



Land to the North East of KGV Playing Fields, Cuffley

Statement of Community Involvement

June 2015

KGV-SCI-2015-001



Lands Improvement

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This Statement of Community Engagement details the extensive programme of community engagement that Lands Improvement, the Applicant, carried out as part of the formulation of its proposals for land to the North East of King George V (KGV) Playing Fields, Cuffley between November 2014 and June 2015.

The Applicant believes local knowledge will produce better informed decisions, whilst giving such decisions legitimacy. Understanding what a community needs and taking on board any concerns they may have, will ultimately help provide a better-planned and more appropriately thought out proposal.

The consultation process included engagement in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan process, stakeholder meetings, design workshops, site tours, feedback events, public exhibitions and individual meetings. The events were well attended by the local community with a total of 470 visitors across all the events.

The Applicant would like to thank everyone who spared the time to engage with them on this project.

This document includes analysis of the feedback received from the local community during the consultation process and demonstrates how this has informed the final Illustrative Masterplan for the site.

For the Applicant and the Project Team, community engagement does not end here or indeed with the submission of a planning application. The Applicant will continue to keep the community updated on the development proposals as they progress, engage in ongoing discussions and ensure that the channels of communication remain open.

In Summary, at the Site Tours & Design Workshops guests told us:

- Cuffley is an aspirational place to live
- Preserving the character of the Village is important
- A mix of different housing is needed in Cuffley
- Local traffic is a real concern

At the initial public exhibitions a feedback form was provided for guests to complete and of those who answered the questions on the feedback form:

- 70% believe that North East KGV is an appropriate location for new homes
- 70% agreed that the Applicant's proposals for the site integrate well with the surrounding area
- 80% supported the provision of more footpaths around KGV and links with the Hertfordshire Way
- 70% felt that the KGV playing fields would benefit from more recreational space
- 79% felt that existing sports and leisure facilities at KGV would benefit from improvements

At the final exhibition, the Project Team showed the local community a revised version of the Illustrative Masterplan. The greatest number of comments made were in relation to traffic, followed by concerns about the impact of the development, support for the proposals, parking, provision of healthcare, education and the need for bungalows.

The final planning application has been heavily influenced by the feedback received throughout the consultation process.

I. Policy Compliance

1.1 Overview

The process of engagement has adhered to the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework, the Localism Act and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which was adopted 2013.

1.2 The Localism Act & NPPF

Section 122 of the 2011 Localism Act inserted a new section, 61W, into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This provides an obligation in certain circumstances to carry out pre-application consultation where a person proposes to make an application for planning permission for the development of any land in England.

Furthermore, Section 122 of the Localism Act also inserted a new section, 61X, into the Act which introduced a duty to take account of responses to public consultation. Through both these elements of the legislation the Government has attributed more weight to the views expressed by local communities during the pre-application stage.

The Act clarified the rules on "predetermination" which previously restricted the ability of Councillors, particularly members of the Planning Committee, to take part in decision making on applications where they have previously expressed a view.

The NPPF stipulates that:

"Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."

1.3 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement

The SCI was adopted on 3rd December 2013. The relevant sections which state the need for pre application consultation are set out below.

5.4 *"At an early stage, developers should discuss with service providers the implications of development on, and contribution towards, provision of infrastructure. In addition, where proposals are of particular significance, for example they would involve a significant impact upon the main retail, commercial, employment and leisure facilities of the borough, then the council will encourage prospective developers to undertake pre-application consultation with the community. This would usually be through the use of public meetings, meetings with local residents groups, amenity groups or parish/town councils, exhibitions and press releases.*

5.14 *The Government sets out minimum requirements for consultation in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management) (England) Order 2010 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for development affecting a Listed Building or the character or appearance of a Conservation Area."*

2.1 Site Location

The site is less than 5 hectares in size and is well contained. South Drive and Cuffley Primary School are to the North of the site, which along with the railway line and Northhaw Road East, act as strong boundaries that help to visually enclose the site. The mature hedge and trees lining the Hertfordshire Way footpath provide a robust southern edge to the proposed development.

The site is in a sustainable location being approximately 700 metres from the centre of the village and all the local facilities on Station Road. Cuffley Primary School, bus stops and local footpaths are also on the Site's doorstep.



2.2 The Application

The Application is for a residential development of up to 121 dwellings, associated infrastructure and change of use from agricultural land for an extension of King George V Playing Fields. All matters reserved except for new vehicular access to serve the site, the provision of surface water discharge points and the levels of the development platforms.

The Application site is in two parts:

- i. The largest (Principal Site) is the area for the residential development to the North East of KGV Playing Fields. (4.89ha)
- ii. The smaller detached site to the south of the Tennis Club will enable an extension to the KGV Playing Fields to be provided. (0.63ha)



