

14 DCSE2007/3592/F - CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT OF 6 NO. 2 STOREY AFFORDABLE HOUSES ON AGRICULTURAL LAND AND WITHIN THE CAR PARK SHARED BY THE EXISTING HOUSING. LAND ADJOINING 10 ST. GEORGE'S, WOOLHOPE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR1 4QR.

For: West Mercia Homes Ltd for Kemble Housing Association, DJD Architects, 2 St. Oswald's Road, Worcester, WR1 1HZ

Date Received: 20th November, 2007 Ward: Old Gore Grid Ref: 61153, 35540

Expiry Date: 15th January, 2008

Local Member: Councillor TMR McLean

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises an area of about 0.25 ha, part of which is the car park at the rear of 1-8 St George's and part is a section of the adjoining field. St George's is a line of 6 old people's bungalows plus a pair of semi-detached cottage-style houses, with a further pair of semi-detached houses to the rear, on the west side of the road leading southwards from Woolhope to Sollars Hope. Access to the parking area is via a short drive to the south of 8 St George's.
- 1.2 It is proposed to erect 6, 2-storey affordable houses on the application site for Kemble Housing Association. 4 of the houses would have 2 bedrooms and 2 would have 3 bedrooms. There would be a mix of rented houses and shared equity. The houses would be arranged in a terrace of 4 plus a pair of semi-detached houses of the same design. The gap of about 7 m between the two groups is to avoid a sewer which crosses the site. The line of houses would face the rear of the bungalows at St George's. They would be 2-storeyed but with the upper floor in the roof slope and lit by dormer windows, in echo of 9-10 St George's. The houses would be staggered along their front and/or back elevations and there would be changes to ridge height along the terrace as ground level rises to the north.
- 1.3 The existing access and drive would be used with the parking area enlarged and re-landscaped to provide 2 parking spaces for both the existing and proposed dwellings. The 4 2-bedroom houses would have parking spaces within their front gardens; the 3-bedroom houses would have parking to the side.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Statements

- PPS3 - Housing
- PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.1 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007

Policy S1	-	Sustainable Development
Policy S2	-	Development Requirements
Policy S3	-	Housing
Policy DR1	-	Design
Policy DR3	-	Movement
Policy H7	-	Housing in the Countryside outside Settlements
Policy H10	-	Rural Exception Housing
Policy H13	-	Sustainable Residential Design
Policy H16	-	Car Parking
Policy LA1	-	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy LA3	-	Setting of Settlements
Policy LA4	-	Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens
Policy LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes
Policy HBA6	-	New Development within Conservation Areas

3. Planning History

3.1	MH94/1402	Erection of 4 houses for local housing need with extension to access and new parking area.	-	Approved 27.08.96
	DCSE2007/1929/F	Construction of 6 no. two storey houses and alterations within the car park shared by the existing housing.	-	Withdrawn 08.08.07

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 Welsh Water's advice has not yet been received.

Internal Council Advice

4.2 Traffic Manager recommends that:

"Planning permission be refused due to the lack of visibility at the entrance to the site, I would accept the Manual for Streets visibility values for the x and y values. The speeds obtained show an 85 percentile of 27mph, this would require a y distance of 39m and an x distance of 2.4.

The width of the highway at the access point is 5.4m, 17m south of the site, the carriageway reduces to 3.1m. I had a discussion on site regarding the actual point that should be taken, what I have done is taken 2m back from edge of carriageway instead of the 2.4m, this though, will only give a visibility of 32m, this will only give 85% of the required visibility/stopping distance, Manual for Streets is very tight on stopping distances and doesn't give much room for manoeuvre.

The other point is that the hedge will grow from its state at the moment and will only grow and reduce the visibility.

My comments about the rest of the site is as follows:

The site lay-out is acceptable but will need to remain private as the access width doesn't allow for a 2m service strip adjacent to the carriageway which therefore means that it doesn't match our design criteria.

There would need to be a footpath to the North from No 10 to allow access and to prevent cars parking at this location.”

