



Architecture and Project Management

Design & Access and Planning Justification Statement

for

**Residential Development at Clayton Lane,
Thurnscoe, Nr Barnsley**

On behalf of

Mr S Frith

Prepared by

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1.0 The Site/Background

1.1 The site for development is situated along Clayton Lane and on greenbelt land. There is currently a 50,000sq feet warehouse/factory on the site built in red brick. The structure is approximately between 15 and 20 metres tall and can be seen down the valley from Thurnscoe. The site is accessible to the east from Clayton Lane. The building is currently used for storage and processing of stone by Mr Frith's business. Subsequently heavy machinery and vehicles regularly pass in and out of the site.

1.2 John Frith, father of Simon Frith and husband of Sally Frith, established the business in 1996. At this stage, the business operated out of Warmsworth quarry in Doncaster and was called Warmsworth Stone Ltd. It was mainly concerned with the manufacturing and installation of bespoke feature fireplaces all over the UK, employing approximately 7 to 8 people.

John died suddenly in October 2000; Simon left his current employer and assembled his family members to take over the running of the business. At the end of 2001 an opportunity arose to purchase the assets of the company Stonemasonry UK Ltd, which operated from Hampole quarry and the Thurnscoe site and had gone into liquidation.

Warmsworth Masonry was formed and they now employ 30 people from Barnsley, particularly the Thurnscoe area, and the adjoining Dearne towns and coalfield areas to the east side. Due to the number of quarries in and around the Barnsley area, they are able to recruit the level of skilled people with the stone handling experience that they require.

1.3 The site at Thurnscoe has 50,000 sq feet under cover on 4 acres of land. In order to dilute the cost of such a large site they have unsuccessfully tried renting out the largest shed at the bottom of the site, compromising 25, 000sq feet. For over 3 years they have had it registered with a local agent and only ever received one enquiry.

In addition they have taken contracts for heavy side products such as walling stone, which goes to house builders such as Redrow and Barratt Homes. On this site they output components equivalent to building 2 houses per week. These contracts are long running and necessarily place them in this region for many years to come. The skill set is very rich and something they are proud to have developed through local people over the last 5 years. It would be very difficult to reproduce the level of skill which they have produced in Barnsley.

The production activities need to be close to the source to minimise HGV movements of raw material to and from the quarry at Grimethorpe. In order to minimise costs, maintain employment and remain competitive, the future development of the company requires an open yard environment, as close to the raw material as possible. The intention to separate the lower value products and heavy end of the process, from the craft masonry element and the office element, requires relocation of the latter to a new site. Thus alternative sites in the area are to be investigated.

Because of the site's location, it is often unoccupied and it has become an easy target for break-ins and vandalism due to its rural isolated positioning.

The existing topography of the site further compounds the operations process and high value sheet material such as granites and marbles are difficult to manoeuvre. This is often time-consuming and at times results in manual handling. This in turn results in excessive vehicle activities, noise, disturbance and dust in what is otherwise a peaceful rural environment.

Furthermore bespoke equipment for the extraction of dust from the masons' sheds limits the growth of this facility. Hand finishing, carving and sanding take place on site and this is a high value growth area for the company. However internal columns within the sheds' production space and restrictions within the site prevent this, and furthermore affect potential for re-letting the floor space.

- 1.4 The ideal location would be close to the present operating space as they could not afford to lose the existing skills that they have developed over the last 7 years. They would therefore look to relocate facilities to a site in Thurnscoe, Manvers or Dearne Valley, with the search initially focussed on Thurnscoe.

They have been working with Business Link in Barnsley and have recently won an award from the UK Design Council and Business Link to remarket their products through brochure and web site designs. Prior to gaining this award they were encouraged to create a new vision for their company for the 21st century. They outlined a purpose built facility in the Barnsley area, with a showroom at the front of the premises and factory behind. Ideally it would also include their admin facility, which is currently located in Doncaster. They would be operating on one site and within the first year would bring 6 staff jobs into Barnsley. The new facility would be more efficient which would allow them to remain competitive and ensure they would retain the entire workforce that they have now. Effectively they wish to locate their current four sites in a more localised area within the community. Growth areas for employment would be within masonry granites and marbles and high value goods with a bespoke facility and this could easily generate a further nine jobs in the first year and after that, a forecasted growth of 10% per annum.

