



Planning Committee

Church Hill Ward

2nd March 2010

**2009/271/FUL PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT CONSISTING OF 39 NO. TWO BED, 16 NO. THREE BED, 13 NO. FOUR BED HOMES AND 21 NO. 2 BED FLATS
FORMER MARLFIELD FARM FIRST SCHOOL, REDSTONE CLOSE, CHURCH HILL NORTH, REDDITCH
APPLICANT: REDDITCH CO-OPERATIVE HOMES
EXPIRY DATE: 24TH MARCH 2010**

The author of this report is Sharron Williams, Planning Officer (DC), who can be contacted on extension 3372 (sharron.williams@redditchbc.gov.uk) for more information.

Site Description

(See additional papers for Site Plan)

The site is located at the end of a cul de sac in Redstone Close and comprised the former Marfield Farm school building which has since been demolished. The demolished buildings were generally single and two storeys in height. The surrounding land within the application site is generally grassed with some tree/shrub planting and former tarmac play areas. The perimeter of the site is generally secured with fencing and established tree / hedge planting.

The former buildings, tarmac play areas and car parking bay are undesignated in the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 (the same as the adjacent residential areas). However, the remaining area that is grassed and landscaped is designated as Primarily Open Space in Local Plan No.3. The site is generally level with a slight slope down north to south of the site.

Proposal Description

The proposal is for 79 dwellings, comprising of 21 No. 2 bedroom flats, 39 No. 2 bedroom houses, 16 No. 3 bedroom houses and 3 No. 4 bedroom houses.

The 21 flats form a 3 storey apartment block whilst the remaining housing would be sited in assorted rows, semi detached properties, as well as a crescent within the layout.

Three particular house types are proposed. Two house types are particularly unique and apply to two plots each, whilst the third house type is slightly varied within the rows of houses to create interest to the general streetscene.

Recycled House – Intended to utilise 70% of recycled material which would be reflected in the elevation of this house type. Gabion baskets with reclaimed stone would be used for the walls whilst reclaimed timber shingle or slate tiles would be used for the roof.

Jennifer House – Is a house type generally devised from the imagination of a West Midlands school child as a result of a school competition and is intended to reflect aspirations of an eco friendly dwelling finished in timber cladding and possibly a sedum roof (subject to suitability).

General House Type – This house type would have an asymmetrical roofline with a gable on the front / rear elevation, and protruding box windows on the opposite front / rear elevation. Some of these plots would be 2½ storeys in height to create a varied roofline on the streetscene. Again, materials would be finished in timber with a suitable colour stain. A sedum roof may be used on some of these plots dependent upon suitability; otherwise alternative roof tiles would be used.

The apartment block – This is intended to be finished in vertical timber cladding for the walls and stained in a suitable colour, whilst a metal clad roof is proposed.

The layout of the access road would be a shared surface for pedestrians and vehicles. Access to the site would generally be via Redstone Close. However, 10 dwellings would be accessed via Upperfield Close. As well as the shared surface access roads, two secure pedestrian entrances are proposed to the north and south of the site and would link to existing footpaths.

To the west of the site, the development creates a courtyard that provides a green communal area for the potential occupiers as well as off street car parking.

A wildlife corridor is also proposed along the western boundary to create an important wildlife corridor link to adjacent open space areas that exist north and south of the site. Allotment areas and orchard planting as well as an edible wall (climbing edible plants trailing up the building) are also proposed as part of the overall scheme.

The application is supported by a:-
Design & Access Statement, Landscape Design, Arboricultural Survey, Extended Phase I Habitat Survey, Reptile Survey, Great Crested Newt Mitigation Strategy, Code for Sustainable Homes Ecological Assessment, Transport Statement, Travel Plan, Flood Risk Assessment, and Geotechnical Assessment. The applicant is also agreeable to enter into a S106 Agreement.

