



**Town & Country Planning Act 1990**

APPEAL UNDER SECTION 78(1)

By

Mr Anthony Hardy (Capital Community Developments LTD)

At

Land North of Gardenia Close and Garden Square

Rendlesham

Suffolk

Planning Inspectorate Ref: APP/X3540/W/19/3242636

ESC Ref: DC/19/1499/FUL

**Summary Proof of Evidence**

of

**Robert Scrimgeour**

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**Principal Design and Conservation Officer**

**2nd March 2020**

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 My name is Robert Scrimgeour. My qualifications and experience are set out in my main proof. Upon receipt of this appeal I was allocated the responsibility to act as a design witness for the appeal. Prior to the appeal I had no previous involvement in the planning application or this site.
- 1.2 This summary proof of evidence has been prepared in connection with the appeal submitted by Mr Anthony Hardy against the decision of East Suffolk Council to refuse planning permission for a phased residential development of 75 dwellings, car parking, public open space, hard and soft landscaping and associated infrastructure at Land north of Gardenia Close and Garden Square, Rendlesham, Suffolk.
- 1.3 The application was refused by delegated decision and the decision notice was issued on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019. It included, inter alia, Reason for Refusal no.3 which stated that the development is not in accordance with the NPPF, the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan and national design guidance in respect of aspects of its design.

## **2.0 Uniformity of layout**

- 2.1 My evidence focusses on these aspects of design in relation to the layout of the development and I demonstrate that the principal approach to the design of the appeal layout is both rigid and uniform and that this can be seen in the:
- a) the uniform application of a grid pattern;
  - b) the uniform application of culs-de-sac;
  - c) the uniform orientation of the principal elevations of the dwellings;
  - d) a uniform approach to building typology and associated plot sizes; and
  - e) a uniform approach to parking provision.
- 2.2 The result is a layout that appears site-unresponsive and repetitive with poor legibility and street character across the layout.

## **3.0 Pattern of roads**

- 3.1 The grid pattern of the layout that has been imposed on the site provides a rigid geometry that consists of multiple dead-end routes, or culs-de-sac, that are mostly positioned at right angles off the main linear axial route. Indeed, all dwellings are

shown positioned and accessed off a cul-de-sac, with only a few exceptions at plot no.s 1,2,3 and 18. This pattern means that none of these roads connect with each other. The result will be a uniform road pattern that lacks good connectivity across the site with the effect that the layout will be inwards-looking with each cul-de-sac self-contained and separated off from its neighbours.

- 3.2 The road layout will be a principal organising feature of the scheme design, connecting existing access points and providing a hierarchy of routes. The appeal layout illustrates a main road connecting access points from adjacent development at Tidy Road and Garden Square. Off this is a 'secondary route' that actually forms the principal organising axis of the layout which is oriented in an east-west direction along a key position at the centre of the site (and following its main direction). Off this secondary route are more culs-de-sac than those off what is designed as the main road (7 as opposed to 4).
- 3.3 That this organising axis does not also form the actual principal route along its full length, despite serving as the main distributor route, is contradictory. Its edge treatment, lack of footpaths and the orientation of dwellings placed along it suggest that it is a secondary route.
- 3.4 The effect of the principal axial route being designed as a secondary route and similar in treatment to what is the designed main route is that the road layout will lack clarity in terms of its hierarchy of use.

#### **4.0 Permeability and connectivity**

- 4.1 The layout suffers from an under-provision of footpaths across the site, the lack of which reinforces the poor connectivity, self-containment and separation that arise from the pattern of roads. It is notable that the only public footpaths provided for are along the length of the connecting route between Tidy Road and Garden Square.
- 4.2 That the layout fails to make this most basic of footpath provision for the benefit of all future residents is a significant failure; as is the overall effect that is provided of a layout that is dominated by provision for the vehicle in the absence of a comprehensive network of connected footpaths.
- 4.3 The lack of comprehensive footpath provision and pedestrian integration combined with a road pattern that facilitates the provision of culs-de-sac and no other form of

layout, contributes to the poor permeability and connectivity of this layout. The lack of permeability and connectivity results in a layout that appears to spurn the opportunity for social spaces, chance encounters between residents and neighbours, and the life outside of private space that provides community.

## **5.0 Character of streets and spaces**

- 5.1 The appeal layout has been designed primarily around a fixed idea of a grid pattern of culs-de-sac with insufficient regard paid to the creation of attractive, positively designed street character or the full influence of the surrounding street pattern. Well-designed streets in a residential layout should function as key spaces of social interaction, as well as transit spaces and can be public or private in character dependent upon their place in the layout hierarchy.
- 5.2 The use of private single-sided culs-de-sac as the principal street typology and as the main organising feature of the layout, and the uniform orientation of dwellings on them, mean that these streets ignore their relationship to what appear to be principal routes – the main route from Tidy Road to Garden Square and the principal axial east-west route – and the principal access into the site from Tidy Road.
- 5.3 The result of this kind of street and spatial character is one where the layout is dominated by private enclosed spaces (the single-sided culs-de-sac, which themselves are little more than parking courts) and streets with a private character; and where the public street - the access route from Tidy Road to Garden Square with a footpath each side of the highway – is limited in extent, unattractive in character and which appears to deter use and surveillance from active frontages.
- 5.4 Both the north-eastern and western areas of public open space are not fully integrated into the layout due to barriers and a lack of overlooking. This is because the housing and open spaces have not been designed together. The effect of this will be to discourage the safe use of the open spaces.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 It is my judgment, in conclusion, that the appeal layout is a highly private layout that fails to create well laid-out connected streets for pedestrians and vehicles and appears

designed to discourage integration with surrounding development, social interaction, easy navigation and public access. This is illustrated by the fact that the layout is designed wholly around the uniform application of a grid pattern of single-sided culs-de-sac which are private dead-end spaces with one looking much like another. As a result of the regimented orientation of dwellings, nearly all accesses into dwellings are off these private spaces and very few are accessed off the more public streets. The public streets are, consequently, downgraded to distributor roads, only, and do not invite enjoyment or use as public streets, as they have no street character. The houses, intentionally, relate positively only to the private culs-de-sac but not to the shared spaces and public spaces (streets and green open space) around them. This private layout and regimented orientation are not an accidental outcome of the design but *the* design drivers.

- 6.2 In this way, the rigid and uniform approach to design illustrated in the appeal layout, overall, provides for a scheme that is detached, inwards-looking, difficult to navigate, unintegrated and essentially private in character, resulting in a number of elements of poor design which are unacceptable.
- 6.3 On these bases, therefore, the Council was justified in refusing the original application partly on the basis of the design of its layout, in my professional opinion as the Council's principal design advisor.