to hear about a number of mobility hubs. The introduction of the car club is supported, and we are pleased that this has been introduced in response to previous panel comments.

7.3.   Generally, there is a good organisation of overall masterplan in relation to walkable distances encouraging walk yet the panel feel it is not as innovative in its approach to sustainability or the user experience of the pedestrian.

7.4.   Ideas around low carbon concrete and waste during construction are key to a site where there will be large scale demolition and decontamination. There should be more specificity around the ambition to use the runway spoil for sub-base. Existing concrete should be used in other circular ways: one option which should be explored is looking at the economies of Smart Crusher / Smart Liberator technology, which can extract low-carbon cement as well as the aggregate use proposed.

7.5.   At the moment the design code does not reflect that market, technological and policy requirements will all change over the years of implementation. The design code needs to identify what it locks in and what it keeps flexible, to allow for future innovation without undermining the qualities of the scheme.

7.6.   The future-proofing of parking spaces to allow for other uses is welcomed.

Confidentiality

If the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the panel, this report is offered in confidence to those who attended the review meeting. There is no objection to the report being shared within the recipients' organisations provided that the content of the report is treated in the strictest confidence. Neither the content of the report, nor the report itself can be shared with anyone outside the recipients' organisations. Design South East reserves the right to make the content of this report known should the views contained in this report be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). Unless previously agreed, pre-application reports will be made publicly available if the scheme becomes the subject of a planning application or public inquiry. Design South East also reserves the right to make this report available to another design review panel should the scheme go before them. If you do not require this report to be kept confidential, please inform us.

If the scheme is the subject of a planning application the report will be made publicly available and we expect the local authority to include it in the case documents.

Role of design review

This is the report of a design review panel, forum or workshop. Design review is endorsed by the National Planning Policy Framework and the opinions and recommendations of properly conducted, independent design review panels should be given weight in planning decisions including appeals. The panel does not take planning decisions. Its role is advisory. The panel's advice is only one of a number of considerations that local planning authorities have to take into account in making their decisions.

The role of design review is to provide independent expert advice to both the applicant and the local planning authority. We will try to make sure that the panel are informed about the views of local residents and businesses to inform their understanding of the context of the proposal. However, design review is a separate process to community engagement and consultation.

Design
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