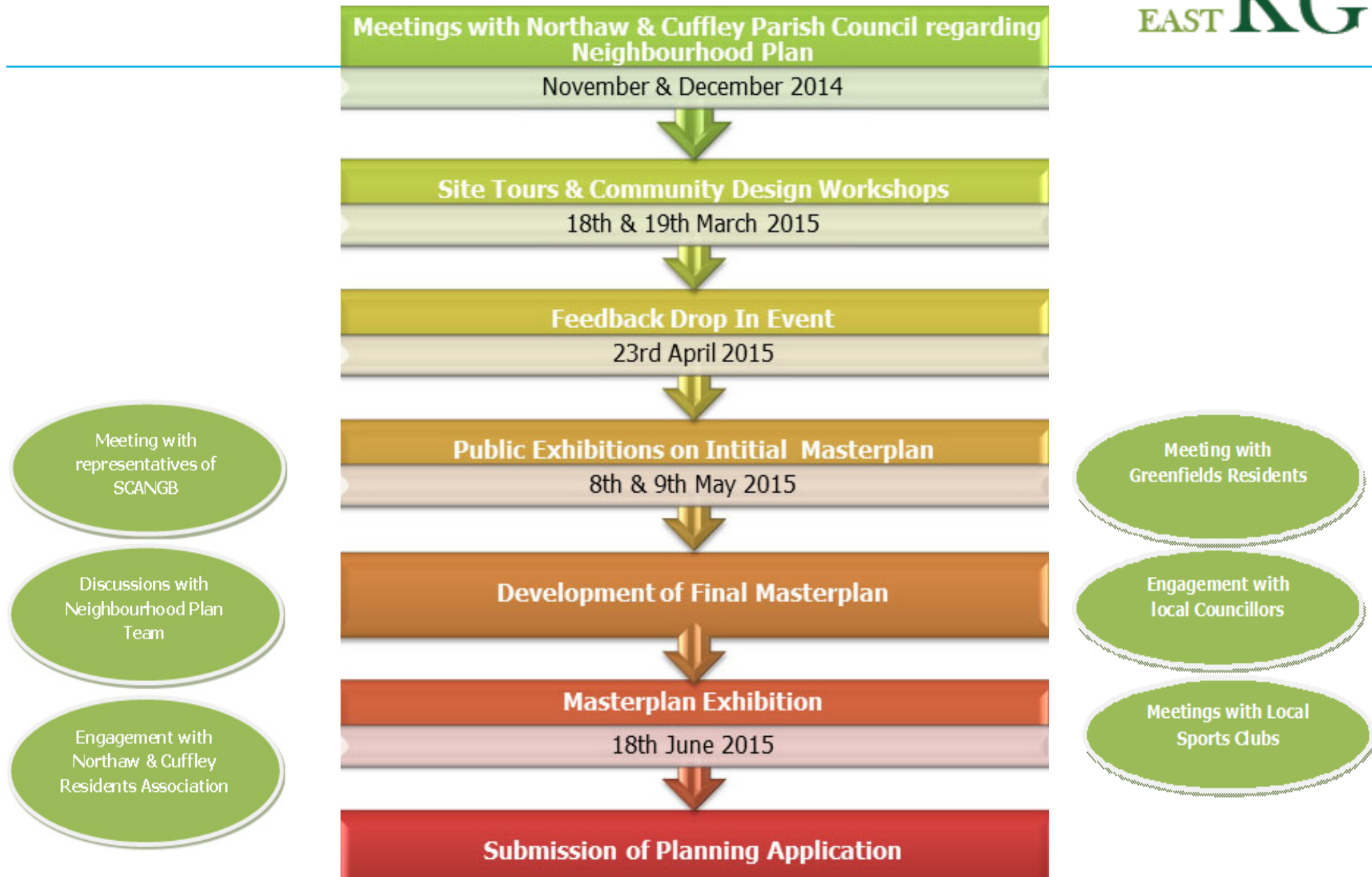
This chapter outlines how the Applicant embarked on a programme of pre-application consultation with local residents and stakeholders who may be impacted by, or interested in, the proposals for land to the North East of KGV Playing Fields, Cuffley.

The consultation sought to give all local residents, community representatives and other key stakeholders the opportunity to view and comment on the proposals.

The Project Team ensured that the proposals it consulted on throughout the process were open to modification with local knowledge being considered an important part of the design consideration process.

Following discussions with Officers at WHBC, and in accordance with the WHBC SCI, a detailed consultation process was agreed, as shown on the following page. The programme was tailored specifically for the proposed development and sought to ensure that the consultation was wide reaching and comprehensive.





3.2 Political Interface

The Applicant was keen to engage with the locally elected members who represent the residents of Northaw and Cuffley at the earliest opportunity. To this end, all relevant political stakeholders were invited to all consultation events, these were:

WHBC - Ward members for Cuffley: Councillors Prest, Michaelides and Nicholls

Hertfordshire County Council - Division Member Councillor Mark Mills Bishop

Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council - All Members

3.3 Neighbourhood Plan & Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council

Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council (NCPC) is currently in the early stages of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

The Applicant has sought to regularly engage in the NP process whilst also engaging with the Parish Council. Parish Councillors were invited to attend all of the consultation events and in addition the following meetings with representatives were also held:

- **Tuesday 2nd December, 2014**
- **Thursday 22nd January, 2015**
- **Thursday 23rd April, 2015**
- **Friday 12th June, 2015**
- **Thursday 18th June, 2015**

3.4 School Engagement

Cuffley Primary School is an immediate neighbour to the site. The Applicant has been keen to engage and include Cuffley Primary School in all stakeholder and public events.

The Applicant met with headmistress Wendy Heyes and the Chair of Governors at the end of 2014 and all school Governors were invited to attend the Community Design Workshops and Public Exhibitions held in May and June 2015.



3.5 Engagement with KGV Sports Clubs

The KGV playing fields border the site to the South, and the Project Team has therefore been keen to engage with the local sports clubs regarding their existing facilities and what pressures they are currently facing. The following sports clubs were approached:

- **Cuffley Football Club**
- **Northaw & Cuffley Lawn Tennis Club**
- **Northaw & Cuffley Bowls Club**

Meetings were held with their representatives on:

Tuesday 2nd September, 2014

Thursday 29th January, 2015

Wednesday 20th May, 2015

The meeting on the 20th May was also attended by 'And Architects' who are specialist sports architects. At this meeting, a vision for a sports hub was discussed.

With a greater understanding of the needs of each club 'And Architects' are now able to draw up plans of how a possible combined club house or separate club houses could look at KGV. It is understood that the Neighbourhood Plan Team are looking at the future requirements for the KGV playing fields and clubs and how this could be incorporated into their emerging Neighbourhood Plan.



3.6 Other Stakeholder Engagement

The Applicant has also engaged with local group SCANGB (Save Cuffley And Northaw Green Belt), Northaw & Cuffley Residents Association and the residents of Greenfields.

Greenfields, which is adjacent to the site, is a facility in Cuffley run by the Welwyn Garden City Housing Association. The Applicant held a dedicated meeting and question and answer session with the residents on 2nd June 2015. Those attending the meeting included:

- 28 Greenfields residents
- County Councillor Mark Mills Bishop
- Phillip Coffin, Life Church, Cuffley
- Andrea Allgood, Northaw & Cuffley Residents Association
- Belinda Shillingworth, Housing Service Manager for Welwyn Garden City Housing Association.





