

**Houghton Regis Town Council  
Planning Committee  
28<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: D Dixon-Wilkinson Chairman  
J Carroll  
D Jones  
M S Kennedy  
S Thorne  
K Wattingham  
T Welch

Officers: Debbie Marsh Corporate Services Manager  
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 1

Also present: Councillors: Y Farrell

**9907 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

None.

**9908 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**9909 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**9910 MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 for consideration.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**Resolved To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**9911 PLANNING MATTERS**

**(a) The following planning applications were considered:**

*Non - Delegated*

CB/19/00789/FULL Tree house to rear  
116 Douglas Crescent, LU5 5AT  
For: Mr & Mrs Cox

*Members of the Planning Committee considered this application at the meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019. The following comments were made:*

*The Town Council requested more information before comments could be submitted, for example: the above ground height had not been detailed.*

Members were advised that further information had been provided.

**Comments: The Town Council objects to this application on the following grounds:**

**Inappropriate development**

**Detrimental impact to neighbouring residents**

**Scale of the building is overbearing and out of character**

CB/19/00883/RM

Reserved matters of appearance, scale and landscaping for residential development of 255 dwellings following outline CB/15/0297/OUT

Parcels 4a and 4b, Bidwell West, LU5 6JQ

**Comments: Members received a report from the Town Councils planning consultant:**

Application CB/19/00883/RM (follows CB/15/00297/OUT)  
– Parcels 4a & 4b for 255 homes on land west of Bidwell, HRN2, Houghton Regis

Observations by Houghton Regis Town Council: May 2019

**NB The Council has previously commented on Reserved Matters for parcels 6a and 6b for 625 homes** – these details were submitted to Central Beds under the same application numbers as shown above.

The Application

The outline applicant approved in November in 2015 was for up to 1,850 homes, roads, landscaping recreation and open space, two schools, employment and a local centre.

The whole site extends westwards from Bedford Road, from the new A5 dual carriageway southwards to the edge of the former Chalk Quarry Nature Reserve.

The current details show 255 homes in two parcels either side of the new ‘spine’ road located west of Bidwell. The proposals (covered by the outline consent) for schools, employment, and local centre are not included in these reserved matters.

In addition to house details the Reserved Matters also cover boundary treatment, materials, parking, open space and drainage arrangements.

NB the outline approval was granted 2 years after the Framework for the whole HRN proposal was agreed by Central Beds.

Preliminary views from the Town Council:

- raised no objection to this application however,
- Members raised safety concerns regarding the water feature shown on the plans and requested more information,
- Members requested that the developer incorporate some disabled friendly equipment play equipment in the play areas, and
- raised concerns in whether current local school capacity could cope with the additional intake.

Previously, in response to the outline scheme the Town Council had concerns over highways issues and connections onto Bedford Road, allotment provision, open space / recreation provision, cemetery / burial provision, the layout of the community / changing facilities in relation to the school, and the Town Council's position of having open space transferred to it in future. A Groundwater Audit report was also sent to CBC as part of the exploration for future cemetery provision.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Town Council welcomes the details in the Reserved Matters and raises no overall objections.

The Town Council may wish to comment:

- the application needs to demonstrate that the 'affordable' housing is within the financial reach of those in need of homes locally, and how this could be supported to assist key workers, teachers, health workers and others important to support the community in this part of Houghton Regis,
- the lack of details on dwellings which are suitable for people with access and mobility issues,

- a feature of the scheme is to position local access roads along the boundaries of the parcels – the plans should show how these edges are to be fenced / hedged in order to maintain a pleasant / soft boundary landscaping and which is safe, preventing children from straying onto the spine / distributor roads,
- the way the plans show footpaths (cycleways??) alongside the spine / distributor roads but needs regard to the point above re. planting and safety,
- similarly, the fencing / hedging around the water feature / SUDS facility needs to be both effective in preventing access and attractive around this landscape feature,
- the details of access routes for pedestrians and cyclists, children, parents with pushchairs, etc to nearby facilities – schools, local centre, recreation areas etc. need to be clearer,
- the locations and ranges of local play areas and equipment within the site needs to be clearer, especially provision for older children / young teenagers.

