

## STATEMENT B2 – Mark Pepper

Statement from Mark Pepper, Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Forum

April 2021

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Mark Pepper, I am chair of Lawrence Weston's Neighbourhood Planning Forum, Development Manager at Ambition Lawrence Weston, and a lifelong local resident.

The Astry Close housing project is a nationally leading example of Community Led Housing, and a case study in how housing is simply better when decisions around delivery are put in the hands of local people and designed to meet local needs.

These proposals have been driven from the grass roots of our community here in Lawrence Weston. The project itself rose from our community's own identification of housing needs in the 2013 Community Plan, and a desire that local housing developments reflect local housing needs (alongside city-wide priorities). Our community also went through a lengthy and inclusive process in 2017 to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan which reflects the community's needs and views in its policies. The Astry Close scheme has emerged from this same conversation.

The design presented to you today reflects strong local input and decision-making at every stage, from the initial housing needs survey, to consultation on final designs. The project has been truly 'co-designed' with residents of Lawrence Weston through a series of interactive, participative design workshops, resident tours of the site as well as other city wide sites, and detailed consultation with local residents and neighbours.

Residents attended pre-application discussions, and influenced the concessions and design changes made in response to this useful process. The project was presented to the Local Planning Forum on a very regular basis, with comments received and incorporated into the proposals. At every stage, the designs have been modified to reflect local needs, concerns, and most importantly, a local vision for the community we wish to live in.

As a result, we received 46 statements of support for the scheme from local residents, councillors, the Planning Forum, and not a single objection.

Of the 30 or more community led housing schemes being developed by groups across the city, Astry Close is one the strongest in the consistency and depth of the community led approach. It is rightly held as an exemplar of grassroots leadership and co-design, and has inspired groups and neighbourhoods across the city – and the UK – to follow suit.

This approach has built a sense of partnership between Lawrence Weston and the city – in line with the One City approach which calls for communities to participate fully in the civic process to achieve our shared goals and values. Ambition Lawrence Weston have demonstrated how this approach can be brought to life with the Astry Close community led housing scheme and I hope the committee will support our efforts by approving the scheme.