Relevant Key Policies

All planning applications must be considered in terms of the planning policy framework and all other relevant material considerations (as set out in the legislative framework). The planning policies noted below can be found on the following websites:

www.communities.gov.uk

www.wmra.gov.uk

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

National Planning Policy

- PPS1 (& accompanying documents) Delivering sustainable development
- PPS3 Housing
- PPG13 Transport
- PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

Regional Spatial Strategy

- SR1 Climate Change
- SR2 Creating Sustainable Communities
- SR3 Sustainable Design and Construction
- CF2 Housing beyond the Major Urban Areas
- CF3 Level and Distribution of New Housing Development
- CF5 The reuse of land and buildings for housing
- CF6 Making efficient use of land
- CF7 Delivering affordable housing
- EN2 Energy Conservation
- T3 Walking and Cycling

Worcestershire County Structure Plan

- SD.1 Prudent Use of Natural Resources
- SD.2 Care for the Environment
- SD.3 Use of Previously Developed Land
- CTC.5 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- CTC.6 Green Open Spaces and Corridors
- D.5 The Contribution of Previously Developed Land to meeting the Housing Provision
- D.6 Affordable Housing Needs
- D.43 Crime Prevention and Community Safety
- T.1 Location of Development
- T.10 Cycling and Walking
- IMP.1 Implementation of Development

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3

- CS.1 Prudent Use of Natural Resources
- CS.2 Care for the Environment
- CS.6 Implementation of Development
- CS.7 The Sustainable Location of Development
- B(HSG).5 Affordable Housing
- B(BE).13 Qualities of Good Design
- B(BE).19 Green Architecture
- B(BE).28 Waste Management

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B(NE).1	Overarching Policy of Intent
B(NE).1a	Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
B(NE).3	Wildlife Corridors
L.2	Education Provision
C(T).12	Parking Standards
R.1	Primarily Open Space

Supplementary Planning Guidance / Documents (SPG / SPD)

Encouraging Good Design
Affordable Housing Provision
Education Contributions
Open Space Provision

Relevant Site Planning History

Appn. no	Proposal	Decision	Date
2007/265	Erection of extra care retirement village – Housing for the elderly (affordable housing)	Resolved at Planning Committee to approve the application subject to the completion of a S106 Agreement. Application disposed of by RBC due to the absence of a completed S106 Agreement within the appropriate timescale.	25 March 2008

Public Consultation Responses

Responses against

46 duplicate comments and 10 individual comments received raising the following points:

- Main access would be via Redstone Close which is a narrow road.
- Major disruption to the area with large, noisy HGVs causing mud on the narrow road.
- Danger to cyclists and pedestrians.
- Increase in noise levels from building work and trucks accessing and leaving the site.
- Danger/safety for children playing outside in Redstone Close due to increased traffic.
- Parking of residents vehicles, with one car space on site – what happens to extra vehicles associated with the site.
- Emergency vehicles could be severely compromised with an increase in on road parking.
- Is it possible to exit / access the site without using Redstone Close?

- Development would have a detrimental impact on the Close which is a cul de sac.
- Proposal is overdevelopment of a small site.
- Buildings will be elevated in relation to existing property and overlook existing properties.

Petition

A petition of 30 signatures has been received from residents of Redstone Close stating objection to the proposal, however, reasons for the objection have not been stated.

Other issues which are not material planning considerations have been raised, but are not reported here as they cannot be considered in the determination of this application.

Consultee Responses

County Highway Network Control

The Adoptions Engineer has highlighted the need for an emergency link to the above development due to the total number of properties accessed via a cul-de-sac exceeding 100.

Consider that the open space area between the existing end of Redstone Close and Upperfield Close would be the most appropriate location as it could be incorporated within existing Highway Land.

Environmental Health

Land contamination - Need information on soil screen values. This is a minor issue due to the sites former history; however there is a possibility that contamination maybe present beneath the building footprint such as from any oil fired heating or imported made ground during the school's construction. Therefore, require that post demolition a report is to be provided demonstrating that there is no additional contamination present beneath the building.

Noise - Construction times to be restricted. Times for loading, unloading or delivery of construction materials to be restricted. External artificial security lighting and light nuisance restricted. No burning of materials on site during construction.

