

# HOLMHURST ST MARY

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# HOLMHURST ST MARY

## Introduction

11.98 The Holmhurst St Mary area is bounded by The Ridge, Harrow Lane, the Conquest Hospital and residential development to the south, covering a total area of 24 hectares. Apart from the previously developed land at Harrow Lane Caravan Park and the site of the classrooms adjoining the former Holmhurst St Mary Convent, the remainder of the site is greenfield land and is seen as an important development opportunity suitable to accommodate significant new housing development. The site comprises the following main land uses:

- The former Holmhurst St Mary convent and associated buildings. The main part of the convent is a Grade II Listed Building, to which have been added more recent additions. The immediate curtilage of the complex includes a stone terrace and ornamental and planted garden. The convent building has now been converted to flats and a small amount of housing built in the grounds.
- The private grounds of Holmhurst St Mary comprising open meadows, preserved woodland and several small ponds. Much of this land is a designated Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) and provides a valuable wildlife habitat.
- The Harrow Lane recreation ground comprising playing fields and two small pavilions.
- The Harrow Lane Caravan Park, now vacant, comprising over 170 pitches and several buildings.
- Land in the north-west of the site comprising an open grass field.
- Three public footpaths cross the site.

## Proposed Development

11.99 The site has good landscape quality but is considered capable of development, provided it is sensitively handled. It is considered suitable for a mix of uses, including housing, open space and recreation. It is important that the design and development of the site is undertaken as a comprehensive scheme. The Borough Council therefore commissioned consultants to undertake work to assess the development potential of the site and to produce a Planning and Development Brief.<sup>1</sup> The resulting Brief provides detailed guidelines for the intended development of the site and will be treated as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The main aspects of the Brief are set out in the supporting text below.

*<sup>1</sup>Holmhurst St Mary Planning and Development Brief*

11.100 \_\_\_\_\_ With the exception of the Harrow Lane Caravan Site, which now has planning permission for housing and is being developed, the main part of the land at Holmhurst St Mary comprises greenfield land which is allocated for development in accordance with Policies HSM1 and HSM2 for the period 2006–2011. This is, however, subject to present and continuing monitoring of the Local Plan and its review. Matters to be taken into account at these stages include the rate of development on allocated and other land, the densities achieved and progress towards the regeneration of the ‘String of Pearls’ sites comprising the Millennium Community. To that extent, therefore, Holmhurst St Mary is regarded as “reserve” land. The Council considers that this strategy accords with its proposals for the regeneration of the more deprived, inner wards of the Borough and with national policies for a search sequence in the identification of suitable land for development and the managed release of land for housing.

### **POLICY HSM1**

#### **Holmhurst St Mary – Development**

**Land at Holmhurst St Mary is allocated for housing development as part of a comprehensive approach to the development of the**

site. Provision is made for the development of the Harrow Lane Caravan Park, which comprises previously developed land, separately and earlier than the remaining greenfield land in accordance with Policy H1. As part of these proposals, provision will be made for the retention of a suitable amount of open space for landscape and nature conservation purposes and to provide opportunities for public recreation.

## General Development Principles

11.101 The Holmhurst St Mary site occupies a prominent site on the edge of the built-up area, close to the AONB. Parts of the site are highly visible from the surrounding area and most of it is a very attractive landscape. The site adjoins the Listed Building complex at Holmhurst St Mary, and includes important areas of public open space and wildlife habitat. All these factors have been taken into account in the development guidelines which represent a balance between providing for housing requirements, and preserving the attractive nature of the site.

## Housing

11.102 Planning permission was granted in 2000 for the conversion of the former Holmhurst St Mary convent to flats and the construction of additional housing within the curtilage of the Convent. This development is now complete. Within the remaining area, there are two sites allocated for housing:-

- (i) The former Harrow Lane Caravan Site (Policy H1, site 44). Planning permission has now been granted for the development of this site which comprises previously developed land. It is considered appropriate that this site is developed separately and earlier than the remaining greenfield land at Holmhurst St Mary.
- (ii) The remainder of the land at Holmhurst St Mary allocated for housing (Policy H1, site 69) comprises mainly greenfield land within and adjoining the grounds of the former Convent and includes a small area of previously developed land comprising prefabricated buildings and a Grade 11\* listed statue of Queen Anne. This land is proposed to be developed at different densities as set out in the Planning and Development Brief, providing an estimated total of 197 dwellings. As mentioned in paragraph 11.100 above, it is proposed to treat this land as a “reserve site” which will be released for development subject to continued monitoring of the Local Plan and its intended review on adoption.

11.103 On the sites above, provision should be made for affordable housing as part of the development, as set in Policy H6. On the allocated greenfield site, the Council will seek a proportion (30%) of the housing to be provided in the form of affordable dwellings.

## Open Space

11.104 It is proposed to retain a large part of the land at Holmhurst St Mary as open space for landscape and nature conservation reasons and for the benefit of the wider public.

- The majority of the existing SNCI will be protected from development in view of its landscape and ecological value. There will be managed points of public access and a strategy for future maintenance. This should be developed in association with English Nature and local residents.

- Public open space for informal use is to be provided as part of the housing development.
- The existing Harrow Lane recreation ground will be retained as playing fields.
- The land in the north-west of the site, to the north of the recreation ground, will remain undeveloped, due to its visual prominence, particularly from areas within the AONB.
- The ornamental garden surrounding the listed building to be enhanced to provide open space for use by residents of the converted convent and new houses.

## **Nature Conservation**

11.105 The area includes a Site of Nature Conservation Importance, including protected species, meadows and substantial woodlands. All proposed development should take into account the protected species and their foraging areas. It is proposed to retain the majority of the existing SNCI as open space.

## **Sustainable Transport Provision**

11.106 It is intended that the new development is designed to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes. The site is located along a defined public transport corridor and is therefore well located in terms of frequent and reliable bus services. In addition to bus services passing the site, the design of the development will provide the opportunity for the routing of bus services through the new housing development.

11.107 A network of footpaths and cycleways will be provided throughout the development, with priority of movement given to pedestrians and cyclists throughout the residential area, with the exception of the main distributor road.

## **Highway Access**

11.108 Following a comprehensive analysis of highway issues undertaken as an input to the consultants' study, a preferred option for highway access has been developed and set out within the Planning and Development Brief.

11.109 The B2093 (The Ridge) and Harrow Lane should provide the main vehicular access routes to the site. Access to the proposed housing on the caravan site will be provided from Harrow Lane. Access to the remainder of the housing development will be from The Ridge in the vicinity of the existing access to the Holmhurst St

Mary Convent. Provision is also made for a bus/emergency vehicle link between the two housing developments, to be provided when the later greenfield development takes place.

## **POLICY HSM2**

### **Holmhurst St Mary – Highway Access**

**Planning permission for residential development at Holmhurst St Mary will not be granted for any proposal that does not include:–**

- (a) Improvement to the existing access from Harrow Lane into the former Harrow Lane Caravan Park site to serve the proposed housing development on the site;**
- (b) Construction of a suitable access to the remainder of Holmhurst St Mary from The Ridge;**
- (c) Provision of a bus/emergency vehicle link between Harrow Lane Caravan Park and the remainder of Holmhurst St Mary; and**
- (d) A full traffic impact assessment.**

## **Service and Infrastructure Provision**

11.110 Developers will be expected to provide or contribute to infrastructure and services as set out in the Planning and Development Brief.

