

Submission Draft Holwell Neighbourhood Plan

Comments on behalf of Magna Housing

Prepared by Intelligent Land

May 2021



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Intelligent Land has been instructed by Magna Housing, to submit comments to the Submission Draft Holwell Neighbourhood Plan consultation. The comments are both general and in respect of Magna's land interests within the plan area.
- 1.2 Magna Housing welcomes the decision of Holwell Parish Council to review and update the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan, and the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Magna considers it important, especially following the restructuring of local government in Dorset in 2019 and the creation of two large unitary Councils, that local areas maintain their distinctiveness and local character. Creation of robust and evidence-based neighbourhood plans are an excellent way of achieving these aims.
- 1.3 Magna Housing are one of the largest housing associations in Dorset with a significant housing stock across the county, as well as in Somerset, and ambitious plans to develop high quality homes for local people. Magna's housing strategy is to be the right homes, of the right quality, in the right place.
- 1.4 This document sets out some general comments of Magna Housing on the plan overall, and then provides specific comments in respect of Magna's specific land holding in the village.

2. General comments on the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1. As stated above, the Magna Housing wishes to congratulate the Holwell Parish Council and its neighbourhood plan group in their efforts to produce an updated Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.2. The vision and objectives of the plan are supported, notably that to meet diverse local housing needs, taking account of changing demographics and social requirements.
- 2.3. Magna notes the detailed work undertaken during the preparation of the plan to determine the type and tenure of housing which local people wish to see in the village. It is clear that a range of housing is needed, including market and affordable dwellings.
- 2.4. Policy H1 provides for a very limited amount of open market housing on just three plots within the village. Whilst these plots appear deliverable, they are also unlikely to provide housing of a type or price affordable for those on even average incomes. With average house prices in the area of approximately £410,000, and detached house prices averaging £524,000, housing on these infill plots is unlikely to meet most local needs.
- 2.5. The plan sets out its position in respect of affordable housing provision as follows:

In 2020 there were 11 affordable homes in the parish, all of which are managed by Magna Housing Association. A further 14 affordable homes are being constructed at Crouch Lane for Stonewater Housing Association, of which 10 will be for affordable rent, and the other four available for shared ownership. These are expected to be completed in the summer of 2021.

Although the Magna Housing Association site was not selected within the top three sites for housing, local residents indicated that they would support its use for affordable housing should a need arise. At the time of writing this plan, the likely need for affordable housing was more than accommodated for on the Crouch Lane affordable housing site adjoining the Nursery School (ref. WD/D/15/002295). However this may not be sufficient for the whole plan period of April 2017 to March 2031, and it is important that any identified need arising from a local community can be met. As such, the Magna site has been included in this plan. If developed, future occupancy will also be prioritised for people with a local connection (for example those living or working in the local area, or with close family in the area).

- 2.6. Magna Housing agrees with and supports this approach, which sets out a clear and deliverable strategy to ensure that local people in housing needs have a chance to remain within the parish in years to come.
- 2.7. The supporting policy (H3) in respect of affordable housing, does appear to be at odds with the strategy above:

Policy H3 : Affordable Housing Prioritised For Local People

The site to the rear of 7 and 8 The Plot (as shown on the policies map) is identified as the preferred location for a rural exception site for affordable housing for local people, and may be developed once 14 affordable homes at the Crouch Lane affordable housing site are fully occupied and there is an identified affordable housing need.

The site would be developed for 100% affordable housing, in accordance with the local plan policy for rural exception sites. A legal agreement will be sought with the developers and providers of affordable housing to ensure that it remains affordable in perpetuity and allocations are prioritised to people with a local connection to the parish of Holwell.

- 2.8 Whilst the strategy acknowledges that local housing need is already exceeding that provided for within the Crouch Lane site, the policy appears to restrict development of the site owned by Magna Housing to the rear of 7/8 The Plot until there is an identified housing need. As evidence suggests that such a need already exists, together with the completion of the development at Crouch Lane, there appears to be no need to caveat Policy H3 in such a way.
- 2.9 We set out below how Magna's site at The Plot is well placed to meet local needs, however it would make the plan more internally consistent and more positive, to reword Policy H3 as follows:

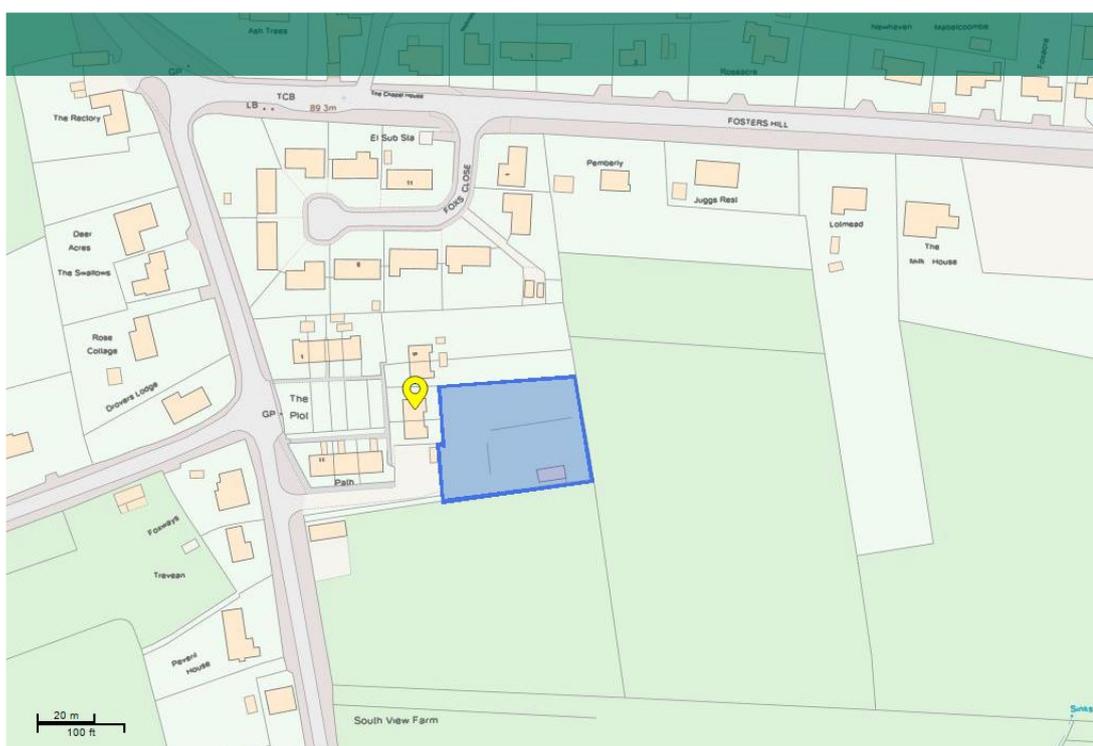
Policy H3: Affordable Housing Prioritised For Local People

The site to the rear of 7 and 8 The Plot (as shown on the policies map) is identified as the preferred location for a rural exception site for affordable housing for local people and will be brought forward once 14 affordable homes at the Crouch Lane affordable housing site are fully occupied.

The site should be developed for 100% affordable housing, in accordance with the local plan policy for rural exception sites. This affordable housing should be of a type and tenure to best meet local housing needs, and could include rented, shared ownership and low entry market housing in accordance with the national definition of affordable housing. A legal agreement will be sought with the developers and providers of affordable housing to ensure that it remains affordable in perpetuity and allocations are prioritised to people with a local connection to the parish of Holwell.

3. Potential of the Magna site rear of 7/8 The Plot.

- 3.1 Magna Housing already owns 11 properties within Holwell, and is thus familiar with the village, its character, and its housing needs.
- 3.2 The land to the rear of Nos 7 and 8 The Plot lies to the south of the village and comprises a small area of land of approximately 0.2 hectares immediately to the rear of the existing Magna properties. The site is self-contained within existing hedge lines and is unobtrusive when viewed from Fosters Hill within the rest of the village.
- 3.3 A location plan of the site is shown below.



- 3.4 The site is capable of delivering a modest development of around 7 dwellings of mixed sizes. Magna has experience of developing mixed tenure housing and would be willing to discuss how best to meet local needs, with a view to complementing rather than repeating the make-up of the Crouch Lane development by Stonewater Housing. Given the broader definition of affordable housing within the National Planning Policy Framework, this could include shared ownership or low entry market housing as well as rented homes.
- 3.5 A simple indicative layout for the site is shown below as an example, however Magna would wish to engage positively with the Parish Council to develop a more detailed layout and design for the site.



4. **Next steps.**

- 4.1 Magna Housing welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Holwell Neighbourhood Plan consultation.
- 4.2 Magna Housing are one of the largest housing associations in Dorset with a significant housing stock across the county, as well as in Somerset, and ambitious plans to develop high quality homes for local people. Magna's housing strategy is to be the right homes, of the right quality, in the right place.
- 4.3 Whilst generally supportive of the Neighbourhood Plan, Magna Housing considers that their site at The Plot could be brought forward in the short term to address local housing need not met through the Crouch Lane development.
- 4.4 Magna is open to discussions on the type and tenure of affordable housing which could be provided, including low entry market housing of a type very unlikely to be delivered on the three infill plots identified in the plan. Subject to some suggested rewording, Magna supports the policy approach of the Plan and would wish for further discussions with the Parish Council on how the site at The Plot can be developed to meet local needs.