4.3 Conservation Manager points out that:

“This revised layout [compared to the withdrawn scheme] has increased the proportion of shared space and confined the units to the western edge of the site, and their reduction in scale is particularly welcome. The combination of units of differing sizes in units 1-4 is effectively disguised by their staggered elevations and the fall across the site but the disjunction remains in units 5 and 6, which maintain a continuous front elevation. This was a fundamental objection in the previous application but could be obviated by simply staggering the front, rather than the rear, elevation of these units.

The detailing is generally appropriate but the 4 course brick band at first floor level is over-emphatic and arguably unnecessary: the 1 storey elevations are very low so it has an awkward visual relationship with the eaves and the 'peaks' which follow the porch roofs will be difficult to detail satisfactorily.”

5. Representations

5.1 The applicant's agent has submitted a Design and Access Statement:

- (1) The development is proposed as a rural exception site.
- (2) The developer is a registered social landlord (RSL) who also own 4 of the adjoining dwellings, with 6 others also owned by an RSL.
- (3) A S106 agreement and restricting purchase of the equity to 80% will ensure that the houses remain affordable.
- (4) The scheme will be supported by Housing Corporation funding.
- (5) The site benefits from a vehicular access, adverse impacts on neighbours can be minimised and local facilities are within easy reach.
- (6) The proposal complies with UDP policies.
- (7) The need for affordable homes in Woolhope has been shown by a housing needs survey, an analysis of the Affordable Housing Register of the Home Point agency and consultation with the parish.
- (8) The scheme has been designed and amended following consultation with the Parish Council and local community - earlier proposals have been re-considered for 2-storey houses reduced to 1 1/2 storeys, additional car parking provided.
- (9) An analysis of the area's character is included.
- (10) The proposed houses have been design to integrate into their setting. The slope of the site, which rises gently to the west and more stongly to the north, ensures that they will have a small impact on their surroundings.

- (11) The main views of the development from the open spaces will be from elevated ground, looking down on the new works.
- (12) The new houses would have the same materials, details and matching roof pitch as the adjoining properties.
- (13) High standards of sustainability will be incorporated into the buildings e.g. ground source heating for all heating and hot water, rainwater "harvesting". A 'Very Good' standard of EcoHome rating will be achieved.
- (14) Designed to be 'Secure by Design' and meet the criteria for Lifetime Home Standards.
- (15) 2 parking spaces per unit, all within distinct domestic curtilages and extra parking for existing houses to achieve 2 per unit.
- (16) Galvanised steel parkland fencing with hedges and shrub planting are proposed. An avenue of trees at the centre of the scheme will ensure a streetscape dominated by trees.
- (17) Shared surface access is proposed for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians but as no space for a 2 m service strip will not be adopted by the highway authority. The drive will be re-surfaced, with design form and detail arranged to reduce vehicle speed and produce a pedestrian friendly environment.
- (18) A traffic survey showed speeds average 27 mph (85th percentile) with peak volumes rarely exceeding 10 vehicles per hour. Visibility splays of 2m x 48 m or 2.4 m x 52 m can be achieved which exceed the safe stopping distances recommended in Manual for Streets (viz about 39 m).

In addition copies of the housing needs survey, traffic survey and ecological survey have been submitted plus a summary of consultation with the parish and correspondence from Welsh Water.

5.2 Woolhope Parish Council make the following comments:

- (1) Councillors believe that this application should be put on hold until the results of a sewerage capacity study are known.
- (2) It is unclear from the plans exact materials to be used and Councillors would need reassurance before the application is progressed that these will be in keeping with surrounding properties.
- (3) A housing need was identified in a housing needs survey, there is currently a planning application for a development of 3 houses and with existing properties vacant also the local housing need would be met without this development.
- (4) Concern was expressed about the frontage of existing properties in St George's and how these will be affected by this development.
- (5) Grave concern was expressed over the operation of the S106 agreement procedure.

