

**13 DCNE2005/0791/F - DEMOLITION OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDINGS. ERECTION OF 10 NO. OPEN MARKET HOUSES AND 5 NO. AFFORDABLE HOUSES AT FORMER CRADLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL, CRADLEY, MALVERN, HEREFORDSHIRE, WR13 5LL**

**DCNE2005/1471/C – DEMOLITION OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

**For: Hereford Diocese Board Of Finance, James Spreckley MRICS FAAV, Brinsop House, Brinsop, Herefordshire, HR4 7AS**

**Date Received:**  
**11th March 2005**

**Ward: Hope End**

**Grid Ref:**  
**73411, 47147**

**Expiry Date:**  
**6th May 2005**

Local Member: Councillors R Stockton and R Mills

**1. Site Description and Proposal**

- 1.1 Cradley lies approximately 8 miles to the north east of Ledbury and comprises two distinct areas, the old village built around the church and a newer part to the west which comprises areas of residential development.
- 1.2 The site lies in the older part of the village. It has a variety of architectural styles and characters with dwellings lining its narrow lane. The lane also serves a number of modern cul-de-sac developments. The old village is designated as a Conservation Area and part also falls within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 1.3 The site itself is the former Cradley Primary School building and playing field. It lies fairly centrally within the village and the building occupies an elevated position but set back from the lane. To its foreground are two mature Yew trees that are protected by a preservation order. The former school house is attached to the rear but is in completely separate ownership.
- 1.4 The original school building is stone built under a slate roof and has a simple rectangular form. Many additions have been made to it over time, the majority of these being to the rear but also to the front in the form of painted brick additions. Some have been made to match the original building whilst others do not. This includes a large flat roofed building. The result is a linear form of development extending from south to north.
- 1.5 The site is very narrow at its road frontage at just 26 metres. This narrows further to 12 metres progressing through the site, and widens again to an average width of approximately 48 metres through its 160 metre length. The former school buildings

occupy the first half of the site and extend almost entirely across the road frontage. The remainder comprises both hard play areas and playing field to the rear portion.

- 1.6 The site generally slopes from east to west, the change in levels being more significant to the front half. The playing field has clearly been levelled with a steep grassed embankment forming the eastern boundary in this area. Around the school buildings the eastern boundary is densely wooded, predominantly by semi-mature Silver Birch. The western boundary is formed by a public footpath, although this falls outside the application site.
- 1.7 The proposal is for the demolition of all of the school buildings and for the erection of 15 dwellings and the creation of a new vehicular access. The scheme has two distinct elements. First is a number of smaller dwellings occupying the first half of the site. These include a terrace of three two bed dwellings which have been designed to reflect the current school building being of stone construction and in a frontage location, and five modestly sized three bed detached dwellings. Of these, plots 1 to 5 are to provide affordable accommodation through a Registered Social Landlord. Vehicular access is gained at the south western corner on the frontage and runs along the western boundary past these dwellings.
- 1.8 The remaining 7 dwellings are located on the rear half of the site and are larger 4 bed detached dwellings positioned around a central vehicular access. Two different house types are shown, but both include details such as chimney stacks and headers above windows and doors. The plans indicate that they will be finished in brick and tile, but exact details are to be agreed.
- 1.9 The plans also indicate the retention of an existing play area, although it is likely that this will have to be upgraded to meet current standards. The submission also includes a detailed tree survey and gives an indication of these to be retained and elements of new planting.

## **2. Policies**

### **2.1 Malvern Hills District Local Plan**

Housing Policy 3 – Settlement Boundaries  
Housing Policy 17 – Residential Standards  
Conservation Policy 2 – New Development in Conservation Areas  
Conservation Policy 4 – Demolition of Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas  
Landscape Policy 8 – Landscape Standards  
Transport Policy 3 – Provision for Pedestrians and Cyclists  
Transport Policy 7 – Road Design in New Development  
Recreational Policy 25 – Recreational Open Space Provision

### **2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan – Draft Deposit Replacement**

H4 – Main Villages: Settlement Boundaries  
H19 – Open Space Requirements  
RST4 – Safeguarding Existing Recreational Open Space  
HBA 6 – Conservation Areas

### 3. Planning History

- 3.1 A number of historic permissions have been identified which relate to the alterations and extensions made to the school. None of these are specifically relevant to these applications.

### 4. Consultation Summary

#### Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Environment Agency - No objection subject to condition.  
4.2 Severn Trent Water - No objection subject to condition.  
4.3 English Heritage - No objection.

