

## **Epping Forest Quality Review Panel**

### **Report of Chair's Review meeting: St Peters Ongar**

**Friday 18 July 2025**

MS Teams video conference

#### **Panel**

Peter Maxwell (chair)  
Kamlesh Bava

#### **Attendees**

Cristina Preciado	Epping Forest District Council
Muhammad Rahman	Epping Forest District Council
Krishma Shah	Epping Forest District Council
Edward Bailey	Frame Projects
Lucy Block	Frame Projects
Yingli Tang	Frame Projects

#### **Observers**

Cllr Mary Dadd	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Ken Williamson	Epping Forest District Council

## **1. Project name, site address and application reference**

St Peter's Avenue / Shelley Close, Ongar, CM5 0BT  
Planning application reference: EPF/0040/25

## **2. Presenting team**

Gary Alston	ECD Architects
Jamie Ho	ECD Architects
Lizzie Tym	Epping Forest District Council
Omair Babar	Epping Forest District Council
Mark Allen	Create Consulting

## **3. Planning authority briefing**

The site is within the Shelley Close Estate at the northern tip of Ongar. It comprises Shelley Park, a mixed-use building with commercial units at the ground floor and residential above, three residential blocks, multiple garages and the associated parking / service areas. The site is not within the Green Belt, nor an Environment Agency Flood Zone, and there are no heritage assets within the site nor any protected trees.

The site is not allocated for housing in the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033. However, that does not mean that the proposed redevelopment is unacceptable in principle, and the Local Plan assumes that a small number of 'windfall' housing sites will come forward during the plan period. The site is also within the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan area, which is part of the council's Development Plan. The revised National Planning Policy Framework 2024 is a material consideration.

The proposal is for the demolition of the existing mixed-use block and garages, and the construction of 26 affordable homes and commercial units. The three existing residential blocks will be retained with new landscaping, refuse storage and parking.

Officers would welcome the panel's view on the proposed layout and landscape strategy, as well as access, servicing and parking. The panel is also invited to comment on the overall architectural quality and character of the scheme.



#### 4. Quality Review Panel's views

##### *Summary*

The Quality Review Panel supports the council's commitment to delivering a high-quality, fully affordable development that meets Passivhaus standards. The changes to the layout are generally welcomed, and the decision to keep the three existing residential blocks is positive for embodied carbon. However, adjustments to the layout are required to improve the definition and quality of public spaces. Outboarding shared staircases, combining Blocks A and B, and changing the servicing strategy for the commercial units, should all be considered. The proposed material palette and architectural language are positive. The design should be thoroughly costed, with detailed drawings submitted to provide assurance of what will be delivered.

The panel is pleased to see a strong emphasis on landscape, and finds the overall approach positive and compelling. Consolidating some of the parking areas, footpaths and small areas of soft landscape across the site, should be considered. This would help free up space to relocate the communal bin store for the retained blocks or provide additional parking. Climate change adaptation should be carefully considered, as well as the development of a robust and long-term maintenance strategy. Further community engagement is encouraged. The design of the public open space could provide a good codesign opportunity with the local community.

##### *Layout and massing*

- The panel applauds the continued commitment to delivering an exemplary development which is wholly dual aspect and affordable.
- Changes to the layout since the previous meeting are positive, including the decision to retain the three existing residential blocks, which will deliver a significant carbon saving for the scheme.
- The inclusion of commercial uses in Block A is positive, but the interface between public and private space to the rear needs more thought.
- Incorporating the servicing requirements for the commercial units within the building and changing the strategy so that the units are serviced from the front could be considered. This would help alleviate some of the pressure in the rear courtyard and allow public and private space to be more clearly defined.
- The proposed deck access for Blocks A and B is positive, but the ground floor of Block B should be rationalised to remove the single storey element that protrudes out to the north.
- The premise of the east / west route through the site is supported, but the location and quality of where the secure line is for the development and the blocks needs further thought.



