

Notes on a meeting held via Teams on 26 May 2026
with Leigh Parish Council and representatives of the developer Elivia Homes

Present: Shaun Lilley - Strategic Planning Manager, Elivia Homes
David Bedford - Planning consultant, DHA Planning for Elivia Home
Miles Wilshire - Communications consultant, Fairthorn for Elivia Homes
Joe Kaye - Chair, Leigh Parish Council
Bruce Williams - Chair, Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee
Louise Kleinschmidt - Parish Clerk, Leigh Parish Council

David Bedford, on behalf of Elivia started the meeting with an overview of the planning situation in Sevenoaks District where the Local Planning Authority (LPA) Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) are after many years of under delivery, under very severe pressure to increase their allocation of land for residential development. Under new planning reforms from central government there are now opportunities to apply for planning permission on Green Belt and other protected land which can be classed as poorly performing and "grey belt". SDC previously identified the Penshurst Road site, bounded by the railway embankment and rear of houses along that road as poorly performing and Elivia agree, despite SDC not allocating it for development, hence the application.

- The site is a little over 4 hectares, the developable area (with houses and associated infrastructure) is about 2.2 hectares. SDC planning guidance suggests 50 dwellings per hectare - Elivia are applying for up to 64.
- Their application is for "Outline permission" which means many such things as the numbers, actual layout and design of dwellings are "reserved matters" and will not be firmed up and agreed until a later date. This means the images provided on the consultation documents are purely indicative at this stage and to give an impression of what the development may look like. Elivia has and will incorporate the Leigh Village Design Statement and other LPA and county design requirements in their final plans.
- They claim to have carried out careful visual impact assessments to address landscape issues and hopefully minimise amenity loss. There is an acknowledgement that there will be landscape damage but that they will do as much as they can to lessen and mitigate this. They are required to demonstrate a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) which cannot be achieved purely on-site. This means they will have to take advantage of the legislation that allows them to fund BNG on remote sites, at a greater cost, to meet the 10% target.
- Drainage - a pond has been incorporated to help their drainage plan, as well as BNG and general landscape. They pointed out that it is now a requirement that developers provide a drainage scheme that is measurably better than that of a greenfield site.
- Amenity loss - while they accept there will obviously be some amenity loss to nearby residents this will be partly mitigated, in their opinion, by the fact that what is currently a private site will now be opened up and green areas will be accessible to the public.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - the development will be liable to this which will make funds available for infrastructure investment. They also expect an additional education contribution will be levied by KCC.
- Traffic - while accepting there will obviously be additional traffic generated their highways consultants use research that shows this will only generate, at peak times, 1 additional car journey every 2 minutes. They do not see this as significant.
- Parking - provision will be in the order of 3 spaces per unit, which is the KCC requirement and is more generous than national norms.

- Affordable housing - the mix and make up of this and how it might be allocated is, from what we understood, to be a matter for agreement at a later stage as a reserved matter. It will be 50% though. It is out of their hands whether there be any local resident conditions.
- Timescale - Elivia expect to submit their application in the next 2 to 3 weeks. SDC will then need to “verify” it before putting it out for consultation. They are hopeful that it will thus be out in a month or so, before the summer holidays.
- Resident consultation - they appreciated the responses from residents and will consider them when making their final application. They made no other comment other than the volume was as expected and the contents were generally not a surprise.

Following the presentation from David Bedford and subsequently by Miles Wilshire who added some of the detail in the above bullet points, BJW stressed that LPC are strictly controlled at this pre-application stage in pre-determining their view on the development. Our comments or any objections would be based on material planning considerations and would be in respect to any actual planning application.

The significant high level issues for us to consider were:

- Balance of the whole of the communities needs/desires
- Highlight any concerns
- Sustainability
- Safety
- Highways
- Alternatives

Specifically we addressed:

- The site is in the National Landscape and deserves special protection. They accepted this but it was poorly performing, as SDC had already found. In a time when there is a dire need for additional housing it was suggested that perhaps it was better to use sites such as this rather than allocate virgin green field/Green Belt sites that would have a more significant impact
- The site was not allocated in the Local Plan. This would be addressed in their application and overlaps somewhat with the above point. In any event the Local Plan has not been adopted and as such that does allow developers some leeway.
- Biodiversity loss - existing vegetation, trees and wildlife. Elivia plan to retain all significant trees. BNG will be greater than 10%. As stated in the section above there is an acceptance that there will be damage to the landscape but mitigations will be via the BNG process.
- Infrastructure/Public services pressure - see above comments re CIL, traffic and drainage. They were interested to hear about current sewage pumping station issues.
- Neighbours loss of amenity - accepted but as stated above that to some extent is mitigated by public access.
- Access - no public rights of way, bar the entrance off Penshurst Road, to allow access to village amenities. Pushes residents on foot or by bike on to the busy B2027. Accepted but no mitigation suggested.
- No control of local allocation for affordable housing. They agreed this as a concern but that it was out of their hands. They may consider suggesting in their application some mechanism for local connections to get priority.
- Housing need/affordability - we accepted that if local priority was granted that the development could meet our identified housing need.