#### Internal Council Consultations

- 4.4 Transportation Manager - No objection subject to conditions.  
4.5 Conservation Manager - The stone core of this building is of a high quality and worthy of retention and conversion. It would be acceptable to demolish the existing extensions as they are of little merit. Ideally a new road could be inserted via the entrance of the school house therefore switching the development around and allowing the original school building to be retained and converted. If this were not possible the scheme should be reviewed as it does not maintain the character of the area. As existing this proposal is contrary to Malvern Hills District Local Plan Conservation Policy 2 and 4 and cannot be supported.  
4.6 Public Rights of Way Manager - No objection. It is noted that some tree felling is proposed. If development works are perceived to be likely to endanger members of the public then a temporary closure order should be applied for.  
4.7 Forward Plans - The site is located within the Settlement boundary as defined by both the adopted Local Plan and the emerging Unitary Development Plan, so the principal of development is established. There are issues regarding the loss of a football pitch and the development being located within a Conservation Area and adjacent to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.  
4.8 Landscape Officer - No objection in principle to this development. However, some concern raised about the proximity of units 1 to 3 to protected trees. If permission is granted for this development, full landscaping details should be required by condition.  
4.9 Strategic Housing - This application equates to the Unitary Development Plan target for affordable housing of 35%. Good evidence of affordable housing need exists and therefore strategic housing supports this scheme in principle.

### 5. Representations

- 5.1 Cradley Parish Council - Raise a number of objections. In summary the points raised are as follows:-

Require a feasibility study of alternative uses for the school building to be completed.

If the retention of the building is not feasible, wish to see stone used as a facing material.

Road should be to an adoptable standard. Concerns over parking provision and increases in traffic levels.

Insist that trees identified to be retained are so.

No clear indication on plans of levels or of drainage arrangements.

Access to the three frontage dwellings needs reworking to retain the wall at the road frontage.

All buildings are two storey. Would wish to see some bungalows to introduce variety and echo adjacent developments.

Hours during which deliveries should be made to be restricted during construction.

- 5.2 In total, 22 letters of objection have been received in response to the application. In summary the points raised are as follows:-

The school building is of historic importance and should be retained.

Alternative uses for the building should be explored.

Concerns over highway safety and additional traffic on narrow lanes.

Concerns over drainage.

Potential for overlooking and loss of privacy to be caused to properties adjacent to the site.

Development is not in keeping with the surrounding area, particularly those on the road frontage.

The proposal represents over development of the site.

Suggestion that the site is contaminated by Japanese Knotweed.

- 5.3 Three letters in support of the application have also been received. In summary the points raised are as follows:-

The school building is unattractive and does not contribute to the Conservation Area.

The site should be re-developed.

There is a need for affordable housing in the village.

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

## 6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The former primary school has become vacant as a new school has been built on the outskirts of the village. It has been operational for approximately four months and all teaching facilities have been switched to it.

- 6.2 The proposal raises a number of conflicting issues. Should the existing school building be maintained and converted or demolished? If it is converted, how is vehicular access achieved? If it is demolished, should a similarly proportioned building replace it, and if so what impact will this have on the Yew Trees protected by a preservation order?

### Demolition of the School Building

- 6.3 The scheme proposes demolition in order that access can be gained to the site, and realistically this is the only option. A partial demolition of the school building would not

be a satisfactory solution in terms of its context in the Conservation Area. Whilst it is a building of some local history, it is your officers opinion that the alterations that have occurred have considerably affected its character and contribution to the Conservation Area in terms of its appearance. It is not worthy of listing and its retention cannot be justified on these grounds.

- 6.4 On balance, the demolition of the school building is considered to be the only viable option to secure the re-development of the site. Its conversion to a single dwelling is similarly unviable given the overall size of the site and therefore, on balance, it is recommended that the demolition of the school building in its entirety is approved.

#### Vehicular Access/Highway Issues

- 6.5 Some initial concerns regarding on site pedestrian refuge and highway standards have been addressed by some modifications to the layout and can be suitably addressed by conditions.
- 6.6 In considering the impacts of this development on the wider highway network, regard must also be had for the former use of the site as a school. It did result in increased number of traffic movements at peak periods and will undoubtedly have causes localised congestion. A proposed residential development will not cause the same congestion as vehicles will move freely onto and off of the site. Whilst the immediate lanes are narrow, no objection has been raised by the Transportation Manager on the grounds of detrimental impact on the road network.