Crime Risk Manager

There are no objections to this application. Discussions have been taking place in order to achieve secured by design accreditation.

Severn Trent Water

No objection subject to a condition regarding drainage details

County Education Service

If development goes ahead in this area, there will be a need for a contribution towards local education facilities in accordance with the SPD on planning obligations for education facilities.

Sport England

Does not raise any objections to the granting of planning permission for this application, but would recommend that a suitable contribution is sought for supporting the local sports facility infrastructure.

County Countryside Service

Proposal is adjacent to a public right of way (Redditch Bridleway 822). Applicant must be aware of their obligations in relation to the public right of way, in respect to no disturbance of / change to the surface of the path, without written consent from County Council. There should be no diminution in the width of the right of way, and there should be no building materials stored on the right of way. Vehicle movements and parking to be arranged so as not to unreasonably interfere with the public's use of the right of way. No additional barriers to be placed on right of way.

British Horse Society

Concerned that bridleway 822 is referred to in the Design Statement as a traffic free cycleway, implying that it is only used by pedestrians and cyclists. Path is a bridleway and as such horse riders' needs should be taken into account, Bridleway used by horse riders on a regular basis.

Council's Housing Enabling Officer

There is a housing need for 2, 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings and there is currently a shortfall of such housing. This proposal is a significant strategic housing site with 90% of provision for affordable tenures (rent/shared ownership). Request that nomination arrangements be secured via a Section 106 Agreement for the Council's tenant housing list.

Proposal meets required quality standards for a high quality housing development, namely Secured by Design, Lifetime Homes (not flats), the Homes and Communities Agency "Design and Quality Standards" and the Building for Life Standards.

County Archaeology Service

The proposed redevelopment may affect deposits of archaeological significance. No detailed archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out to date, hence the archaeological potential of the site is unknown, however, its proximity to the Roman Road (Ryknild Street) increases the possibility of contemporary road side settlement and farmsteads. Therefore as a condition of planning consent a staged programme of archaeological work (field evaluation) will be required prior to commencement of development.

Council's Waste Management

Comments awaited.

Council's Arboricultural Officer

Comments awaited.

Council's Biodiversity Officer

A general view of the whole development is that there are too many houses planned for this site and not enough green open space is being left within the site. This will have implications on wildlife and also on drainage and possible flooding issues for this site and land and buildings adjacent to this site.

Good to see that the planned development will retain almost all of the existing hedgelines, hedgerows being one of the most important habitats present around the border of the proposed development site.

Along the western hedgeline there is proposed a wildlife corridor. Whilst approve of this idea, have concerns with the narrow width of this and the fact that the proposed house gardens back right onto this strip. It is highly likely that this strip will over a period of time, be encroached upon by adjacent householders, unless an unmovable border line such as a solid brick wall or steel railings is erected along the length of it.

There are also a number of trees around this site, mainly occurring along the hedgelines. These do appear to be adequately safeguarded within the development.

Pleased to see that there is a proposal to install bat and bird boxes throughout the development.

Council's Drainage Officer

Comments awaited.

Development Plans

The site is identified on the Local Plan No. 3 Proposals Map as 50% white land and 50% open space. There are no policies relating to white land and therefore no comments on this aspect of the site. Local Plan No.3 contains Policy R.1 in relation to the open space. The site is partially brownfield land which was previously a school. Developing on previously developed land is considered as a sustainable approach and favoured ahead of greenfield land as prescribed in Planning Policy Statement 1 and Planning Policy Statement 3.

The draft Core Strategy for Redditch Borough contains a Spatial Vision, this Vision sets out how Redditch should be in 2026. The aspects of the Vision for Redditch that this application would contribute towards include:

- *By 2026, Redditch Borough will be distinctively 'green' and all development will make a positive contribution to the effects of climate change.*
- *All new residential areas in Redditch will be of a high quality and safe design and contribute towards creating places that reflect the local*

character and are tailored to the needs of the people that live in the Borough.

