



Townsend Farm, Poulshot – Gaiger Brothers Proposed Redevelopment

May 2023 Update to Poulshot Parish Council & Local Community

SUMMARY

(1) INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this May 2023 update is to summarise the feedback received from the July 2022 consultation, report on activities that have since been progressed by Gaiger Brothers and advise on our proposed next steps. The July 2022 consultation material provides further background to the proposals and site information, and is still available together with a copy of this update alongside supporting plans and appendices via our website at <https://gaigerbros.co.uk/townsend-farm-poulshot-consultation>

(2) MAY 2023 UPDATE

(a) Poulshot Village Public Consultation (July 2022): following the 7th July 2022 event, there was an open period of consultation through to 22nd July during which the local community were able to provide feedback to the information provided including the initial Concept Site (layout) Plan illustrating a housing development of 14 new homes.

Approximately 35-40 people attended the event, there were 144 webpage views during the 8th to 22nd July 2022 period and 22 feedback forms were completed and returned in addition to a small number of email responses. The following table summarises the responses:

	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A new use needs to be found for this redundant dairy farm	11	8	2	0	1
A residential redevelopment at this location would be more appropriate than an alternative approach providing commercial / industrial / storage uses	12	6	2	2	0
The existing red brick 'coach house' building at the south of the site from c. 1880 should be retained	14	5	0	2	1
The proposed farmyard/ courtyard style layout broadly following position of existing buildings and structures is right for the site	6	13	1	1	1
The overall proposed housing numbers (14 dwellings) is suitable for the site	4	11	1	3	3
The proposed housing mix of 7 smaller and medium sized dwellings and 7 larger dwellings is about right	3	10	3	3	3
The housing (density) should be concentrated more towards the road and follow the general position of existing buildings with larger open gardens in the northern section of the site (as shown)	3	9	6	3	1
The number (4) and type of affordable housing to meet local need is about right (2 x	3	10	7	1	1

2 beds and 2 x 3 beds including shared ownership and affordable rent)					
The heights of dwellings (predominantly 2 storey in the southern and central part of the site and 1 / 1.5 storey to the north/east) is right for the site	6	12	2	0	2
The provision of a footpath connection through the site to Broadway Lane, coupled with extending the existing footway on Poulshot Road from Mill Lane to Townsend will improve local walking routes	10	10	1	0	1

The final part of the feedback form also provided respondents the opportunity to raise any additional comments. These have been reviewed and collated into a list as set out at Appendix 1 with further assessment and analysis included at Appendix 2 available via our website at <https://gaigerbros.co.uk/public-consultation-may-2023>

Gaiger Brothers response: we have been grateful to the local community for the engagement to date including attendance at the July 2022 consultation and written feedback. We have reviewed the feedback received and have used this to inform our proposed changes to the Concept Site (layout) Plan, as outlined further at (c) below.

(b) Pre-application submission to Wiltshire Council planning department (received end January 2023): this was submitted in early August 2022 including the July 2022 Concept Site (layout) Plan and related background information. We received a response from Wiltshire Council at the end of January 2023 following which we have reviewed the feedback, unsuccessfully sought to meet with the case officer and have made changes to the July 2022 proposals in response to comments made by various officers.

Gaiger Brothers response:

The broad conclusion from the case officer was that they were not supportive of the principle of housing at Townsend Farm:

- Their view was the site and Townsend locality “*does not form part of the settlement of Poulshot*”, and even if the site was considered part of Poulshot that the proposal does not qualify as “infill” development – therefore the proposals would be contrary to policy (Core Policies 1 & 2 of the current Wiltshire Core Strategy). Linked to this, concerns were raised regarding the limited sustainable transport opportunities due to the site location and over-reliance on travel by car.
- They acknowledged there is no current policy for dealing with the re-development of land including a now redundant farmyard at this location and suggested consideration of other land use options including: employment, tourism, cultural and community uses.
- They acknowledged that “*the benefits of bringing redundant farm buildings back into use would be a benefit that would be factored in as part of the planning balance alongside other benefits such as affordable housing provision etc.*”

Notwithstanding these ‘in-principle’ policy reason for objection, comments from other technical officers in relation to Ecology, Highways, Conservation, Drainage, Urban Design, Housing were more positive and broadly concluding that related issues could be addressed through a well-designed scheme and supporting technical planning reports.