2.0 The Proposals

- 2.1 The scheme is a result of a detailed and in depth consultation process with the local planning authority, council and neighbouring farmer. This has spawned a number of considerations that have been fully taken into account within the design process. At this stage, the initial feel of the development was agreed with BMBC and from these discussions the theme of an enclosed courtyard development with walkable access roads was decided upon. While at this time it was agreed that a 10 metre greenbelt should be maintained around the perimeter of the site in order that the development sits more discretely, consultation with the local farmer resulted in the access road into the site being positioned to the southern reaches of the site and subsequently away from the blind summit at the top of the hill. Provision has also been given for a farmers' track to the north of the site, allowing the farmer access to the road from his farm and land.
- 2.2 A residential scheme has been decided upon as the most suitable and financially viable alternative development for the site. This will help to facilitate Mr Frith's business aspirations with regard to centralising his stone business and potentially bringing more employment to the Barnsley area.
- 2.3 The new scheme will look to reduce the impact the current building has on the landscape by reducing the massing on the site while also attempting to reduce the current built footprint within the greenbelt. The scheme also intends to reduce the site's impact on the development, with the aforementioned designation of a perimeter strip of land to be assigned to green buffer and heavy planting. The area should also benefit from the removal (by change of use) of large vehicles accessing the site and travelling through the surrounding area. This should result in a reduction in the amount of noise pollution local residents are subject to, while also scaling down the amount of dirt that these trucks bring onto the roads. Needless to say the introduction of a high quality residential development would create increased trade for local businesses and would go some way in helping toward the rejuvenation of the Thurnscoe settlement.
- 2.4 The design of the scheme is based upon harnessing the natural beauty around the site while creating self-sufficient security and enclosure. In achieving these objectives it is also important to echo the local vernacular tradition of the area and attempt to make the development blend with its neighbouring villages.
- 2.5 The initial objective of the development is to address the road and formalize its presence by creating a street scene. The hedging at the entrance to the site is immediately intended to indicate entrance into an enclosed residential space, in a green environment. This aims to impact on traffic speed and thus the residents' perception of walkable spaces. As the road sweeps into the site, the first private drive to a small 'pocket' courtyard is revealed on the left, and vistas of the properties across the village green in turn evoke a sense of community. A sense of enclosure is maintained across the village green as the formalised houses that surround it overlook the greenspace, thus giving the residents using it comfort in the sense of protection. Moving deeper into the site the road continues in a curving line, ending in a turning circle with three private drives leading into more small residential courtyards. This further

adds to the sense of community and strongly impacts on the traffic speed by having a relatively short dead-end road. The turning circle allows ample room for the turning path of a refuse or emergency service vehicle. The hedging provides natural definition to the site boundary, and in addition to the green space between the housing clusters, creates a sense of community and safety. Furthermore, the hedging perimeter to the site will serve to buffer noise pollution from outside of the site, thus creating a peaceful, rural community feel to the development.