- *To have sufficient homes meeting demographic needs, including affordable housing, providing for a range, mix, and type in the best locations, including Strategic Sites.*

National Planning Policy:

This application is generally in conformity with national planning guidance including Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development as it is located within the urban area and on a predominately brownfield site; PPG 13 – Transport – a travel plan has been provided which shows how sustainable forms of transport can be accessed from the site including cycling; and PPS 25 Development and Flood Risk, any potential flood risk on the site has been considered and SUD techniques incorporated.

PPS 3 Housing states that the Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. This application broadly seeks to achieve this housing goal by providing a mix of housing that will address those in need and who cannot afford to access market housing.

a) (1) Regional Policy:

All planning applications must be in accordance with regional planning policy as it forms part of the Development Plan for Redditch.

With regard to the current Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) this application appears to be in general conformity with this document.

b) (2) Emerging Regional Policy

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, as stated, is currently being reviewed; the emerging regional planning policy is the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision Preferred Option Document (2007). The Inspectors Recommendations have been published in September 2009 in the RSS Panel Report and these changes are being considered by the Government Office for the West Midlands. The comments below reflect both the Preferred Option RSS and the Panel Report recommendations.

The Preferred Option RSS contains a number of draft policies which should be taken into account when considering this application and are afforded some weight. Generally this planning application is in conformity with emerging regional planning policy.

c) Local Plan No.3 Policy

The proposal is located on 50% open space (as designated by the 2005 Open Space Needs Assessment). Therefore this application is contrary to Local Plan No.3 Policy R.1 'Primarily Open Space'. This

policy states that *“Proposals which would lead to the total or partial loss of Primarily Open Space will not normally be granted planning permission unless it can be demonstrated that the need for development outweighs the value of land as an open area.”* Therefore it must be demonstrated, by the applicant, that the value of this development would outweigh the value of the open space. It is worth noting that this portion of open space was previously the playing field for the adjacent school; in 2006 the school was closed. Subsequently, the playing field is no longer required as open space to serve the school therefore the 2009 update to the Open Space Needs Assessment de-designates this open space and classifies it as white land. This Open Space Needs Assessment Update has not been through formal Examination procedures and therefore currently does not hold significant weight.

d) Preferred Draft Core Strategy material considerations

As stated above this application contains measures that contribute towards achieving the long term Spatial Vision for Redditch and therefore this application is in general conformity with the Preferred Draft Core Strategy for Redditch Borough.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Comments awaited

The Cyclists Touring Club

Comments awaited

Assessment of Proposal

The key issues for consideration in this case are:-

Principle

The application site is indicated as white land and Primarily Open Space. The principle of residential development is acceptable on the white land. However, as part of the site is designated as Primarily Open Space in Local Plan No.3, Policy R.1 would apply. This policy states that proposals which lead to the total or potential loss of Primarily Open Space will not normally be granted planning permission unless it can be demonstrated that the need for development outweighs the value of the land as an open space area.

The open space area is contained as a result of its former use as a school that enclosed the area with fencing and hedge / tree planting around the perimeter of the site, and reduced its visual appearance as an open space area. Whilst this area could provide a link between the two large open space areas north and south of the site, the fact that it is heavily enclosed with hedge and tree planting, restricts its visual openness as an open space area and restricts its level of accessibility for members of the public,

and as such lessens its amenity value. In addition, the Open Space Needs Assessment 2005 referred to the land as school playing field rather than general open space. This highlighted its restricted use as an open space provision. In the latest Open Space Needs Assessment 2009, the land concerned is no longer designated for open space purposes due to the fact that the school has since been closed and demolished.

To clarify, whilst generally, the proposal conflicts with the designation of part of the site (Policy R.1), from a practical point of view there is no real loss of open space provision given that it was only for the purposes of the school.

Sport England have responded by stating that they have no issues with the development on the playing field. However, they consider that the creation of new dwellings will lead to an increased demand on existing leisure and sports facilities, therefore, a contribution towards supporting sports facilities infrastructure within Redditch should be sought. Officers would clarify that a contribution towards enhancing playing pitch facilities is being negotiated to form part of a S106 Agreement (see later).