4.1 Contact 24/7

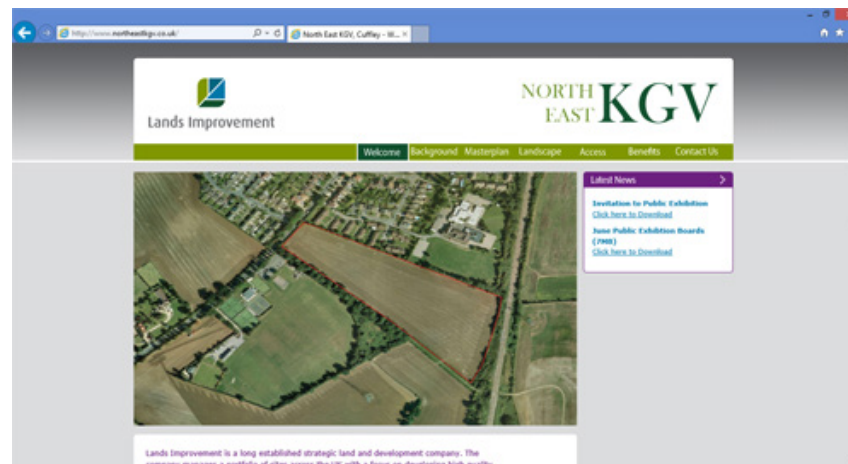
In order that the Project Team were accessible to all members of the public a Freephone telephone number and email address were set up. These were publicised on all material relating to the consultation.

- 0800 232 1794
- Consultation@NorthEastKGV.com

4.2 Website

A project website was also set up: www.NorthEastKGV.co.uk

The website held details of the Public Exhibitions and as the consultation progressed, this was updated with more current information, including all materials that were on display at the exhibitions. To date, there have been a total of 296 unique visitors to the website and 1,228 pages accessed.



5. Site Tours & Design Workshops - March

The Applicant believes that it is important to engage with the local community at the earliest opportunity, and therefore, Site Tours and Design Workshops with local stakeholders were held at the very start of the Masterplanning process.

Event details:

- Held on 18th & 19th March 2015, on site and in Cuffley Hall
- Over 81 local stakeholders were invited to the event (Full List attached at Appendix A) by letter and email (Appendix B)
- 30 people attended the events
- Plans of the site were annotated by participants and they can be found in Appendix C.

5.1 Format

Two broadly identical sessions were held on both days. The Design Workshop sessions commenced with a briefing from the Project Team about the Site and the role and status of the emerging Local Plan and emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

Participants were asked to:

- contribute their specialist and local knowledge
- appreciate the perspectives and contributions of others
- be open about the potential of development on the Site

Exhibition display boards giving an overview of the Site and its relationship to Cuffley were on display at this event. (Appendix D)

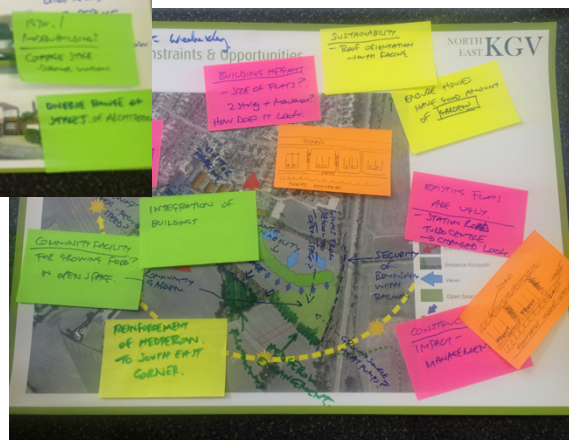
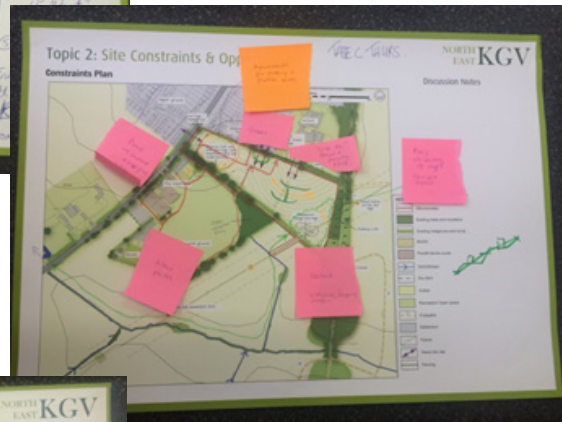
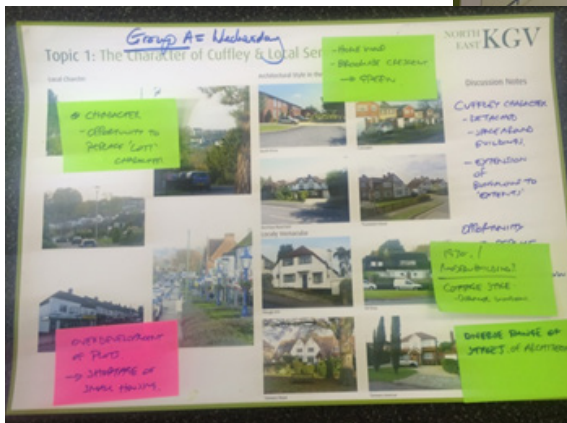


Discussions centred around four key themes:

- The Character of Cuffley and local services
- Site Constraints and Opportunities
- Access and Movement
- Leisure Provision and Community Benefits

These areas of discussion were chosen because they would generate useful feedback and debate that would help inform the development of the Illustrative Masterplan. These themes helped the Project Team to:

- Understand how local people in Cuffley feel about their village, what they would like to see repeated and what they would prefer not to see
- Learn about existing issues within the village, and areas that the Applicant may be able to address
- Understand what they feel the opportunities for the development are as well as potential constraints
- Gain an insight into the type of housing needed locally.
- Gain an insight into the community facilities needed offsite



The workshops identified the following opportunities for the development:

- To create a southern gateway to Cuffley
- Improve connections to, and facilities at KGV
- Enhance the existing public footpath
- Potential for south facing plots
- Opportunity for a large area of open space in south eastern corner of the site
- Convenient access to the village and local amenities

Guests told us they would like to see the following on site:

- A diverse range of styles and architecture including houses on individual plots
- A mix of house types including bungalows and ground floor apartments
- Wide roads and buildings set back with driveways and gardens
- Low density housing, which support the character of Cuffley
- A strong landscape character
- Improvements to KGV facilities
- A new pub, petrol station, youth centre and improvements to the surgery
- Improved cycle and footpath connections
- More primary and secondary school places