5.3 3 letters of objection have been received citing, in summary, the following reasons:

- (1) One of Woolhope's most important features is that many houses back on to open fields or look out to hills and woods being along winding lanes with little infilling between.
- (2) Furthermore although not taken into account in the Design and access Statement the village is in the Wye Valley AONB and a Conservation Area.
- (3) The houses would be lower but with a bigger footprint the mass would be the same; their impact would be greater since effectively one terrace.
- (4) This would be backland development rather than linear along the 5 roads into Woolhope, which is the natural fabric of the village.
- (5) The development would harm the setting of listed and locally important buildings, open spaces and vistas, contrary to policies HBA4, HBA6 and HBA9.
- (6) The site's open nature is of such importance to warrant its protection.
- (7) Various criteria in the HBA9 would not be met.
 - (ii) create and maintain a well-defined edge to the settlement
 - (iii) provide important views in and out of settlements of attractive buildings and their settings or attractive landscapes
 - (iv) provide an important amenity of value to the local community.
- (8) The housing needs survey is over a year old and the questions are biased to finding the right figures to justify further housing; respondents' circumstances will have changed and no guarantee that those seeking housing in Woolhope will benefit.
- (9) Officer's report regarding 3 affordable houses elsewhere in Woolhope states that need is for 8 houses whereas Design and Access Statement states 11.
- (10) Some of existing housing stock is becoming available and should be offered to residents indicating a preference to remain in Woolhope.
- (11) The cumulative impact of the two affordable housing schemes will be for Woolhope to become an imbalanced community. Policy H10 refers to single dwellings not 6.
- (12) In response to objections 32 spaces would now be available plus 6 or 7 on the road making 39 for 16 dwellings which is not sustainable and 39 extra cars along narrow and twisty country lanes has serious safety implications.
- (13) Width of access and drive is well below standard and woefully inadequate to allow refuse vehicles and cars to pass.
- (14) Traffic survey underestimates volume of traffic as it omits existing traffic using the road to gain access to St George's.
- (15) Visibility splays stated in the Design and Access Statement as achievable are questioned.

- (16) Units 5 & 6 would look directly into the rear garden of Greytrees and the houses would totally overshadow and overlook the bungalows.
- (17) Style and design uninspired and monotonous and not in keeping with the Conservation Area.
- (18) The foul drainage system is up to capacity and unable to cope with 6 extra houses.
- (19) Existing water shortage would be exacerbated.
- (20) Contrary to the Parish Plan.
- (21) Contrary to Government policy of using "brown field" sites for new housing.
- (22) Must be for local people in housing need and this should be guaranteed for the future. Consideration should be given to designing a property for elderly people of restricted mobility.
- (23) Housing design should minimise the carbon emissions and minimise waste.
- (24) Light pollution should be minimised.
- (25) In summary poor design, irreparable damage to the setting of Woolhope village, AONB and Conservation Area, an already difficult access which is too narrow to accommodate the volume of cars proposed by this development, harm to neighbours' amenities and inadequate services.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

- 6.1 The main issues are whether there is a need for affordable housing, the effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and AONB, the effect on the amenities of neighbours and whether highway safety would be prejudiced.
- 6.2 Housing Needs Surveys are undertaken by the Council's Strategic Housing Department and are generally accepted as the most reliable indicator of housing need within a parish. In this case the survey is reasonably up to date and the analysis of Strategic Housing is that there is a current need for 8 affordable houses in Woolhope. Planning permission has recently been granted for 3 houses near to the parish church (SE2007/2898/F) but there remains a need for at least 5 additional houses. The current scheme is for 6 and in view of the admittedly constantly changing need for affordable housing it would not be reasonable to refuse the whole scheme as it includes one additional dwelling.
- 6.3 Policy H10 does encourage the development of affordable housing on land outside but adjoining established rural settlements. Woolhope is a smaller settlement and development is not therefore limited to one dwelling (criterion 7 of H10). The development is by a RSL and it has been agreed in principle that a S106 agreement will be entered into to ensure that the benefits remain for the future. I consider therefore that the proposed housing would comply with policy H10.