- 2.6 The general emphasis on the site is for the creation of small pockets of shared courtyards and the natural overlooking surveillance this brings. This in turn intends to create a sense of safety from crime and subsequently a sense of community. The individual dwellings are intended to echo the neighbouring village of Clayton and attempt to match its vernacular style, namely through the barn and cottage styles associated with the area. A conscientious attempt has been made by integrating 'car barns' into the development as opposed to standardised garage units. These car barns have been organised either individually beside a house, or in units, to create a definite link from car, to courtyard, to dwelling. This gives a practical layout familiar to the area. Each individual plot has been tailored to exploit its location and access the views to the surrounding countryside whilst simultaneously creating a strong connection between the internal and external private spaces created in each plot's rear garden.
- 2.7 The development is looking to create twenty four two storey dwellings each with provision of an external garages including subterranean garaging in strategic locations where it was felt that visual impact and car dominance should be minimised.
- 2.8 These should all give ample accommodation for family homes that echo the scale of dwellings in the Clayton area. With accommodation proposed on the footprint of the original buildings the layout will provide ample garden space for family life, together with a green buffer and village green both of which contribute to minimising the impact of the proposals on the neighbouring greenbelt.
- 2.9 The landscaping of the development will play an important part in how the development works. In particular the planting around the site and village green will blend the development into its landscape. Footpaths to the front doors will be made from a York stone to define access routes as private. The road and courts will be herring bone paved and change as the road moves into the site in order to create a visual sense of variation. This intends to give both pedestrians and drivers a sense of pedestrian priority, thus a mews court feel. One of the main landscaping details in creating the development's distinctiveness will be the green hedging around the development, which will strengthen the boundaries in a subtle manner and provide the sense of a rural community that the development intends to create.
- 2.10 Through conducting photographic surveys of the surrounding area and assessing the nearby villages, the appearance of the proposed development has evolved. Taking a number of details from the vernacular architecture of the wider area and reflecting that appearance across to the development as far as possible, features such as arches, gables and the courtyards reflect the local built environment. The materiality of the development is also an important factor that has been carefully considered to make the development blend with

the local vernacular as well as possible. Hence the use of both slate and tile along with the more obvious choice of stone. It is anticipated that the weathering of these materials and in particular the grain of the stone will reflect and enhance the character of the wider area.

- 2.11 The proposed development has been carefully developed to comply with building regulations and to provide level access for both able bodied and disabled persons. External entrances have been standardised at 1010mm while internal corridors, door ways and stairs have all been taken into consideration with regard to ease of use for disabled access. While all ground floor layouts incorporate a downstairs toilet facility, emergency service access is achievable via the main route through the site, and all houses are within 45m of a mews court turning head. The enclosure and many individual design considerations have gone into making this a safe, pedestrian friendly development with a real sense of community.

3.0 Policy

3.1 Planning policy statement 3 (PPS3)

PPS3 sets out the national policy framework for delivering the government housing objectives and this,

“compliments and should be read together with other relevant statements of national planning and housing policy (in particular PPS1 – *Delivering Sustainable Development* and the forthcoming PPS on climate change)”

3.2 Amongst its objectives, this PPS reflects the government’s commitment to improving:-

- a) “the supply of housing in all communities including rural area”
- b) “to create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural”

3.3 In addition, local planning authorities are encouraged to:-

“bring forward sustainable and environmentally friendly new housing developments”

3.4 PPS3 states that:-

“in providing for affordable housing in rural communities where opportunities for delivering affordable housing tends to be more limited, the aim should be to deliver high quality housing that contributes to the creation and maintenance of sustainable rural communities in market towns and villages”

“this requires planning at local and regional level, adopting a positive and pro-active approach which is informed by evidence with clear targets for the delivery of rural affordable housing”

3.5 Clearly PPS1 encourages the release of land/sites that satisfy these requirements and the application site due to its rural and yet highly sustainable location accords with these requirements.

3.6 In respect of this, PPS3 states that,

“local planning authorities should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable housing, including using a Rural Exception Site Policy. This enables small sites to be used specifically for affordable housing in small rural communities that would not normally be used for housing because for example, they are subject to policies of restraint”

3.7 Whilst in the context of the current application the proposals do not represent an ‘affordable housing ‘scheme’, a balance must be struck with the policy versus the sustainability of the wider community and the release of housing land.