A number of themes emerged from the feedback which were set out:

- **Village:** Cuffley is an aspirational place to live
- **Character:** Importance of the character of Cuffley and its long term preservation
- **Services:** The importance of providing good quality local services, as well as concerns over the pressure on existing services that new development will bring and the possible closure of the Library.
- **Parking:** Concerns about parking and traffic at Cuffley Primary School, especially at drop off and pick up times, and how this could impact on the development of North East KGV
- **Housing Layout & Density:** Concern that in some areas of Cuffley the houses feel very squashed and a desire to see new homes built on decent sized plots.
- **Traffic and Congestion:** Peak time traffic was considered a particular problem in the village and stakeholders would like to see the Applicant reflect on this as they draw up the application for the Site.
- **Connectivity:** Connections with the surrounding area are important and new links would be welcomed
- **KGV:** Importance of improving facilities at KGV

5.3 How the Design Workshops feedback influenced the emerging masterplan

All feedback from the Design Workshops was carefully analysed and the initial masterplan reflected the feedback received in the following ways:

- The feedback shows local residents feel a range of housing is needed and therefore a **mix of properties** ranging from 1 bedroom flats to 4 bedroom detached houses including bungalows were included.
- To reflect feedback from Greenfields residents, the houses closest to existing dwellings will be **restricted to 2 storeys in height**. The rest of the site will be limited to 2.5 storeys with bungalows located closest to Greenfields.
- **Private rear gardens** will be provided for all houses which are proportionate to the dwelling size.
- Significant parking provision for all new homes in line with **WHBC parking standards**.
- Improvements to the access off Northaw Road East with a quality **Gateway** to the site creating a sense of arrival in the village.
- A Gateway feature into the village was also explored to help reduce vehicle speeds.
- Creation of a **pedestrian friendly green route**, linking South Drive with the KGV Playing Fields, providing a pleasant and usable access for new and existing residents.

- Improvements to the local highway network as required.
- Provision of land to enable the **extension of the existing KGV playing fields** as part of ongoing discussions between the parish council and sports clubs.
- The street network will be designed to be attractive to all users whether by car, bicycle or on foot.
- The main access road provides a route around the dwellings and connects to Northaw Road East. This includes the use of sections of **shared street surfaces**.

Character

- To reflect the comments made about the importance of the character of the village, the western half of the site seeks to reflect and extend the existing settlement pattern with Northaw Road East, Theobalds Road and Burleigh Way all running north-south with properties along these roads having east-west aspects.
- In addition, the main tree lined avenue will be overlooked with gable fronted houses, using materials local to Cuffley such as red brick and tile hanging.
- The rural eastern half of the site could be referred to as the "Rural Fringe" given its location overlooking the countryside to the south and the lower density nature of this area. Houses could incorporate gables or terraces overlooking the public open space and public footpaths to the south, with 'softer' materials used such as white render and white boarding, helping to limit the visual impact of the new development.

6. Drop In Feedback Event - April

The Applicant was keen that the local community had a chance to view the feedback from the Design Workshops and Site Tours. Therefore the Applicant held a feedback event where detailed information on the feedback received was displayed.

Drop In Event details:

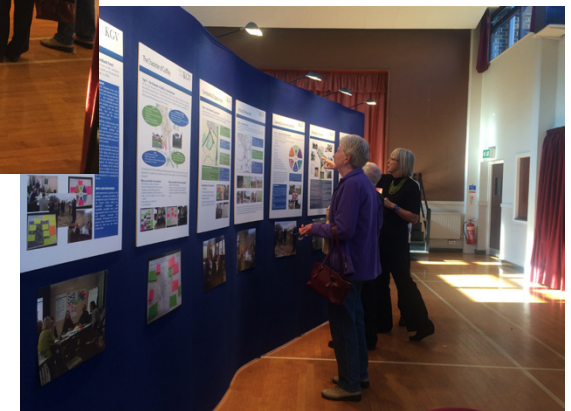
- Held on 23rd April 2015 from 5pm until 8pm in Cuffley Hall
- 81 local stakeholders were invited to the event (Full List attached at Appendix A) with a written letter and email of invitation.
- 22 people attended the event

6.1 Format

The drop in event was held to inform those who attended the Design Workshops about the feedback the Applicant received, and also to explain the next stages of the consultation process and development of the emerging Illustrative Masterplan.

The exhibition boards again focused on the four key themes from the Design Workshops and included details of the exact feedback that had been given.

The Emerging Concept Board explained how the feedback received had influenced the emerging Masterplan. A full copy of the Exhibition boards can be found in Appendix E.



7. Initial Masterplan Exhibition - May

Reflecting on the feedback from the Design Workshops described above the Project Team drew up a more detailed Illustrative Masterplan. Public exhibitions were then held to show how the development proposals had evolved and to seek the views of the local community. Exhibition details:

- Friday 8th May (1pm-8pm) & Saturday 9th May (1pm-5pm) in Cuffley Hall
- An advert for the exhibition was placed in the Welwyn Hatfield Times (Appendix I)
- Over 81 Local stakeholders were invited to the event (Full List attached at Appendix A) by the Applicant with a written letter and email (Appendix F).
- 2,000 written letters of invitation (Appendix G) sent to local residents and businesses in the whole of Cuffley (Appendix H)
- 182 guests attended over the two days

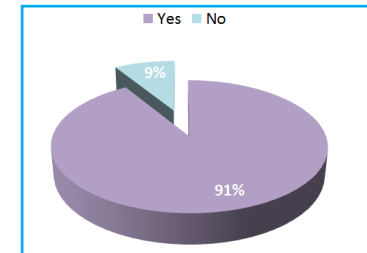
7.1 Format

Nine A1 exhibition boards were on display which explained the emerging proposals in detail. The boards: Welcome; Opportunities; Housing Need; Design Workshops; Landscape, Access & Movement; Community Benefits and Next Steps. In addition, a triple sized board displayed the emerging Illustrative Masterplan. A full copy of the boards can be found in Appendix J. Visitors attending the exhibition were encouraged to complete a feedback form which they could complete on the day or return via a dedicated Freepost address at a later date. The form had 9 questions and space to leave comments. It was also available to complete online, a copy of this can be found in Appendix K.