Design and Layout

The design of the proposal has been carefully thought out. The approach into the site from Redstone Close is sharply angled to deliberately slow traffic down whilst a shared surface is proposed for pedestrians and vehicles to enable the scheme to be more pedestrian friendly and reduce traffic speeds.

The two particular unique house types (Jennifer house and Recycled house) are proposed to be sited in a prominent location within the site (south of the apartment block). Whilst they are quite unique they do complement the scheme overall. The dwellings that enclose the courtyard with terraced housing and one in a crescent shape, have frontages that vary to create an interesting streetscene but also enable the dwellings to the north and south of the site to face outwards towards the existing open space areas. The design of the dwellings also harmonise with existing housing in the locality.

The car parking areas would be block paved to match the access road. 94 car spaces are proposed providing at least one car space per unit. However, the approach to this development is sustainable living and as such, good footpath links (north and south of the site) to neighbouring bus stops in the locality have been considered within the layout of the proposal.

The layout of the scheme shows smaller than usual gardens for some of the plots. The overall policy requirement of minimum garden / amenity space has been provided within the site for the number of dwellings proposed, some of this provision has been combined together to create a useable communal area within the courtyard. It is intended that the

communal area would be used for social occasions and be suitably landscaped.

Generally, the proposal complies within the design guidelines set out in the Council's SPG on Encouraging Good Design. However, approximately 20 metres (rather than 22 metres) would be achieved between the rear of the proposed dwellings along the western boundary and properties in Oldbury Close. Given that minimal work is proposed to the western hedge / tree boundary, this 2 metre shortfall is unlikely to hinder privacy for existing neighbouring occupiers.

The site is slightly elevated in relation to surrounding houses, particularly those adjacent to Upperfield Close. However, the difference in levels is minimal and unlikely to have a detrimental impact on neighbouring occupiers in terms of overshadowing / overbearing.

Comments have been made by neighbours regarding the number of dwellings proposed. Officers would confirm that the number of units is less than that of the previous proposal (retirement village), and although the density of housing exceeds 50 dwellings per hectare (53 proposed) as recommended in PPS3, the density is only marginally exceeding this guideline. Due to the layout of the scheme, this level of density appears to be similar to neighbouring Closes.

Landscaping and Trees

The aspiration for the development is very much a sustainable lifestyle. As such an allotment area is proposed within the site to be used by the potential occupiers of the scheme, as well as orchard planting of native fruit trees. An edible wall (fruit climbing plants) is also proposed on the end of the apartment block, and other native species will be provided in respect to general shrub and tree planting to encourage biodiversity in the area.

A wildlife corridor is proposed to be introduced along the western boundary of the site. A ditch currently exists along this boundary and would be further enhanced to create two artificial habitat areas as well as providing bat and bird boxes within the site.

A newt survey has been carried out on the site. At the time of the survey there was no evidence of newts, however, the applicant proposes some ecological mitigation measures due to the suitability of the surrounding area for reptiles.

It is also important to note that the site will be privately managed. Therefore, it is unlikely that the rear gardens of some of the plots would encroach into the wildlife corridor. In addition, it is intended that boundary treatment for the rear gardens of the dwellings would be relatively open and of a low height.

Groups of trees within the site are too young to be protected by the Area Tree Preservation Order that covers the site. However, some trees along the boundary are protected by the Order and it is intended that these trees will be retained. Mature hedgerows also exist around the site and are overgrown and in need of management. In particular, the hedge to the north of the site will be reduced in height in order to lay the hedge.

Highways and access

The access arrangements are proposed via Redstone Close (for the majority of the housing) and Upperfield Close (for 10 dwellings). Initial comments have been submitted by County Highway Network Control who have verbally stated that the number of houses proposed to be served off Redstone Close would not raise highway issues; however, an emergency access would be required. Officers from Highway Network Control believe that an emergency access can be achieved at the side of 137 Upperfield Close. The land concerned is already designated as highway land. However, having looked into this matter further, collapsible bollards already exist in this location. Therefore an emergency access may already exist for the site. Confirmation of this matter is awaited from Highway Network Control and will be reported at the meeting.