The Reserved Matters application covers Parcels 4A and 4B here. The application relates to 255 dwellings, a mix of dwellings in varying sizes and flats, in 14 types.

Development Parcels were defined by the plans approved under the outline permission, including Parcels 4a and 4b. Condition 1 of the outline permission required the approval of the following details for each Development Parcel – scale and appearance of the development, plus landscaping of the site (details of access arrangements were determined at the outline stage) to accord with the Bidwell West Design Code (approved June 2015).

#### Brief Description

The application site itself is currently an 8ha arable field which has been recently separated into two parcels by the newly constructed main spine road/primary vehicular route through the Bidwell West site.

Parcel 4a to the north of the spine road (2ha) and Parcel 4b to the south of the spine road together adjoin a large block

of woodland (Bluewaters Woodland) to the south. Existing arable land to the west of the site on the other side of the main spine road is proposed to form a large amenity area, including sports pitch provision. The Ouzel Brook watercourse runs broadly east-west immediately to the north of the application site.

As part of the proposed residential development of 255 residential dwellings, 77 units will be affordable housing; equating to 30% and complying with the S106 agreement in this respect. There will be a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties, including 1 and 2 bed apartments and 2 bedroom coach houses, which will help contribute to a mix of housing within the local area in order to meet housing requirements.

Development Parcels 4a and 4b form the “Park View Crescent” Character Area within the Bidwell West development. The houses are laid out in blocks with near continuous frontages onto the main roads, parcel 4a has a large formal landscaped open space on the western side, 4b has a similar feature in the centre around which the blocks of new houses are arranged. The proposals achieve an onto the open space, along with strategically located keynote buildings. The average density is 32 per ha (the Design Code specifies between 30 and 35). The plans show a range of buildings, detached, semi-detached and terraced, 3 houses of 2 and 2.5 storey, 1.5 storey

flats over garages (FOGs) and 3 storey focal point apartment blocks in line with the Design Code.

The palette of materials and the design details comply with the Design Code including some local detailing from the local vernacular.

Annex A: Initial Comments by Houghton Regis Town Council

Framework: The proposals need to be set out more clearly to show how they reflect the Framework scheme for the area, especially with regard to landscaping and non-vehicular access arrangements. Each Reserved Matters application

needs to show how each 'parcel' relates to the broader landscaping proposals for HRN - the pieces within a jigsaw - to achieve an integrated whole.

Landscaping - tree- planting around the edges of the site appears to be very low density. With the layout and densities shown it will take many years for the landscaping to mature. It would be preferable to use a combination of retained existing trees\* and hedgerows where possible, introduction of a variety of tree sizes as part of the new landscaping, and denser planting patterns with provisions for later thinning. The tree species mix should be native species appropriate to the area and soil type.

As well as the proposed grassed areas, native woodland flower species should be introduced so that when established, the landscaping reflects the habitat and ecosystems of the former copses and field edges.

Planting adjoining the rear of properties which back onto the landscaped areas / public paths should have spiky species (rose, briars, fruiting brambles, etc) to deter intruders.

\*The degree of tree and hedgerow removal which has taken place along the roadside is alarming - mature trees and hedgerows especially should be retained - using TPO provisions, where they could add to the appearance of the new area and preserve wildlife habitats and ecosystems until the new landscaping has had time to become established.

Parking provisions - appears to be inadequate, requires confirmation that the number of spaces meets Central Beds parking standards for residents and visitors

Layout - generally no objections. The plans for the parcels need to highlight how the layout relates to the network of foot and cycle paths to facilitate non-car access to shops, schools, recreation etc. Existing rights of way in the area should be highlighted and the connections from the new development made clear

Appearance: The buildings and cottages in Bidwell and Thorn exhibit a generally plain design for rural brick-built dwellings, with however interest and detailing is created in the brick detailing around the windows, eaves, chimneys, lintels etc. The proposed house-types could be easily adapted to reflect this level of detailing so that the scheme is

more reflective of the area. There are no details within the plans of features such as solar panels, electric car charging points, etc.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.40pm**

**Dated this 18<sup>th</sup> day of June 2019**

**Chairman**

DRAFT