7.2 Feedback

A total of 46 feedback forms were received. A breakdown of the responses to all questions is set out below. Respondents were largely over 65 (68%) and owner occupiers (93%).

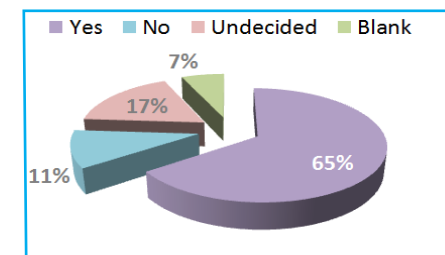
Q1. Are you aware that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) are preparing a new local plan to help deliver new homes across the Borough?



Yes: 91% No: 9%

The Applicant is pleased that local people are aware of the Draft Local Plan Consultation Documents. The Consultation Document identifies North East KGV as a 'more favourable' location for homes in the Borough.

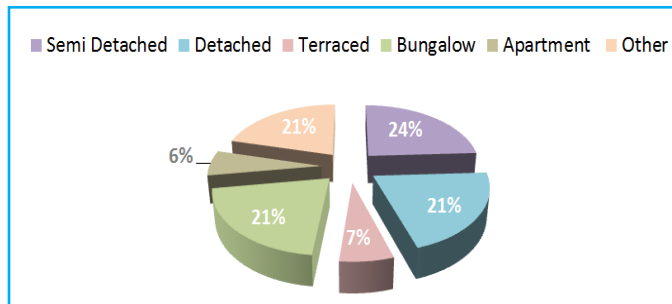
Q2. WHBC have identified this site as a 'more favourable' location for new homes in the Borough. Do you believe that the North East KGV site is an appropriate location for new homes in Cuffley?



Yes: 65% No: 11% Undecided 17% Blank 7%

The Applicant is pleased with the level of support for the development of the site. The Applicant believes that its proposals at North East KGV will constitute a sustainable development which will compliment the existing village.

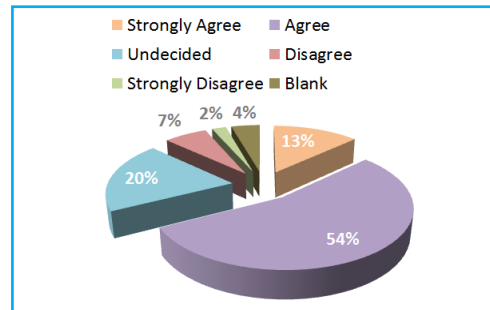
Q3. What type of housing do you think is most needed locally (please tick only one)?



Detached 21% Semi Detached 24% Terraced 7% Bungalow 21% Apartment 6% Other 21%

The Applicant understands that local people feel a mix of housing is needed. The final masterplan includes a range of properties from 1 bed flats to 4 bed houses and bungalows. 30% affordable housing will be included.

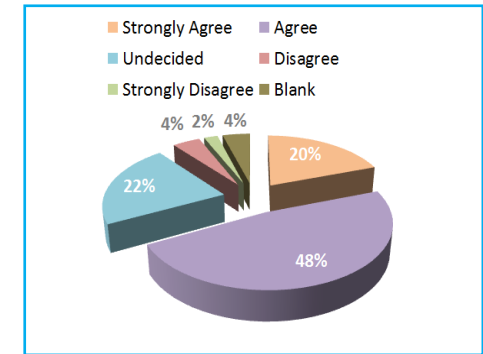
Q4. Do you agree that our proposals have integrated well with the surrounding area through the proposed access, footpaths and cycle links?



Strongly Agree:13% Agree 54% Undecided 20% Disagree 7%Strongly Disagree 2% Blank 4%

The Applicant is pleased with the support for the connections provided. The final masterplan has sought to further enhance the entrance to the development and to the village as well as to KGV.

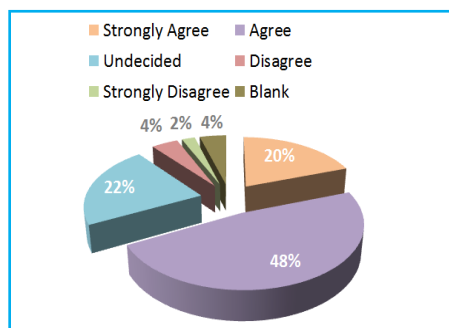
Q5. Do you like the idea of more footpaths around KGV and new links with the Hertfordshire Way?



Strongly Agree:20% Agree 48% Undecided 22% Disagree 4%Strongly Disagree 2% Blank 4%

The Applicant believes that the provision of new footpaths and links will be of benefit to both new and existing residents and see this provision as a key part of the scheme.

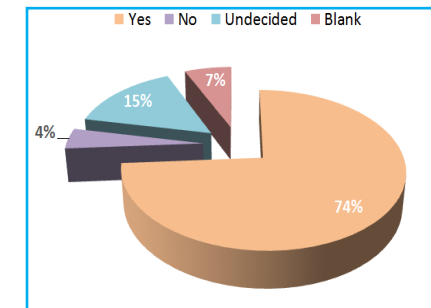
Q.6 Do you believe the KGV playing fields would benefit from having more land to use for recreational purposes?



Strongly Agree:20% Agree 48% Undecided 22% Disagree 4%Strongly Disagree 2% Blank 4%

The Applicant understands that there is pressure on the facilities at KGV. Therefore, the Applicant is looking to make additional land available for recreational use to ease the current pressure on KGV.

Q7. Do you believe the existing sports and leisure facilities on KGV would benefit from improvements?



Yes: 74% No 4% Undecided 15% Blank 7%

The Applicant agrees that improvements could be made and will be looking to make a financial contribution to assist in delivering these.

Q8. What other facilities do you think would benefit from investment ?

There were a number of responses to this question including Sports facilities (5), Youth Centre (4), Pitch and Put (2) Doctors (2). A community centre, play area, library, public toilets, overspill car park, bungalows and a shelter by the park were all raised by one respondent each.

The Applicant is discussing the level of sports provision with the sports clubs currently occupying KGV. The proposed extension to the KGV playing fields will assist in delivering improved sports provision, and financial contributions will be made to upgrade other KGV facilities. A full list of responses can be found in Appendix L.