There are discussions still taking place between the applicant and Highway Network Control regarding minor amendments to the access road into the site. More information on this matter will be provided in the Update Report.

Most of the comments submitted by neighbouring occupiers relate to vehicle movements and potential volume of traffic. It is considered that the vehicle movements would be less than those of the school when it was in use. Highway Network Control does not consider the potential volume of traffic to be an issue in this particular location.

The applicant has provided information to demonstrate that the access and enclosed courtyard would be suitable for refuse vehicles to use, and it is understood that the applicant has been in discussion with Waste Management Services regarding this proposal prior to its submission. Comments are awaited from Waste Management and will be reported on the Update paper.

Sustainability

The aspiration for the development is very much a sustainable lifestyle. The dwellings will be built to achieve Levels 3, 4, and 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, and incorporates sustainable construction approaches such as use of materials, solar panels and orientation of the dwellings to maximise natural daylight into the proposed rooms.

Planning obligations

The size of the proposed development is above the policy threshold for requiring contributions which should be sought via a planning obligation. Normally, the following would be required under the adopted policy framework:

- A contribution towards County education facilities, however affordable housing schemes are exempted from this requirement in the SPD, and therefore this is only required in relation to the market housing units of the proposal; and
- A contribution towards playing pitches, play areas and open space in the area due to the increased demand/requirement from future residents is required in compliance with the SPG; and
- That 40% of the dwellings be provided as affordable units for affordable housing in line with SPD policy, however in this case the applicant has confirmed that all 69 units will be for this. Therefore, this must also be included in the agreement to ensure the retention of the units for this purpose in perpetuity.

Conclusion

The proposal, due to its sustainable aspirations, is a very innovative scheme that generally complies with the Council's policies and SPG / SPDs, but maintains important landscaping whilst enhancing elements of the site to encourage wildlife habitats. The scheme maximises its potential to provide suitable sustainable homes, whilst the elevational design of the units complement surrounding housing. It is therefore considered that the proposal is both sufficiently compliant with policy and unlikely to cause harm to safety or amenity such that it can be considered favourably.

Recommendation

1. **That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, authority be delegated to the Acting Head of Planning & Building Control to GRANT planning permission subject to:**
 - a) **The applicant entering into a S106 planning obligation ensuring that 69 units out of the 79 are for the provision of social housing in perpetuity; that the Council are paid appropriate contributions in relation to education (for the 10 units that would be for sale), and the development for pitches, play areas and open space provision in the locality to be provided and maintained; and**
 - b) **the following conditions.**

2. **In the event that the planning obligation cannot be completed by 24th March 2010, Members are asked to delegate authority to officers to:**
 - a) **Refuse the application on the basis that without the planning obligation the proposed development would be contrary to policy and therefore unacceptable due to the resultant detrimental impacts it could cause to community infrastructure by a lack of provision for their improvements, and that at least 40% of the dwellings could not be restricted to use for affordable housing in line with current policy requirements; and**
 - b) **In the event of the applicant resubmitting the same or a very similar application with an acceptable and completed S106 legal agreement attached, authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions stated in this report and subsequent update report and any conditions agreed at the Planning Committee meeting held on 2nd March 2010.**
1. Development to commence within three years.
2. Details of materials to be submitted.
3. Landscape scheme including details of boundary treatment to be submitted and approved.
4. Landscape scheme including details of boundary treatment to be implemented in accordance with approved details.
5. Limited working hours during construction.
6. Dwellings to be built to a minimum Level 3 requirement set out under Code for Sustainable Homes.
7. Land contamination.
8. Development to be carried out in accordance with plans submitted with application.
9. **No loading, unloading or delivery of construction materials to be restricted.**
10. **Archaeological programme (field evaluation) to be carried out prior to commencement of development.**

Informatives

1. Drainage details to be in agreement with Severn Trent Water.
2. No disturbance to Bridleway 822 without prior consent from County Council Countryside Service.