The Urban Design officer was supportive of the design approach with frontage development to Poulshot Road, retaining the coach house, retaining views to the wider landscape, providing a standoff to existing residents, new walking links and design commitment to respect the Conservation Area status. However, they have encouraged a review of the Concept Site (layout) Plan, including:

- the central ‘focal space’ within the development to improve design and not be dominated by rear property boundaries and/or car parking
- plot sizes to achieve a more even / better graduation of changes in plot sizes across the site, with a concern that those fronting Poulshot Road were too small and those at the rear of the site too large
- ‘better use’ of the site through delivery of more houses within the scheme
- improve the legibility of the footpath through the site
- the purpose and role of the ‘wedge’ of (excess) land to the north and a better approach to integrating the site into the wider landscape

It was disappointing that the Wiltshire Council response failed to recognise our comparison of the principle of this proposal at Townsend Farm with other former farmyard redevelopments in Wiltshire including: Higher Green Farm, Poulshot; Harestone House, East Kennett; Manor Farm, Winterbourne Monkton; and Manor Farm, West Overton.

We were also disappointed that the Wiltshire Council response failed to acknowledge the extensive early community engagement and broad support for the proposed redevelopment, including by the immediate site neighbours.

The response also advocated consideration of alternative land uses, we consider that there is no known demand for alternative tourism, cultural or community uses, and we do not believe that an employment redevelopment would be appropriate in this location. This was confirmed by the July 2022 community consultation feedback and would also be likely to give rise to significantly more traffic than our housing proposal, a stated local concern.

We acknowledged as part of the July 2022 public consultation that *“In planning policy terms, Poulshot is designated within the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy (current adopted Local Plan) as a ‘Small’ village and accordingly would typically only be expected to accommodate small scale infill development. This proposal at Townsend Farm would not conform with that broad policy direction, however, there remains a need to assess the site as a former farmyard and how best to reuse the site.”*

All planning decisions, whilst being considered against the Development Plan, are also the subject of ‘other material planning considerations’ to arrive at a balanced planning judgement. We remain encouraged by the lack of significant technical design concerns raised in the pre-application response and it remains our view that a well-designed housing scheme at this location positively responding to both the local community feedback and Wiltshire Council officer feedback provides the best and most sustainable opportunity to remediate the site, deliver needed local housing including affordable housing and other local community benefits.

(c) Review and update Concept Site (layout) Plan

We have reviewed the July 2022 Concept Site (layout) Plan in light of the feedback received, seeking to balance the various suggestions whilst continuing to be guided by our original key design objectives which we believe remain relevant and appropriate for this site:

- Contain development within the broad existing building & structures footprint

- Respect the privacy of neighbouring properties
- Remediate and naturalise the site and provide a robust drainage and landscape strategy
- Deliver a scale and form of development responding to the Conservation Area status & general locality whilst generating sufficient value to cover associated site demolition, remediation and wider development costs

We have worked through a number of design iterations and have presented below an extract of our revised May 2023 Concept Site (layout) plan with additional site Landscape detail. A full scale version of this plan together with the following additional plans are available via our website at <https://gaigerbros.co.uk/public-consultation-may-2023>:

- Proposed Sketch Site Layout (MWA drawing 21146.112.A) – including accommodation schedule and the comparison with the existing site structures
 - Updated version of July 2022 Consultation Board no 8
- Proposed Sketch Site Layout comparison with July 2022 Consultation version (21146-104-G) (MWA drawing 21146.112.Comp)
- Context: Materials, details and heights (MWA drawing 21146.107.C) – showing updated indicative building heights
 - Updated version of July 2022 Consultation Board no 9



The primary changes when compared to the July 2022 proposal include:

1. Alignment of plots 2 to 5 which previously all faced onto Poulshot Road and backed onto the central focal space within the site – this has enabled improved parking and

garden areas for plots 2 to 5 whilst retaining building frontage to Poulshot Road (plot 2, as well as plots 1 and 14) and allowing building frontage (plot 5) to be introduced to the southern side of the central focal space

2. Relocation of the pond and the introduction of a swale – this has optimised the drainage strategy for the site and enables better coordination within the landscaped area on the western part of the site. This will help achieved improved landscape design and biodiversity outcomes, whilst also providing a better footpath connection to Broadway / Byde Mill Lane to the west. To achieve this, the red line has been extended to the west, this land falls within the same land ownership. This has in turn enabled the ‘drawing in’ of the site northern boundary, reducing the footprint of the revised scheme and with the intention of returning this part of the site into agricultural use.
3. By relocating the pond onto the area where x2 building plots were previously proposed, plots 11, 12 and 13 now provide an improved development frontage to the northern side of the central focal space.
4. The built form of the northern most unit (plot 9) has been brought back into the site by approximately 10 metres reducing the potential development visual impacts to the north, and a modest reduction in the overall building footprint across the site has been achieved.
5. An improved balance of plot sizes across the site is achieved across the site including a higher number of more modest 2-3 bedroom homes and a reduced number of larger properties set within large plots.