Q9. Are there any particular features you would like to see included in the public park in the South East corner of the site?

The most popular response (5) was in respect of the provision of seating/benches/picnic area. The Applicant has included provision for this in the final version of the Illustrative Masterplan. Another respondent asked for play equipment and space for ball games, however it has been agreed with the Borough and Parish Councils that a financial contribution towards upgrading the existing play area at the KGV playing fields would be preferable.

(A table of all responses can be found in Appendix M)

7.3 Comments Section

The comments section on the feedback form asked people to write any further comments that they wanted to make. A summary of the key points made and a response from the Applicant is included below. A full list of responses can be found in Appendix N.

Topic & Number of Comments made	Summary Points	Lands Improvement's response
Road Network & Connectivity (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keen for roundabout at Station Road Need to improve vehicle access to site Concern over traffic flow Bus Service is important 	The Applicant has made additional improvements to the access from Northaw Road East which have been included in the final masterplan. A full traffic assessment has been undertaken and is included as part of this planning application. Possible improvements to the Station Road or Cattlegate junctions and Station Road itself are also included as part of the proposals.
Further information needed (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much social housing? Pressure on Schools and Doctors How will drainage be managed What energy saving measures are proposed Need downsizer homes as well Must deliver the community benefits 	30% of the housing on site will be affordable in line with policy. As part of any planning consent, WHBC is likely to require financial contributions for education and healthcare provision. The final exhibition included more detailed information on drainage, the mix of housing and the proposed potential community benefits.
Support for development (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good development for the area Great idea would be strongly welcomed Your staff were friendly and helpful 	The Applicant is grateful for the support of the community and is pleased to bring forward a development which has been genuinely shaped by their input. The Applicant will continue to engage with the local community on an ongoing basis.
Health & Safety (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HSE issues from the anaerobic digester Impact of slurry lagoon in terms of air quality. 	An assessment has been undertaken by the Applicant which determines that this will not impact on the development.
Parking (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger car park for KGV to help with drop off Ensure sufficient parking onsite 	The final masterplan meets the parking standards at WHBC.
Sports (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need investment in facilities at KGV 	A financial contribution towards the improvement of facilities at KGV will be provided along with land for the extension of KGV fields.

7.4 How the feedback received was reflected in the final masterplan

The Applicant considered all of the feedback received carefully in discussions with the Project Team. The final Masterplan reflected the feedback received in the following ways:

1. Vision : The masterplan on display was amended to include 121 new homes, reduced from an original figure of 130. This reflects the comments received in respect of providing more family homes and less flats. The Illustrative Masterplan comprises 82% houses and 18% flats. The new homes will range in size from 1 bedroom flats to 4 bedroom detached houses and include some bungalows.

2. Access: Based on comments received from local stakeholders and residents, the speed of traffic on Northaw Road East can be an issue when entering the village. The Applicant is exploring new entrance signs which will help to reduce approach speeds into the village.

3. Parking: The plan was amended to include more visitor parking to discourage the need for any on street parking.

4. Boundary Treatment: Following feedback received from the Greenfields residents regarding the boundary treatment, possible options now include: the planting of oak, hornbeam, holly, privet, hawthorn and black-hawthorn hedges along the boundary.

In addition, the houses facing the green space next to Greenfields have been pulled away from the boundary to respect the residential amenity of the existing properties.

All the dwellings along the northern boundary have also been limited to 2 storeys following feedback. Bungalows are now situated in locations closest to Greenfields to help to ensure privacy and prevent any overlooking.

5. Connectivity: Following consultation with Greenfields residents, the proposed pedestrian access into the site from South Drive will be kept low-key and limited to a 3m wide footpath. The Applicant will also explore ways in which the path can be designed to strictly prohibit use by motorbikes and to limit the speed of cyclists.

An additional pedestrian access point from the site on to the Hertfordshire Way has also been incorporated in order to increase permeability and use of the Hertfordshire Way.

6. Open Space: The Applicant decided to include a picnic area in the open space in the South East corner of the site with benches for the public to enjoy the rural setting which was a popular request from the feedback.

The open space provision can provide potential ecological enhancements

8.Final Masterplan Exhibition - June

As outlined above, the Project Team revised the masterplan following the initial masterplan exhibitions. At this point the proposals still remained open to amendment and the Applicant decided to seek further feedback from the community. An additional public exhibition was held, and at this event the revised version of the Illustrative Masterplan was shown to the local community for their comments. Exhibition details:

- 18th June in Cuffley Hall from 1.00pm until 8.00pm
- 212 guests attended
- Over 81 local stakeholders were invited to the event (full list attached at Appendix A) with a letter and email (Appendix G).
- Details of the Final Masterplan Exhibition were included in the letter sent to 2,000 local residents and businesses prior to the Initial Masterplan Exhibitions. (Appendix H)
- 400 written letters of invitation sent to Northaw residents and businesses closest to the site.(Appendix O&P)
- An advert for the exhibition was placed in the Welwyn Hatfield Times (Appendix Q)

Development plans unveiled

Residents consulted over homes plans

By Martin Ford

martin.ford@hertsexnews.co.uk

RESIDENTS have been urged to have their say on plans to build 121 homes in Cuffley.

A public exhibition will be held today giving details of the proposals.

The development off Northaw Road East would include 99 houses and 22 flats, of which 30 per cent would be affordable.

The developer, Lands Improvement, is also in talks with Hertfordshire County Council about designing the entrance to the development to encourage drivers to adhere to the 30mph limit on Northaw Road East and implement ways to make Station Road safer.

Also proposed are "minor" modifications to junctions with Station Road and Cattlegate Road to increase vehicle capacity, including changing the priority.

Neighbouring

Designs also include a green space, a network of footpaths, and a pedestrian link with the neighbouring King George V playing fields.

Lands Improvement also suggests extending the playing fields by 1.6 acres and adding more sports pitches, making improvements to access, individual clubhouses and the playground.

Barry Knichel, from the Save Cuffley And Northaw Green Belt (SCANGB) campaign group, was open to the possibility of development as long as it is not too dense.

He said: "Our view has always been that we expect there will be some building there."