- 6.4 New development outside a village will inevitably have some adverse impact upon rural character. In this case the proposal would extend built development to the rear of St George's. This process has already started in that 9 & 10 St George's do not front the village road but are accessed off a short drive and the car parking area is also at the rear. The development would not result in housing along this road coalescing with housing along the roads leading westwards from the junctions of the 5 village roads. The application site rises to the north and less sharply to the west but the height of the new houses would be kept to a minimum and they would not be intrusive in the street scene nor in views of the village. The centre of the village is on higher land and the new houses would be seen against this backdrop rather than on the skyline. Provided the detailed design issues raised by the Conservation Manager are addressed the new houses would complement 9 & 10 St George's in style and materials and the appearance of Woolhope Conservation Area would not therefore be harmed. The effect on the character of the Wye Valley AONB would not in my view be unacceptable and the proposal meets the other criteria in policy LA1 for development that may be permitted in the AONB viz. small-scale and necessary for the social well-being of communities in the designated area.
- 6.5 The houses would be set well away from 1-8 St George's. At the closest there would be about 30 m between new and existing houses and about 21 m between the new houses and the gardens of 1-8 St George's. There is a tall hedge along the western boundary of the latter and further tree planting is proposed within the intervening parking area. This would be sufficient to protect the privacy of existing residents. 9 & 10 St George's face towards the new terrace. The gap of only 9 m is less than ideal but the gable end wall is not directly in front and the new development would not be unacceptably intrusive. At the northern end of the development units 5 & 6 would be close to and overlook the rear garden of Greytree. There would be adequate space however between these houses and Greytree itself.
- 6.6 The main highway problem is visibility to the south at the access. The Traffic Manager calculates that the visibility distance that could be achieved would only be 85% of the safe stopping distance. This could be resolved by removal of a short section of hedge. The hedge is not in the applicant's ownership but the full visibility splay could be required by a Grampian condition. However the applicant's agent points out that only very narrow vehicles (presumably motorcycles) would not be visible at the safe stopping distance, that most vehicles would be seen well before the safe stopping distance (by at least a further 15m), that the hedge has been trimmed and visibility is 34m not 32m and that for 27 mph as safe stopping distance of 37m not 39m is required. The latter would be about 90% of the required distance. In addition a revised proposal shows a new footway to replace on-street parking immediately to the north of the access to improve visibility in that direction. The Traffic Manager's comments on these amendments will be reported at the Committee meeting.
- 6.7 It is not clear from the submission and representations whether the capacity of the mains drainage system is adequate without improvements but this could be the subject of a planning condition.

RECOMMENDATION

That subject to being satisfied with regard to highway safety and to satisfactory revisions to the design of the houses:

1. The Legal Practice Manager be authorised to complete a planning obligation agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to ensure:
 - a) The houses remain affordable in perpetuity.
 - b) The houses be made available for local people in housing need.
2. Upon completion of the aforementioned planning obligation that the officers named in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers be authorised to issue planning permission subject to the following conditions:
 - 1 A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
 - 2 B01 (Samples of external materials)

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings.
 - 3 G01 (Details of boundary treatments)

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure dwellings have satisfactory privacy.
 - 4 G04 (Landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.
 - 5 G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.
 - 6 F32 (Details of floodlighting/external lighting)

Reason: To safeguard local amenities.
 - 7 E16 (Removal of permitted development rights)

Reason: To ensure that the houses remain affordable.
 - 8 F48 (Details of slab levels)

Reason: In order to define the permission and ensure that the development is of a scale and height appropriate to the site.
 - 9 F18 (Scheme of foul drainage disposal)

Reason: In order to ensure that satisfactory drainage arrangements are provided.

INFORMATIVES:

- 1 N02 - Section 106 Obligation

2 N19 - Avoidance of doubt

3 N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission.

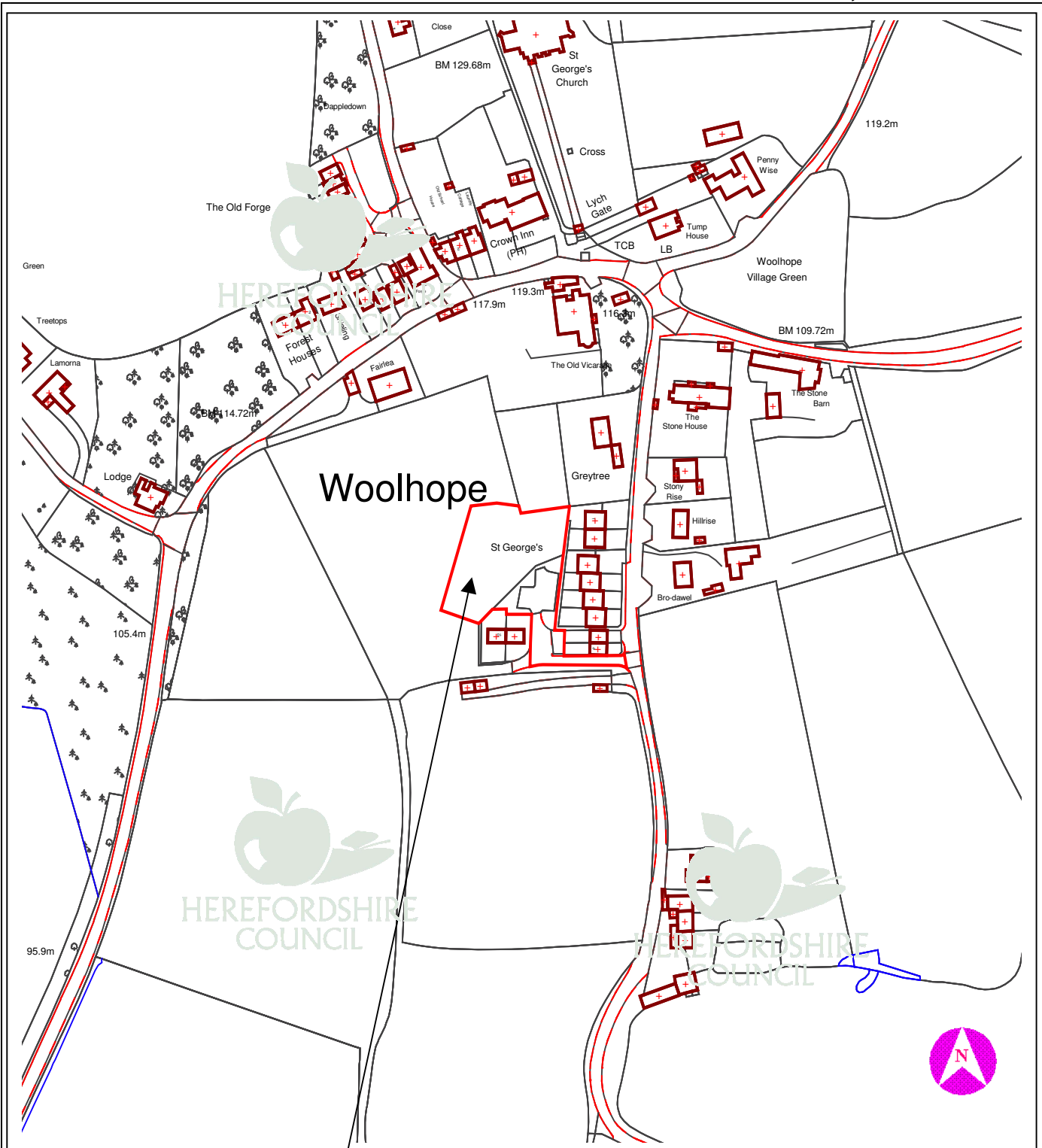
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCSE2007/3592/F

SCALE : 1 : 2500

SITE ADDRESS : Land adjoining 10 St. Georges, Woolhope, Herefordshire, HR1 4QR

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DRAFT HEADS OF TERMS

Proposed Planning Obligation Agreement

Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

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- 1. The approved houses shall be affordable housing units which meet the criteria set out in Section 5.5 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007 and related to Policy H9 or any statutory replacement of those criteria and that policy. None of them shall be occupied unless and until the Herefordshire Council has given written agreement to the means of securing the status of these units as affordable housing.**
- 2. The developer shall pay to the Council, or on completion of the Agreement, the reasonable legal costs incurred by Herefordshire Council in connection with the preparation and completion of the Agreement.**
- 3. The applicant shall complete the Agreement by 9 April 2008.**