- The panel suggests looking at bringing the secure line to the edge of Blocks A and B and similarly between A and C, to allow the space between these blocks to be more resident focussed. This could be open to others during daylight, but secure at night, given previous issues with anti-social behaviour.
- Further design development will be needed to any fencing solution to ensure they do not visually dominate the scheme.
- By resolving the above, this could also present opportunities for refinement and efficiency of the block design.
- Outboarding the circulation cores could help to relieve some of the pressure internally to improve the quality of circulation spaces and create additional ground floor space for ancillary uses. The panel recommends looking at Monier Road by Pitman Tozer Architects, and Hortsley in Seaford by RCKA, to help develop the commercial design.
- The panel suggests joining Blocks A and B, particularly along the western elevation. This may provide new opportunities to locate the cores, that could increase their efficiency, and depending on evacuation distances, potentially reduce the number of cores needed.
- The east to west connection could be maintained by incorporating a generous archway. This would also provide a clearer threshold between public, semi-public and private spaces.
- The regeneration of Bourne Estate by Matthew Lloyd Architects, is a good example of how to incorporate generous and activated archways that achieve these outcomes.
- Welcoming and distinct residential entrances should be provided, alongside more spacious lobbies with well-defined private thresholds.
- Clear and robust justification for the proposed housing mix should be included as part of the application, with clarity on how this addresses local need.

#### *Landscape and public realm*

- The continued focus on the landscape design is positive. Improving the connections to the park, the integration of attenuation ponds, the use of soft landscape, and changing the topography to add interest, are all welcome.
- Further detail should be provided to demonstrate how the landscape responds to climate change. This should include resilient species selection, sustainable drainage and clear maintenance strategy.

- The panel suggests that the landscape design should be reviewed generally, with areas be consolidated to provide high quality, functional and maintainable spaces.
- The number of pathways in the courtyard space between Blocks C, D and E should be rationalised, to help create more usable amenity space. Creating a single, wider path may also address the needs for emergency fire tender access.
- The location and impact of the bin store for Blocks C, D and E needs further consideration, including how mess and smells will be managed, to ensure it does not negatively affect the sense of arrival for residents or their use of the amenity space.
- Consolidating some of the parking spaces and small areas of landscaping, could also create an opportunity to relocate of the bin store to a less prominent location.
- Access and management of the community orchards should be considered, with thought on how anti-social behaviour can be designed out. This was not reviewed by the panel during the meeting.

### *Parking*

- A robust car parking strategy and management plan is needed to define how parking will be managed and who will enforce this, including the commercial units and visitor spaces.
- The panel suggests reviewing the northern area of the site to explore whether there is scope for additional parking to ease the pressure and visual impact of parking in more prominent areas.
- As the quantum of parking is a contentious issue, it will be important that additional ways of meeting local need are identified, including opportunities for car clubs, in line with the county and local guidance.
- Whatever parking solutions are chosen, the applicant should include consideration on how this is futureproofed, in case the quantum and need changes, and how these spaces could be rethought.

### *Sustainability*

- The panel supports the aspiration of delivering Passivhaus development here.
- It suggests that it could go further, particularly given it is a wholly affordable housing scheme. The panel suggests looking at precedents such as Carpenter's Yard, the Passivhaus and zero bills development by GS8 in Thornwood, to develop a similar approach for this scheme.



## *Architecture*

- Overall, the architectural approach is welcome and clearly grounded in existing typologies.
- The material palette is positive, and the influence of sustainability considerations is welcome. The eventual depth and articulation of facades will be important to the quality of the scheme.
- Further thought is needed to develop clear fronts and backs for Blocks A and B. The panel suggests identifying precedents with similar conditions to help inform the approach, such as Ryle Yard by Maccreanor Lavington and Witherford Watson Mann architects in North West Cambridge.
- The gable ends of Block A should positively contribute to connections and areas they front onto. Archio's Becontree Avenue scheme is a good example of incorporating visually engaging gable ends.
- Further work is needed to make key frontages, such as the commercial units in Block A, more celebratory and clearly defined.
- It is important that the scheme is thoroughly costed to provide assurance that what is shown is viable and can be delivered.
- The application should include detailed drawings, including bay studies and key conditions, to give the council assurance on the quality that is proposed. The requirements for samples, mock-ups and schedules should be conditioned by officers.

## *Community engagement and codesign*

- While the community engagement approach for the previous iteration of the scheme was positive, it is important that the local community is given a meaningful opportunity to influence these latest proposals.
- The panel suggests that the design and programming of the public open spaces could be a great opportunity to involve the community, beyond the statutory planning process.

## *Next steps*

- As the scheme has already been submitted for planning, the Quality Review Panel would like to see the applicant work with planning officers to resolve the issues identified in this report. The panel is available, if further engagement is needed.