"It's important residents recognise there will be some development. We want something that is in keeping with the village, rather than something that's alien to it."

"For this consultation to have any value, they have got to recognise what residents are looking for."

"It's important residents come along and say, 'This is what we would like to see.'"

Lands Improvements' plans also point out that development is required to accommodate the number of homes needed for growth across the boroughs of Welwyn Hatfield and Broxbourne.

Northaw and Cuffley parish councillor Mike Clarke told the Mercury: "The Welwyn Hatfield local plan includes 12,500 houses across the borough."

"We have sent a letter of objection to the council about that."

He went on to explain that they had to watch the Broxbourne local plan closely as well, which is yet to be published.

He said "hypothetically", if it included 20,000 homes, that would seriously impact Cuffley because of the proximity of the village to the border.

Lands Improvement had not commented as the Mercury went to press.

The exhibition will take place today from 1pm until 8pm at Cuffley Hall in Maynard Place.

They have got to recognise what residents are looking for

Barry Knichel, SCANGB

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8.1 Format

Six A1 exhibition boards were on display along with a triple sized masterplan board. The Welcome board thanked visitors for attending the exhibition and gave information on the WHBC local plan and the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. Boards 2 and 3 (Engagement and Feedback) detailed the consultation events undertaken to date and the feedback received. The Masterplan board displayed the current version of the Masterplan and was annotated to show how the feedback from the previous events had shaped the current plan. Board 4, Access and Movement, discussed the proposed improvements to the local road network, whilst the Community Benefits board gave information on what the development of the site will deliver in addition to new homes.

The final board, Next Steps, encouraged guests to leave their feedback and included contact details for the project and gave an indicative timeline moving forward. A full copy of the boards is included in Appendix R.

8.2 Feedback from Final Masterplan exhibition

Visitors attending the exhibition were encouraged to complete a comments card (Appendix S). A total of 81 respondents left their feedback.

The Applicant has considered all of the feedback received carefully in discussions with the whole Project Team. The most commonly occurring themes are identified below, along with a selection of five verbatim comments on this topic and a response from the Applicant. A full list of all comments can be found in Appendix T.

Traffic Impact

Selection of comments:

- The additional traffic would cause rat-runs around already busy roads - traffic accuring via Cattlegate road joining Northaw Rd.
- The effect on the already inadequate road and rail system is very worrying
- Access to Northaw Road East could be problematic and may be better served by a mini round about
- I think that the prefered traffic flow with Cattlegate Road and Station Road having priority would be workable solution.
- As I live on South Drive, it is imperative to me that the pedestrian access at '4' never becomes a vehicular access
- The concerns about traffic at peak times are not addressed. The improvements mooted are merely cosmetic
- Changing priority at junctions increases the chances of 'rat runs' being created through residential areas. There is little point in discussing traffic because unless a bypass miraculously appears

- I am concerned that your proposals will not make any significant improvement to the traffic situation. Perhaps lorries etc could be diverted away from cuffley. Consideration needs to be made for the fact that 24 flats and another 47 flats are being built/converted on station road increasing traffic flow.
- I hope that the authorities fully consider the impact of all proposed developments (garage site / everest, greenfields, meadway & the dell) on traffic flow, congestion and added vehicles using the limited roads available.
- My main concern is the B156 and the traffic management through Cuffley. The impact of more traffic must not be to worsen the access to and through the village for pedestrians. We need traffic calming; 20mph speed limits, more crossings, indeed measures that keep the balance more in favour of the pedestrians are essential. Any moves to speed up traffic (the SOMETHING clearway solution) should not be considered as they are not fit for purpose through small rural villages such as Cuffley

Applicant's Response

The increase in traffic associated with the site would be a maximum of 80-85 traffic movements during peak hours. This is between only 2% and 4% of existing traffic levels at the junctions on Northaw Road East. At other times it is expected to be significantly lower.

The Applicant appreciates the concerns over the traffic and believes that the proposed improvements would allow more traffic to pass through the Cattlegate and Station Road junctions.

Another approach would be to make a financial contribution towards public realm improvements to Station Road to enhance the shopping area which is the heart of the village. These could include:

- Reducing street clutter - signs, bollards, railings etc
- Improving the surfacing and introducing more trees and discrete planting
- Narrowing the carriageway to 6m to slow large vehicles
- Introducing more informal pedestrian crossing points through raising the carriageway
- Consider removing the existing pelican crossing
- Providing more cycle parking

The Applicant is entering discussions with the County Council and the Parish Council to find the most appropriate solution.

The site access junction has been designed in accordance with Department of Transport design standards and subject to an independent safety assessment.

There is good visibility in both directions. The capacity of the access has been assessed and it would safely accommodate future traffic flows.

Amendments to the junction of Theobalds Road with Northaw Road East are proposed to allow residents access, but to discourage rat running. It is intended that the link to South Drive will be for pedestrians and cyclists only. It will link the development to the village and provide a link from the village to the playing fields and the footpaths. It is anticipated that this will not be a heavily used route.

Network Rail has existing proposals to increase the capacity of trains and it is not within the gift of the Applicant to influence this.

Construction traffic will be strictly controlled through a Management Plan that will control matters such as hours of operation, vehicle routing and preventing mud on the surrounding roads.

Support for development

Selection of comments:

- Following all previous meetings / discussions the proposals look generally acceptable.
- Have no objection to this plan partic as council seem to approve
- Nice polite staff happy to explain
- No issues with development
- It seems a well considered and well designed development that will fit into Cuffley village well
- I accept the need for development and agree that this is a suitable location

Applicant's Response

The Applicant is pleased to have received support from the local community. As detailed in this document, the Applicant has sought to provide extensive opportunities for local people to comment on the proposals which have remained open to modification throughout the consultation process.

The Applicant has sought to remain open and transparent at all times, with information on the feedback received made public. An email address, freephone and freepost address were established so that the enquiries could be made with ease. In addition members of the Project Team attended all public events where they were on hand to answer questions and respond to issues guests wanted to raise.

The Applicant intends to continue working with the local community as they look to develop a Neighbourhood Plan over the coming months.

