

04th December 2020

Dear Shiplake resident,

We are writing to provide you with an update on the plans for our Regency Place development, off Reading Road in Shiplake.

We aim to build good relationships with the communities in which we operate and build, and would like to assure you that we value all the feedback that we have received. We wanted to write to all residents of Shiplake to update you on the current situation, explain the history of the site, the work we have carried out so far, and the next steps.

Most importantly, we would like to reassure you that we recognise and understand that the drainage strategy is a cause of concern for residents. I would like to assure you that we are listening to the feedback from the local community as we continue to work with consultants to investigate a number of options. We will provide all Shiplake residents with an update early next year and are committed to engaging with the community prior to a formal submission being made to the local authority.

The history of the development

Taylor Wimpey bought the land at Thames Farm from the previous landowner in October 2018. At the point of purchase, the site already had outline planning permission for 95 homes.

Before we acquired the land, intrusive soil and ground investigations were carried out by a technical specialist we appointed. The findings of these investigations concluded that there was a low risk of dissolution features, or sinkholes, on the site.

Following acquisition of the site, and consultation with the local community and Shiplake and Harpsden Parish Councils, we submitted a reserved matters planning application to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) in January 2019, following a public consultation process. The reserved matters application was prepared in line with the conditions approved in the outline application and in response to feedback we received. As part of the reserved

matters application, we submitted a proposed drainage strategy which was based on the results of the soil and ground investigations that had previously been carried out.

In April 2019, we submitted amendments to the reserved matters application to SODC, which responded to comments raised by Shiplake and Harpsden Parish Councils and the local community. At this point, the Parish Councils and local community members who had commented on our proposals were re-consulted by SODC. The reserved matters application was approved by SODC in May 2019.

In September 2019, we carried out soakage testing to support our drainage strategy. This testing identified possible dissolution features, or sinkholes, where voids appeared during the testing process. Works were immediately stopped on site, pending further ground investigations, which identified some unstable ground conditions, including the risk of dissolution features, or sinkholes, which had not been identified in previous reports.

Next steps

Since the results of our ground investigations in December 2019, we have been working with specialist geotechnical consultants to identify a solution for filling the sinkholes on the site. We would like to assure you that we take great care and attention when it comes to protecting existing habitats and biodiversity at our developments, and that the agreed solution is safe and will protect the existing trees and wildlife on the site.

The findings of our ground investigations have meant that it has been necessary to revise the drainage strategy in order to discharge the relevant planning conditions. We have been working closely with SODC, Thames Water and the Environment Agency since January 2020 in order to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place.

Our initial proposal to redesign the drainage focused on the installation of deep bore soakaways to manage the surface water on the site. Whilst deemed technically possible, this proposal was not supported by SODC and its stakeholders, based on concerns around the geology of the site and the long-term maintenance strategy. On this basis, we are currently exploring a number of alternative options, including a proposal to drain the surface water off site.



I hope this helps to alleviate some concerns regarding the development and I would like to once again reassure you that we are committed to taking on board your feedback and keeping residents updated prior to finalising our drainage strategy for the site.

If you have any further questions then please email us on shiplake@taylorwimpey.com

Kind regards,

Novraj Sidhu
Managing Director
Taylor Wimpey West London