This layout continues to provide 14 new homes including:

- 10 open market houses and 4 affordable houses, complying with the Wiltshire Council policy requirements for 30% provision and the outcomes of the Poulshot Housing Needs Survey
- A mix of 2/3 bed affordable houses, and 2-5 bed market houses, including x1 bungalow at Plot 1 through the retained, converted and extended Coach House

We recognise that there were a number of community feedback responses indicating a preference for a smaller number of new homes, however we believe that on balance the revised scheme retaining 14 new homes is a well-considered and appropriate design-led response to a number of key factors including:

- It is a large site with significant demolition and remediation costs
- The number of homes and proposed layout responds to the immediate site surroundings and is proportionate to the site area and neighbouring community
- It delivers a policy compliant number of affordable housing which also aligns with the outcomes of the recently completed Poulshot Housing Needs Survey
- The majority of the community feedback responses agreed that this is an appropriate scale of development at this location

Scheme Benefits

We believe that the benefits that this proposal could deliver include:

1. Remediation of the site including the removal of existing agricultural buildings many of which are in poor repair, cleaning up any existing site contamination and address noise, smell, flies and rodent issues associated with the previous dairy farm operation and which consistently adversely affected the immediate site neighbours

2. Provision of new open market and affordable homes enabling existing residents to up or down size from their existing home and bringing new people into the village providing additional support to existing facilities and amenities including a range of active community groups and the much-valued village public house
3. Improve flood risk and drainage management introducing a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) designed to current standards & substantially reducing the impermeable area on the site compared to the existing site, providing betterment by significantly reducing runoff rates and volumes and surface water flood risk
4. Enhancing the character of the Conservation Area and the north-side setting of the Grade II Listed Townsend Farmhouse would be improved
5. Landscape and Biodiversity improvements through the removal of extensive concrete and buildings, replaced with a substantially reduced building footprint and delivery of a comprehensive site landscaping strategy maximising ecological benefits
6. Improved pedestrian connections through a new connection to Broadway / Byde Mill Lane to the west, and a new footway on Poulshot Road connecting existing provision at Townsend through to Mill Lane
7. Opportunity to support Poulshot Parish Council ambitions for road safety and speed reduction measures in the village, proposed to include development funded delivery of a new village gateway traffic calming feature at the southern entrance to the village and a complementary feature to the north subject to agreement with the local highway authority

Design Detail – no further work has been undertaken in respect of detailed design matters at this stage beyond the very early information provided at the July 2022 consultation event. We note that the Wiltshire Council Conservation officer stated that “.....I would suggest that the new development should not try to imitate an historic farmstead design reference (i.e. barn style) but to create high quality house design which reflects the character, scale and form of housing in the village.”

This will require further consideration alongside a more detailed review of building materials which we will give further consideration to following receipt of the Poulshot Parish Council feedback, expected following the 9th May Parish Council meeting.

(3) NEXT STEPS

(a) Review Poulshot Parish Council (& any wider community) further feedback

This update will be posted on the Poulshot Parish Council website as a supporting information item ahead of the 9th May 2023 Parish Council meeting.

It will also be posted on the Gaiger Brothers website at <https://gaigerbros.co.uk/public-consultation-may-2023>.

We would welcome feedback from Poulshot Parish Council following the 9th May and would be grateful if this could include a response to the following questions:

- Do you have any queries or concerns regarding the extent of community engagement summarised within this May 2023 update?
- Do you have any feedback on the revised May 2023 Concept Site (layout) plan?
- Do you agree with the Scheme Benefits listed above and/or are there any other issues/considerations you would like us to consider?

Whilst we would encourage members of the local community to attend the 9th May Poulshot Parish Council meeting, Gaigers Brothers are pleased to reconfirm our standing offer to respond to any individual queries from the local community remains open, and that any

questions or queries could be directed toward James Gaiger (james@gaigerbros.co.uk) or Nick Church (nick@gaigerbros.co.uk) or by calling the Gaiger offices on 01380 722412.

(b) Prepare Planing Drawings and Reports, and Submission of Planning Application

Following receipt of Poulshot Parish Council and any further wider community feedback, and subject to that remaining broadly supportive of the redevelopment proposal, it is our intention begin preparing detailed drawings and finalising supporting technical planning reports ahead of a full planning application submission within the next 2-3 months. There will be a further opportunity for anyone to make comment on the application at this stage as part of the formal planning consultation process.

It is difficult to predict how this would then be determined by Wiltshire Council and the associated timescales but at this stage we would anticipate it could take 6-12 months to secure a decision on the planning submission.