#### Alternative Uses

- 6.7 The application before the Local Planning Authority is one for residential development. The site falls within the Settlement Boundary under both adopted and emerging policies where the principle of residential development is accepted. Whilst there may be a demand for other uses for the vacant school premises, it is not appropriate to use this as a reason to refuse these applications, nor to request that feasibility studies are undertaken prior to the determination of them.

#### Drainage Issues

- 6.8 The proposal seeks to connect to the mains sewer running through the village and Severn Trent have raised no objection to this in their consultation response. The Environment Agency similarly raise no objection, but recommend that a condition is imposed relating to run off from impervious surfaces. By the imposition of such a condition it is considered that concerns in this respect can be satisfactorily addressed.

#### Amenity Issues

- 6.9 There are two plots whose boundaries are with existing dwellings and these may be considered to be an issue of detriment to amenity.
- 6.10 Plot 8 bounds a property known as Pilgrims. The proposed dwelling has a blank gable end elevation fencing east towards Pilgrims, which is itself approximately 25 metres from the boundary. The finished floor level for the dwelling is shown to be over 1.5 metres lower than the existing ground level and this continues to rise to Pilgrims. There will be no issue of overlooking or overbearance as a result, although a condition could be imposed to restrict the creation of further openings in its eastern elevation.

- 6.11 Plot 13 bounds Dragon House to the north. It is set 15 metres back from the boundary whilst the proposed dwelling; in a slightly amended position, is a further 7.5 metres away. This gives a separation distance of 22.5 metres. A single storey garage building located close to the boundary will provide privacy at ground floor, but will not be overly dominant in itself. A single bedroom window will look across the garden of Dragon House, but not directly onto the dwelling itself. The separation between the two is considered to be sufficient to ensure that satisfactory privacy is maintained between the two.
- 6.12 The proposal does not detrimental affect amenity in terms of overlooking or overbearance and is therefore considered to be acceptable in this respect.

#### Design/Impact on the Conservation Area/Density

- 6.13 The design on the road frontage building is an attempt to replicate that of the original school building. The plans show it to be faced in stone, and conditions can be imposed to secure the reclamation and re-use of that from the demolished school building if the application is approved. Its position too will reflect the historical context and layout of the school, but will also allow some separation between the new development and the Old School House. A compromise arises from this desired separation and the impact on the frontage Yew Trees. However, existing extensions are closer than the proposed development. Conditions to ensure their protection during construction works should be imposed.
- 6.14 In accordance with Conservation Policy 4 of the Malvern Hills Local Plan, the scheme ensures that a gap does not occur in the road frontage. A view must be taken on the contribution that the replacement building will make to the Conservation Area. With a seeming alternative of a vacant building at its heart, the proposal is not unattractive and, subject to detail is considered to be acceptable.
- 6.15 The remaining dwellings are all of similar designs and details and are well spaced within the site. This reflects the low density of both old and new development in the locality. On plot size of 0.7 hectares, the development is of a low density; much lower than the minimum threshold of 30 per hectare as stated in Planning Policy Guidance 3. However the Conservation Area status is considered to legitimise this.
- 6.16 Whilst bungalows are present in the locality, they have a more suburban, rather than village feel. Their use elsewhere does not render them appropriate in this context, nor would such development contribute to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

#### Boundary Treatments

- 6.17 The current proposal does not include any detail of boundary treatments within the site, but this is readily addressed by condition and is not a reason in itself to withhold permission.
- 6.18 The road frontage is defined by a stone retaining wall, and the plans show three separate incursions into this to provide pedestrian access to the terraced dwellings. Cradley and Storridge Village Design Statement makes reference to boundaries and suggests that they should be preserved as far as is practicable. The creation of three separate points of access does seem excessive and access could be given via the main vehicular access with a shared path to serve these dwellings. Again it is considered that this can be appropriately conditioned.

Affordable Housing

- 6.19 In accordance with the requirements of the Unitary Development Plan, five of the dwellings are to be affordable through a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). Plots 1 to 5 are identified for such use and the applicants agent has confirmed that he is in negotiation with two RSL's, both of whom are preferred partners of the Council.
- 6.20 Strategic Housing comment that they have no objection to the scheme. The mix of accommodation is as required by the Housing Needs survey. However, they do comment that it is concentrated in one area and that this does not help to promote a mixed community.
- 6.21 In light of the constraints of the site, it is considered that the smaller accommodation would appear in the front part of the site, and it is this that meets local need. Furthermore, the relatively small scale of the development limits the opportunities for a more mixed development and the proposal is considered acceptable in this respect. If the application is approved, a Section 106 Agreement will be necessary to secure this aspect of the scheme.