Opposition to principle of development

Selection of comments:

- I don't feel the need for the development at all. I know the argument of 'housing crisis' and everyone is under pressure to build houses - BUT - its location
- I do not want this development to be built and will totally oppose it
- Yet another ill thought out plan
- Please do not allow this

Applicant's Response

The proposed development will create much needed new homes, in a sustainable location for new development. It will also facilitate the provision of an extension to the KGV playing fields for the benefit of the local community.

The masterplan submitted as part of the application is the result of considerable engagement with the local community over the past six months. The Application has sought to reflect the feedback received at consultation events and through ongoing discussions with local stakeholders.

Whilst the Applicant appreciates that some respondents object to the principle of development, it believes it can bring forward a sustainable development that can help meet an identified local housing need. The Applicant considers the proposed development to be a logical, sustainable and proportional addition to Cuffley that is well contained on all sides.

Green Belt

Selection of comments:

- Any development on greenbelt should be avoided
- Very disappointed overall. Still opposed in principle to any development on the greenbelt
- I am opposed to any development on the green belt land
- I am totally opposed to a development of this size on green belt land adjacent to cuffley.
- This is green belt

Applicant's Response

As part of the Local Plan process WHBC has undertaken a Review of the Green Belt. The findings of the Green Belt Review have been analysed as part of the Landscape and Visual Assessment submitted with the Application. The Council identified the site in their own evidence base for the emerging Local Plan as a more favourable location for new homes.

The site is physically and visually separated from the surrounding rural landscape and has urban influences from the settlement edge of Cuffley to the north, the recreation area to the south and from the pylons that cross the south-eastern corner of the Site. As a consequence, the Site does not contribute significantly to the landscape and visual amenity of the local landscape and makes a limited contribution to the openness of the surrounding Green Belt and in particular the openness of the Northaw-Cuffley Gap.

Further information on the very special circumstances, which justifies the Site's release from the Green Belt are set out within the Planning Statement.

School

Selection of comments:

- Schools - lots of locals cannot get their own children into school
- Too many houses for this existing infrastructure - school, doctors, shops
- There are not enough schools to take all the extra children
- Donations to school, library, doctors etc will not ease anything (to train new teachers, doctors etc)
- No guarantee that providers will accommodate extra demands, schools, health, railway, parking

Applicant's Response

The Applicant appreciates that the development will bring new children to the village. As part of any planning consent, the Applicant, would make a financial contribution towards the provision of new school places. It will then be down to the County Council who are responsible for the delivery of education in the County to spend this money as they determine. The Applicant has provided a briefing note on education provision as an appendix to the Planning Statement.

The Applicant would also expect to discuss with WHBC and the Parish as appropriate, relevant financial contributions to local services and facilities to help mitigate the impact of the development.

Doctors

Selection of comments:

- Doctors - busy now trying to get app
- No mention of effect on neighbouring primary school numbers, local services, doctors, police etc
- To increase the size of the village will not be beneficial to the current inhabitant - the school will overflow, doctors, shops, traffic (which is HORRENDOUS already) will only get worse!
- Also shortage of doctors
- Too many houses for this existing infrastructure - school, doctors, shops

Applicant's Response

The Applicant appreciates that the development will bring new residents who will need access to local healthcare facilities. As part of a planning consent, the Applicant expects to agree financial contributions to help mitigate any impact the development might have.

Bungalows

Selection of comments:

- Two bungalows is not a good balance there should be more
- I am keen to (a) ensure the social housing is a min of 30% and spread across housing types (b) that the bungalows are protected (by S106 agreement) from morphing into large poorly designed dormer bungalows
- Pleased to hear about the two bungalows and the reasonable attitude of the architects to the orientation of the bungalow as it effects 29b Greenfields.
- Not enough bungalows and siting needs adjusting
- No notice taken of workshops asking for a significant number of bungalows

Applicant's Response

Following feedback from the residents at Greenfields, the bungalows on the site were positioned in the vicinity of the existing residential dwellings to prevent over looking and help protect privacy.

The mix of housing proposed is illustrative at this stage and is responsive to currently identified market needs. The unit mix will be set and specified at the Reserved Matters stage.

Parking

Selection of comments:

- Please consider more visitor parking on roadsides (making roads wider)
- The last thing we need is more cars locally add up to the congestion. We also have commuters coming and parking their cars all day and walking to the station. They will now have more side roads to fill up.
- Concerned re traffic and station rd traffic and parking. I am disabled and already find parking a problem at certain times.
- The traffic increase will be far too much to cope through the village. The parking now is unsustainable and the increase in population will be too much for the area to cope with.
- One reason the bollards are in the village is because of parking two wheels on the pavements and the elderly people and prams could not pass, to remove them would be suicidal.

Applicant's Response

The parking provision onsite will be in line with WHBC's parking standards. Provision has also been made to accommodate visitor parking onsite.

The Applicant believes the site is in a sustainable location within easy walking or cycling distance of local bus stops, shops and services on Station Road, Cuffley Primary School and the railway station. This should help encourage residents to use other modes of transport aside from the motor vehicle.



Local stakeholders and residents have been actively engaged in the development of the Illustrative Masterplan for the site, and their opinions and views have shaped the planning application. The feedback received demonstrates the local community who actively engaged in the consultation process are broadly supportive of the proposals at North East KGV.

The Applicant has successfully engaged with a wide range of local stakeholders incorporating, local sports clubs, faith groups, School Governors, local residents, Councillors and businesses. The number of events held, along with the project website, freephone and email has ensured that there were considerable opportunities to engage in the consultation process.

The Applicant believes that the consultation process undertaken has met and surpassed the aspirations of the Localism Act, the NPPF and WHBC's own Statement of Community Involvement with regards to ensuring the local community plays a key role in the creation of new development proposals which will impact on the communities in which they live.

The Applicant understands the importance of continuing to keep the community involved in future decisions about the Site, including at the Reserved Matters stage. The website will be kept regularly updated with new information, and the Applicant intends to continue to work with the Neighbourhood Plan Team, Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council as well as local stakeholders and residents in the future. The Applicant is working with the Neighbourhood Plan Team to produce a Development Brief for the site.

The Applicant would like to thank everyone who has taken the opportunity to engage with them so far. Discussions at all of the consultation events were insightful, constructive and crucial in helping to deliver the Applicant's vision for land to the North East of KGV.