- 3.8 Clearly the site is a brown field site and incongruous in terms of its use and environmental impact within a rural setting. Thus releasing the site for housing development contributes to delivering the housing targets afforded to the local authority, whilst providing significant environmental benefits.
- 3.9 PPS3 states that,
“Rural Exception Site policy should seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, whilst also ensuring that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed, inclusive communities”
- 3.10 Using land efficiently is also a key consideration and in the context of the site’s current ‘industrial’ activities in a rural location, this must also have a bearing on the appropriateness of the site and the decision to release it for housing delivery.
- 3.11 Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council’s Unitary Development Plan includes policies that give further guidance and justification for development of the application site.
- 3.12 UDP Policy GS7, ‘Development within the Greenbelt’ states that:-
“...development within the greenbelt will not be permitted unless it maintains the openness of and does not conflict with the purposes of and including land in the green belt”
- 3.13 Clearly the proposals seek to remove an inappropriate and highly intrusive industrial development from the greenbelt and to replace it with a domestic form of residential development similar in scale and character to the residential neighbouring settlements, i.e. Clayton.
- 3.14 The proposals seek to introduce a significant swathe of open space in the heart of the development and thus encourage a visual as well as physical link with the wider area greenbelt. Boundaries will be planted with a 10.0m deep buffer of mature tree and shrub planting that will form a ‘green’ envelope around the development and thus reduce the impact of the proposed development to subtle glimpses and framed views. In other words, the proposals will significantly enhance and improve the greenbelt setting and provide environmental improvement to the wider area.
- 3.15 The proposed form of the residential development will clearly preserve the openness and visual amenity of the greenbelt whilst enhancing its general quality. Due to the current inappropriate use of the site, the proposals represent,
“very special circumstances”
and replace “materials or design which result in significant harm to the visual amenity of the greenbelt (policy GS9)
- 3.16 In relation to the design and layout of the proposed housing development, the proposals have been informed by UDP Supplementary Planning Guidance, note 2.

- 3.17 Guidance note 2 states that:-
- “for a development to make a positive impact, it needs to provide an attractive environment in which people want to live and be successfully integrated into the wider community. To do this effectively new developments must fit in with their surroundings and be connected with them in terms of transport links”
- 3.18 Prior to preparing the design proposals, a wider area assessment of the *surrounding architectural character* was undertaken. The overall townscape and character of Thurnscoe and more significantly, of Clayton, was assessed to the extent that the application proposals derive from these spatial characteristics.
- 3.19 Scale, form, massing and design of the local vernacular within Clayton have been used to plan the design of the dwellings, courtyards and open spaces associated with the development.
- 3.20 Streetscape is vitally important and represents a significant consideration in the context of the design. Similarly, the spaces generated between the dwellings and the relative scale and massing are seen as important in defining the character of the wider area.
- 3.21 The development proposals are viewed in the context of their surroundings and include the neighbouring settlements, the rural setting and the openness of the greenbelt. This in turn relates to UDP policy GS13 in that the proposals must relate to,
- “the overall character and appearance of the area”
- Policy GS13 further states that the area will be,
- “conserved and whenever possible enhanced”
- 3.22 The development proposals seek to make efficient use of the land whilst balancing constraint by acknowledging the local character.
- 3.23 Consequently the proposals are based on achieving two storey family housing of a *mixed tenure*. The choice of materials is representative of the surrounding area and the layout achieves acceptable levels of residential amenity whilst avoiding car dominance and/or a standard form of suburban layout. In other words, the proposals respond to the site, the setting, the wider context and the desire to protect and enhance the greenbelt.
- 3.24 Careful attention and consideration has been given to landscaping and to the interface with the greenbelt through the introduction of large areas of open space, a 10.0m green buffer to the site and strategic glimpses/views in/out of the site.
- 3.24 Significant tree planting will be achieved through the development and in particular on prominent site frontages and at the interface with the greenbelt.
- 3.25 The proposals clearly comply with the UDP policy and PPS 3 which seeks

the release of 'windfall' sites such as this to:-

- a) Replace inappropriate forms of development, whilst
- b) Ensuring delivery of a mixed tenure of housing within the local authority.

3.26 On this basis the applicant seeks support from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and approval of the proposals.