Play Area

- 6.22 The scheme includes the provision of a play area in excess of the minimum requirements made by Recreation Policy 25 of the Malvern Hills District Local Plan, that being 100m<sup>2</sup> for 15 dwellings. It is sited in the same location as the former play area associated with the school. It is centrally positioned and forms an integral part of the site as a whole. This aspect of the scheme will also need to be the subject of a Section 106 Agreement to secure the precise nature of the equipment to be provided and to make provision for its future maintenance.

Japanese Knotweed

- 6.23 This is recognised by the Environment agency as a contaminant due to its invasive nature. One objector has suggested that it is present on site. It has not been identified by the Tree Survey and arboriculture assessment prepared as part of the application, nor by the Environment Agency in their comments. Further investigation has been requested, but at this stage no further information is available.

Conclusion

- 6.24 In determining this application a decision must be made as to the weight to be attached to each of the issues. It is unlikely that the site can be developed without the demolition of the existing building and therefore, on balance, the scheme is accordingly recommended for approval.

**RECOMMENDATION****DCNE2005/0791/F**

- 1 - The County Secretary and Solicitor be authorised to complete a planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to secure the provision of affordable housing and the provision and future**

maintenance of a play area, and any additional matters and terms as she considers appropriate.

- 2 - Upon the completion of the aforementioned planning obligation that the 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 - A09 (Amended plans )

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the amended plans.

- 3 - Prior to the commencement of demolition a method statement for the demolition, salvage and storage of the stone shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The stone to be salvaged shall then be used in the construction of plots 1 to 3 inclusive.

Reason: In the interest of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 4 - B01 (Samples of external materials )

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings.

- 5 - B07 (Stonework laid on natural bed )

Reason: In the interests of conserving the character of the building.

- 6 - C04 (Details of window sections, eaves, verges and barge boards )

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of [special] architectural or historical interest.

- 7 - C05 (Details of external joinery finishes )

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of [special] architectural or historical interest.

- 8 - E02 (Restriction on hours of delivery )

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the locality.

- 9 - E18 (No new windows in specified elevation )

Reason: In order to protect the residential amenity of adjacent properties.

- 10 - F16 (Restriction of hours during construction )

Reason: To protect the amenity of local residents.



**11 - F20 (Scheme of surface water drainage )**

**Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding by ensuring the provision of a satisfactory means of surface water disposal.**

**12 - F27 (Interception of surface water run off )**

**Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment.**

**13 - G01 (Details of boundary treatments )**

**Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure dwellings have satisfactory privacy.**

**14 - G02 (Landscaping scheme (housing development) )**

**Reason: To ensure a satisfactory and well planned development and to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment.**

**15 - G03 (Landscaping scheme (housing development) - implementation )**

**Reason: To ensure a satisfactory and well planned development and to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment.**

**16 - G18 (Protection of trees )**

**Reason: To ensure adequate protection to existing trees which are to be retained, in the interests of the character and amenities of the area.**

**17 - G19 (Existing trees which are to be retained )**

**Reason: In order to preserve the character and amenity of the area.**

**18 - G31 (Details of play equipment )**

**Reason: To ensure the play area is suitably equipped.**

**19 - H03 (Visibility splays )**

**Reason: In the interests of highway safety.**

**20 - H06 (Vehicular access construction )**

**Reason: In the interests of highway safety.**

**21 - H11 (Parking - estate development (more than one house) )**

**Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure the free flow of traffic using the adjoining highway.**

**22 - H21 (Wheel washing )**

**Reason: To ensure that the wheels of vehicles are cleaned before leaving the site in the interests of highway safety.**

23 - H27 (Parking for site operatives )

Reason: To prevent indiscriminate parking in the interests of highway safety.

24 - Notwithstanding the submitted plans, the means of pedestrian access to plots 1 to 3 inclusive shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons: To maintain the existing stone boundary wall at the road frontage to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

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1 - A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission) )

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

25 - C14 (Signing of contract before demolition )

Reason: Pursuant to the provisions of Section 17(3) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Informatives:

- 1 - N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC
- 2 - HN08 - Section 38 Agreement details
- 3 - N02 - Section 106 Obligation
- 4 - N14 - Party Wall Act 1996

Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies.