

Ward: Peppard

App No.: 160762/REG3

Address: Land at Lowfield Road, Caversham

Proposal: Temporary permission (5 years) for 28 no. (2 bedroom) temporary accommodation units with vehicular access, car parking, communal amenity space, refuse and bicycle storage, a play area, and landscaping.

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Date received: 25 April 2016

Major Application 13 week target decision date: 29 July 2016

RECOMMENDATION:

GRANT planning permission.

Conditions to include:

1. Std 3 Years
2. Temporary permission (5 Years). Site to be returned to former condition thereafter
3. Approved plans
4. Site investigation plus report of contamination & remediation
5. Land gas site investigation
6. Noise & dust control scheme
7. Hours of construction (no bonfires)
8. Tree/vegetation protection measures
9. Hard landscaping & boundary treatment (incl. fences)
10. Soft landscaping & play equipment
11. Landscape maintenance (implementation)
12. Replacement planting (5 yrs.)
13. Street lighting (details)
14. Secure refuse storage & collection (details of enclosure)
15. Litter collection

Informatives to include:

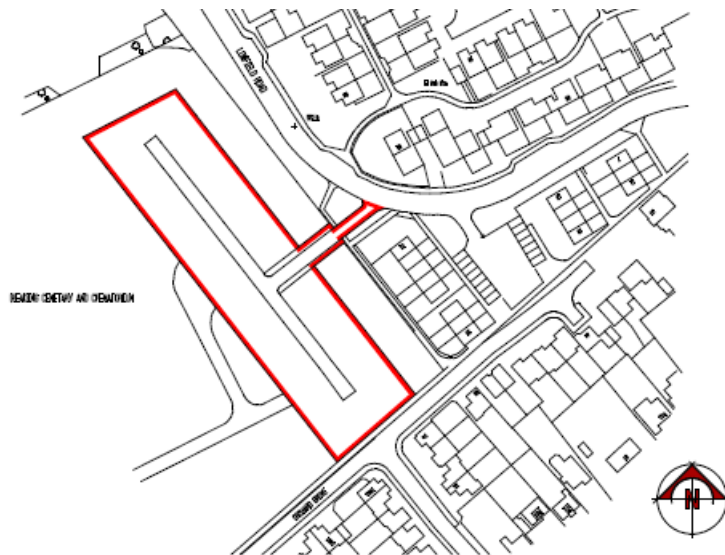
1. Terms & conditions
2. Positive and proactive approach
3. Pre-commencement conditions and fees
4. Building Regulations (noise insulation/fire safety)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site (approx. 0.6 hectare in area) is situated on the west side of Lowfield Road adjacent to the Reading Crematorium and Henley Road Cemetery. It forms part of Caversham Park, a Registered Park and Garden. There is open land to the north and a meadow to the west. There is also an unmanaged strip of vegetation adjacent to the NE boundary.
- 1.2 The site comprises vacant uneven ground with grass and scrub vegetation

that slopes marginally downwards to the south. There is a central surfaced road and the remnants of concrete pads on either side where mobile homes were positioned as part of the previous use of the site until 2006. The site boundaries are lined with a belt of trees and vegetation along all perimeters excluding the SW part adjacent to the cemetery. There are few significant trees within the site, with most towards the SW corner and southern boundary including a mature willow and two oaks. There is a vehicle access entrance from Lowfield Road at the mid-point of the eastern boundary.

- 1.3 The site is allocated for housing development in the Reading Borough, Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015). Most of the site excluding the section to the SE of the entrance and the southern boundary alongside Orchard Grove is designated as contaminated land or improved grassland habitat.



Site entrance in Lowfield Road (looking south)



Looking south towards Orchard Grove



Looking north towards Caversham Park

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Temporary planning permission for 5 years is sought for 28 no. (2 bedroom) two-storeys in height temporary accommodation units constructed of timber cladding and arranged either side of the existing access road. These units are to provide for homeless households. The Council has experienced a significant increase in the number of such households seeking assistance over the past three years. The proposal forms part of the wider housing strategy for the next 5 years.

- 2.2 The site will be laid out in a linear format and follows the previous arrangement for mobile homes which were placed either side of the central road. This layout makes the most efficient use of space and is a cost effective solution in terms of ease of construction, connection to utility services and ongoing management. There will be 7 no. blocks comprising 4 no. modular units with 2 units stacked above 2 ground floor units. There will be communal amenity space and car parking located adjacent to each block. Between each unit a 'service strip' of 1m will be provided.
- 2.3 Each block is proposed to be clad externally with a natural timber finish and single ply membrane roof (slate grey colour); UPVC windows and doors and painted metal staircases. Canopies will be provided above the door at the top of the external staircase. The two floor blocks will be approximately 5 metres in height with a footprint of approx. 126 square metres.
- 2.4 Each residential unit will have a Gross Internal Area of 50.6 square metres comprising a double or twin sized bedroom at either end with a hall, shower room, kitchen-diner and living room between. The bedrooms will be 12.2 sqm. and the living areas approx. 24.4 sqm.
- 2.5 The existing access from Lowfield Road will be used to gain vehicular and pedestrian access into the site. A total of 32 car parking spaces, with one space allocated per unit plus four visitor spaces will be provided. Bicycle sheds are proposed within the amenity area for each block. Each unit will be allocated a shed which has sufficient space to accommodate 2 no. bicycles. All ground floor units will be provided with ramps for the safe access/egress of pushchairs or wheelchairs.
- 2.6 The site layout also incorporates shared amenity spaces adjacent to each of the individual seven blocks to include play space, drying areas and refuse bin storage. A landscaped communal recreation/play area for use by all residents is to be provided at the southern end of the site to include various children's play equipment (subject to revised details to be agreed with Env & Neighbourhood Services) and seating. A similar informal open amenity area of about half the size (without play equipment) would be created to the north end of the site.
- 2.7 The site's perimeter is occupied by an established tree/hedgerow belt which largely screens the site from the adjacent cemetery and nearby Caversham Park. Within the two communal amenity green spaces at either end of the site the boundaries will be enhanced by the use of shrub and tree planting. The existing close 1.8 metre high boarded fence boundary of the site is to be retained and as part of the landscaping proposals, the informal play and recreation spaces would incorporate natural materials in the various features. Within the green spaces, native planting species will be favoured in order to create habitats for wildlife which will help to integrate the proposals within the existing landscape surroundings.

2.8 The landscape design for the communal gardens and along the street aims to create a sense of place through definition of each garden with planting, amenity grass with hedgerow against the boundary close board fence. To the rear of the parking spaces there will be low shrub planting to soften the transition from the street to the private communal gardens. Within the communal garden there would be storage and refuse areas and a hard surfacing area for drying. Standard street lighting columns would be installed at the requisite intervals along the entrance road and central access.

2.9 The application is being reported to your meeting because the applicant and land owner is Reading Borough Council (Regulation 3 Application) and upon the further request of Councillor Stanford-Beale (Peppard Ward) with regard to the potential amenity impacts on the local residents. It is also a major application.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 930753 Use of land as mobile home site for period of 5 Years PER 10.2.1994

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Statutory:

None

4.2 Non-statutory:

RBC Environmental Protection & Nuisance: Recommends conditions regarding:

- site investigation to assess potential contamination plus remediation, implementation and report of contamination;
 - Land gas site investigation;
 - Noise & dust control scheme; and
 - Hours of construction (no bonfires etc.)
- Informative re. Building Regulations (noise insulation between properties).

RBC Transport Strategy: No objection with the following comments:

- Parking provision (32 spaces) is below minimum standard for Zone 3 (42 plus 7 visitors spaces) but acceptable as are bicycle sheds for each unit
- Visibility splays of 2.4m x 70m are required to be shown on drawings plus bin storage no more than 15m from access (Revised Plan received 15th June)

RBC Natural Environment Officer (Trees & Landscape): Acceptable as proposal uses the same footprint as before (does not encroach on perimeter vegetation) subject to conditions regarding:

- Details of tree/vegetation protection measures (Heras type fencing)
- Details of hard landscaping/boundary treatment including fences open to wildlife
- Soft landscaping and play equipment prior to occupation
- Implementation of landscape maintenance
- Replacement planting (5yrs.)

RBC Natural Environment (Ecology): No objection with the following comments:

- ecological report submitted is to an appropriate standard and concludes that the risk of protected species being affected by the proposals is minimal
- the landscaping scheme is predominantly native and wildlife friendly species and as such is satisfactory.

RBC Environmental Health (Housing): No objection subject to meeting Building Regulations (fire safety)

RBC Housing Strategy (Property): No objection - valuable contribution (quality temporary accommodation) to meet the needs of homeless in Reading.

RBC Env & Neighbourhood Services (Policy & Projects): No objection subject to following details & information:

- play area/equipment including layout;
- surfacing;
- provision of entrance gates;
- litter bin;
- seat;
- alternative to wooden stepping stones (slippery when wet) and climbing wood (dangerous); plus
- who will inspect/maintain the play area?

RBC Education Division: Comments to be reported in and update to this report.

4.3 Neighbour Notification:

Properties at Nos. 1-17 (All) and 34-47 (All) Orchard Grove; 13-35 (Odds) and 20-58 (Evens) Lowfield Road; and 1-4 (All) Galsworthy Drive plus Reading Crematorium & Henley Road Cemetery and BBC - Caversham Park were consulted on 10th May 2016. In addition, two site notices were displayed on 11th May 2016.

From the 67 residents notified there have been 25 responses and in addition a further 17 representations (Total 42 OBJECTIONS) received plus 1 IN SUPPORT with the following issues and concerns raised:

Previous Use:

- previous use of site (anti-social/abusive behaviour - crime, drugs, break-ins, vandalism, fence damage, fire, rubbish, noise, untidiness, broken glass, parking)
- undesirable characters/type of people associated with trouble

Proposed Use:

- will there be a limit on 56 persons/5 years? (buildings, new trees & playground look permanent)
- who will these homes be for? (homeless/RBC residents?)

Housing Policy:

- no 3-bed houses in mix (contrary to Policy DM5)
- alternative/better uses for land? (park or cemetery land)
- does not reflect long term housing strategy in Borough (housing situation/demand in Reading will not change in 5yrs.)
- temporary accom. no better than B&B/better to develop permanent housing or integrate smaller numbers elsewhere in Borough
- contrary to planning policy (prev. housing project failed)
- lack of RBC understanding, respect & common sense/arrogant
- why here? (derelict homes elsewhere in Reading)
- short term/justified by financial cost (avoids CIL charges)
- will maximise site use (not comparable to previous caravan use)
- current housing crisis is similar to post WWII (more temp housing sites in Katesgrove?) IN SUPPORT
- principle of temp housing accepted (as good as a small flat) IN SUPPORT

Traffic, Highways & Access:

- dangerous site access on bend (poor visibility)
- additional traffic on busy road (high speeds)
- potential accidents - school children cross here
- lack of footpaths outside site
- insufficient parking (how managed?)/additional parking in locality

Effects On Character & Amenities Of Area:

- temporary buildings: 5m high/appearance out of character with surrounding area - flat roofs, unsightly modular design (portacabins, barracks, hostel or prison-like) will spoil views - visible above tree line - plus high density
- character of area is quiet/well maintained including cemetery & crematorium with outside services & burials
- possible loss of trees/inadequate landscaping (for screening/privacy)
- noise from traffic generated/families with children

- construction period disruption/noise
- protected species (owl, bats) have been seen or heard on site

Impacts On Community:

- pressure on local schools & doctors, shops & services - Caversham is overcrowded (infrastructure can't support)
- effect on local community as a whole incl. safety (families/children)
- limited access to public transport & local "weekly" shops for occupants
- house prices
- new (permanent) play area would be better in nearby Farnham Rd
- path alongside crematorium creates opportunities for burglaries
- costs of policing
- travel distances to schools

Consultations:

- no local engagement/consultation before application
- insufficient consultations (100 letters?)
- site notice inadequate

5. RELEVANT POLICY AND GUIDANCE

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

5.2 NPPF Paragraph 50 states the need for Local Planning Authorities to *"plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community ... and to identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand."*

5.3 The following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015)

- CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design
- CS2 Waste Minimisation
- CS4 Accessibility and the intensity of development
- CS5 Inclusive Access
- CS7 Design and the Public Realm
- CS16 Affordable Housing
- CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy
- CS24 Car/Cycle Parking
- CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

CS34 Pollution and Water Resources
CS36 Biodiversity and Geology
CS37 Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space
CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

**Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012
(Altered 2015)**

SD1 Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development
DM1 Adaptation to Climate Change
DM4 Safeguarding Amenity
DM5 Housing Mix
DM6 Affordable Housing
DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space
DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
DM17 Green Network
DM18 Tree Planting
SA8h Other Sites for Housing Development (Land at Lowfield Road)
SA17 Major Landscape Feature

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Affordable Housing SPD 2013
RBC Annual Monitoring Report (Housing) 2014-2015
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011
Residential Conversions SPD 2013

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 The main issue to be considered are:

- a) Housing need;
- b) Housing policy and principle;
- c) Effects on the character of the area;
- d) Impacts on amenities of neighbouring occupiers;
- e) Access, traffic & highways issues;
- f) Amenities of future occupants;
- g) Safety, security & site management
- h) Other issues (site contamination, ecology, sustainability, local infrastructure)

Housing need

6.2 The Council's Environment & Neighbourhood Services Department has identified a significant increase in the number of homeless households approaching the Council for assistance over the past three years. The number of households that the Council has a statutory duty to house increased from 148 in 2012/13 and 218 (2013/14) to 339 in 2014/15. A significant number of these households have been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation with no alternative accommodation available.

6.3 In a report to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee in November 2015 relating to the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2015-

2020, this increase was explained thus:

“Reading’s economy is such that housing is in high demand across all tenures and house prices are amongst the highest outside London. A number of factors have resulted in an increase of homeless households. The cost of renting in the private sector has increased, driven by factors including fewer households buying property, high demand from student and young professional markets, and households moving out of London to seek more affordable accommodation. Landlord concern about the impact of Universal Credit and a rising market has led to a reduced willingness to house benefit claimants and increasing private sector evictions, often through no fault of the tenant.”

- 6.4 The report also identifies that the availability of affordable housing is in scarce supply, stating that:

“...due to the limited pipeline of new build affordable housing, reducing social housing stock through Right to Buy sales, high land prices, and a reducing supply of affordable private rented sector housing at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels (Housing Benefit will only be paid up to this amount). Further, new measures announced in the Chancellor’s autumn budget (and flowing through into primary legislation) have dramatically reduced the Council’s capacity to deliver its planned programme of new Council housing - resulting in an estimated 200 fewer new homes being developed over the coming 5 years.”

- 6.5 Due to a shortage of affordable permanent accommodation, the use of temporary accommodation and bed & breakfast (B&B) has grown - with an increase in the number of placements and length of stay over recent years. This is unsuitable, unsettling and disruptive for homeless households. The sharply increasing demand in Reading for emergency housing has also led to a need to make B&B placements out of the Borough in some instances, which creates further problems for households.

- 6.6 To overcome this and to ensure the Council fulfils its duty to accommodate these households, the Draft Homeless Strategy 2015-2020 seeks to introduce measures which will firstly reduce homelessness; reduce the use of B&B accommodation by increasing the supply of temporary accommodation; and increase the supply of permanent affordable housing. Accordingly, the Council is looking at all options to better meet the needs of these households that would keep local people in the Borough and is more cost-effective than paying for Bed & Breakfast.

- 6.7 In line with the Council’s emerging Homeless Strategy 2015-2020, the site at Lowfield Road has been identified and approved by the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee (HNL Committee) as a suitable

site for temporary modular accommodation.

- 6.8 The Council's rationale for the scheme to be temporary relates to the availability of funding. At this stage, the HNL Committee have granted the expenditure of £1.2 million from the Housing Revenue Account for the site's development, including site clearance, provision of services and procurement of the units. Realistically, it would not be feasible to develop permanent housing on such a limited budget.

Housing policy and principle

- 6.9 The proposal forms part of the Council's wider strategy for the next 5 years as the temporary use of this site responds to the sharp increase in homelessness which needs to be accommodated immediately. In effect the proposal represents a short term cost effective solution to alleviate the rising levels of homelessness, given the restricted availability of funding.
- 6.10 Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy deals predominantly with the thresholds and levels of provision of affordable housing associated with various types and scales of development. The proposal is for a 100% affordable site. Policy DM6 of the SDPD states that the Council "*will assess the site size, suitability and type of units to be delivered in relation to the current evidence of identified needs. An appropriate tenure mix will be sought which will include social rented, affordable rent, intermediate rent and shared ownership.*"
- 6.11 Priority needs for 2014 were stated to be family sized housing, specialist accommodation for vulnerable people and extra care housing. Policy DM5 of the SDPD relates to housing mix and, for developments of more than 10 dwellings, states that at least 50% of dwellings should be of 3 bedrooms or more, having regard to all other material considerations.
- 6.12 However, the scale and temporary nature of this development means that the overall balance of the surrounding local community would not be altered in the long term and that there would continue to be a range of permanent dwelling types to meet the requirements for different people at different stages of their life.
- 6.13 Policy SA8h of the SDPD allocates the application site for housing development and states that is suitable for residential development of 21-34 dwellings but that the potential for contamination and important landscape close to the site should be considered. The policy supporting text identifies that there is potential for allocated sites such as the application site to accommodate other uses which have not been anticipated by the Local Plan. This includes the potential for specialist housing provision for groups such as vulnerable people. Differing uses for these sites could reduce the amount of housing allocated for the site. This will be appropriate provided that it does not harm the chances of

delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy.

- 6.14 The scale of development is comparable to the number of units in residential settings in other Council temporary accommodation, and considerably smaller than one existing block on Basingstoke Rd. The number of units proposed for the site has nonetheless been limited to what is considered to be manageable for temporary accommodation units. A temporary permission for this site would give the Council control over future disposal and use of the land should housing needs change. In the meantime, the Council would continue to re-assess housing needs and consider all options at that time. If at the end of the 5 year period there is still an identified need for temporary accommodation on this site a further application seeking renewal could be submitted.

Effects on the character of the area

- 6.15 Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development is of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. Layout, landscape, density, scale and materials will be assessed.
- 6.16 The site is noted to be a 'transitional' space located between an area of open space to the north and west and residential to the east and south. As such, strong focus has been given to site landscaping. Timber cladding for the units is considered an acceptable material as it is noted that a number of properties within the locality have clad detailing.
- 6.17 Policy DM18 of the SDPD seeks to make provision for tree planting within sites to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Policy CS38 of the Core strategy protects trees, hedges and woodlands whilst looking to extend vegetation cover where possible. The boundary tree/hedgerow retention and new planting and landscaping proposals within the site (described in 2.7-2.8 above) would thus achieve the objectives of these policies.
- 6.18 Policy SA17 of the SDPD lists the areas of the Borough considered to be Major Landscape Features to be applied with Policy CS37 of the Core Strategy which confirms that planning permission will not be granted for development that would detract from the character and appearance of such a feature.
- 6.19 The height of the buildings and their natural appearance will ensure minimal impact to the nearby 'Major Landscape Feature' of Caversham Park (including Reading Crematorium and Henley Road Cemetery) which is a Registered Park and Garden. It should be noted that the site has remained derelict for 10 years and thus contributes little visually to the setting of Caversham Park. The temporary proposals would therefore enhance the site's existing appearance.

- 6.20 Policy DM17 of the SDPD requires new development to provide open space and landscaping within a scheme to maintain or link into and thus consolidate the existing Green Network. The proposals within the site layout for green spaces and planting would accord with the policy.
- 6.21 In summary, the proposal responds positively to its local context by providing a design which is suitable for the site given its transitional location between Caversham Park and an established residential area. In terms of impacts upon the adjacent landscape and heritage designation, the existing vegetation will largely screen the development from Caversham Park, particularly given the low rise scale of the development and additional landscaping. The proposals represent a temporary improvement to the site which currently brings no benefit to the setting of Caversham Park.

Impacts on amenities of neighbouring occupiers

- 6.22 Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy states that development should respond positively to their local context and create safe and accessible environments where fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. It should address the needs of all in society and be visually attractive with high quality built forms and spaces.
- 6.23 Policy DM4 of the SDPD seeks to safeguard residential amenities and living environments and in particular whether developments will cause significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of privacy, noise and disturbance, lighting or crime and safety etc.
- 6.24 The site is enclosed with an established belt of hedgerow along all boundaries which screens much of the site from most nearby properties. As a result and due to the separation distances there will be no significant overlooking possible from the bedroom or living room windows of the top floor units. The proposals would thus have no effect on the privacy of the nearest properties on the west side of Lowfield Road (which are located more than 25 metres to the east) or those in Orchard Grove beyond the footpath to the south (40m plus). Access to sunlight and daylight for these properties would be unaffected whilst the street lighting installations proposed for the site (details of which would be requested by condition) are to be kept to the minimum to ensure that these are not intrusive.
- 6.25 It is concluded that there would be no dominant visual or overbearing effects from the development and no other significant harm through noise or disturbance caused to the detriment of the amenities of the nearest neighbouring occupiers in these respects. The site management concerns raised in consultations are considered under a separate heading in the report below.

Access, traffic & highways issues

- 6.26 Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy seeks to implement the Reading Transport Strategy by ensuring that development should contribute to the provision of a balanced transport network and improved accessibility generally with alternatives to the use of private cars (such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport). In relation to the scale and intensity of the development, Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy assesses the level of such accessibility to local pedestrian routes and bus services.
- 6.27 Policy DM12 of the SDPD permits development where the proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network including pedestrians and cyclists.
- 6.28 The Council's Transport Strategy Officer has approved a revised plan indicating that adequate visibility splays at the site access in Lowfield Road are fully achievable. The location of the refuse bin collection point Shown has also been agreed alongside the internal road inside the site entrance. The parking provision and layout associated with the development has been accepted. The number of spaces to be provided is less than the standard set out in the Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (1.5 spaces per dwelling plus 1 visitor space per 4 dwellings) however there is additional capacity within the site if needed and a good level of accessibility to public transport whilst the nature of the use means that lower levels of car ownership are likely.

Amenities of future occupants

- 6.29 Policy DM4 of the SDPD seeks to safeguard residential amenities and living environments of existing or new residential properties in terms of privacy, noise and disturbance, lighting or crime and safety etc. Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy considers how the urban design objectives of a development should create safe and accessible environments that are usable and understood by all who use them and with good high quality built form and spaces.
- 6.30 Policy DM10 of the SPDP states that dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal (in the case of flats) outdoor open space that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, refuse storage and drying space. These outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the area and be related to the main entrances, enhancing the perception of safety for the residents and general public without being compromised by overlooking or overshadowing etc. The proposed layout demonstrates that the site is large enough to accommodate such outdoor amenity space for the future occupants.
- 6.31 The proposed layout and landscaping scheme seek to provide a visually

attractive and safe environment for occupants. Parking and communal amenity areas are located immediately adjacent to each block, providing adequate provision of outdoor amenity space including passive surveillance of these areas and parked vehicles.

- 6.32 Each unit is 50.6 sqm, which for the type of development proposed which is intended to be occupied by households for only a temporary period (typically 1-2 years) is considered to provide a satisfactory level of living accommodation and standard of residential amenity.
- 6.33 For instance, the Council's adopted floorspace standards in the Residential Conversions SPD set a minimum of 6.5 sqm (for a 1 person bedroom), 10.5 sqm (2p bedroom) and 7 sqm for a kitchen. These standards are strictly applicable to Houses of Multiple Occupation, but may nonetheless be applied to this development as minimum standards to ensure sufficient space for temporary occupation. The proposed units exceed these standards with bedroom sizes of approximately 12 sqm and a living area of approx. 24 sq m. The floorspaces proposed are therefore sufficient to meet the short term needs of prospective occupiers.
- 6.34 Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy also promotes layouts and designs that provide adequate space for waste storage and recycling and the bin storage location would allow the occupants of the units to access their refuse for collection and recycling safely.
- 6.35 In summary, the proposal would provide suitable living accommodation for the temporary occupiers of these units and as such is in accordance with the relevant LDF Policies CS2, CS7 and DM10.

Safety, security & site management

- 6.36 As stated, Policy DM4 of the SDPD considers the potential for detrimental impacts to the living environment of existing or residential properties including noise and disturbance, crime and safety etc. These potential impacts have been described by local residents' in recalling various incidents associated with the previous use of the site for temporary housing and those problems have been acknowledged by the Council.
- 6.37 However, there is no evidence that there will be such occurrences. In any case, planning permission could not be withheld for this reason unless there would be demonstrable material harm or the development clearly conflicted with adopted policy.
- 6.38 Nonetheless, in view of the number of concerns raised on this issue, the Council has undertaken to ensure that services are in place to minimise as much as possible any possible problems for local residents that may arise. The following measures demonstrate the management techniques that would be put in place:

- all households who are allocated temporary accommodation will undergo an assessment to determine whether they have any support needs and if so will be allocated a support worker to assist them in addressing particular areas of need and helping them to sustain their accommodation.
- a Housing Officer will visit the property regularly to ensure that it is being maintained properly and that tenants are abiding by the terms of their licence agreements. They will also pick up any areas of concern tenants have and link them into local services.
- an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer will have responsibility for dealing with any issues that may arise and will take swift remedial action where required.
- tenants will also be offered a range of debt, budgeting and employment advice should they require it.

6.39 Apart from the welfare of the occupants, the general maintenance, safety and security of the whole site, in particular the communal amenity spaces and children's play areas, would be a priority for the Council Housing Officer. The management of the play area will be further subject to an annual inspection of the equipment itself and surrounding surfaces with any repairs/replacement being undertaken as required. Reading Borough Council's own Housing Management Team will have full responsibility for the site using statutory powers whilst the site maintenance duties would be directed to Property Services.

6.40 Members of the general public and the police would be advised by letter and/or notice(s) displayed around the site boundaries closest to existing dwellings of the name and contact details of a person within the Council should there be a need to report any incidents or concerns that need to be investigated.

6.41 In addition to the management controls described, a number of suitable conditions are also recommended that are intended to prevent other significant nuisances arising and continuing uncontrolled. Such matters as the street lighting, litter collection, vandal proof new fencing and secure refuse storage can all be controlled through suitably worded conditions.

6.42 With such management controls, it is considered that the amenities of local residents and other nearby occupiers would be adequately safeguarded.

Other issues

Site Contamination:

6.43 Policy CS34 of the Core Strategy permits development where it would not

damage the environment through air, land, noise or light pollution; where it would preserve ground surface water quality and where existing water and sewerage treatment infrastructure are adequate. Proposals sensitive to pollution levels will be permitted in areas where these are low or where mitigation measures can be provided. Where development is proposed on land affected by contamination it should be demonstrated that satisfactory remediation is possible.

- 6.44 Policy SA8h of the SDPD identifies possible land contamination issues. As such, a Phase I Geotechnical Survey has been undertaken to ascertain the likely risks. The survey concludes that the risk to human health and the environment from potential contamination is low to moderate. The report suggests that land stability is not an issue. If land remediation is required however, this could satisfactorily be undertaken and secured through a planning condition requiring site investigation as necessary. Accordingly, the proposals comply with Policy CS34.

Ecology:

- 6.45 Policy CS36 of the Core Strategy states that development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site. Sites with recognised biodiversity value are to be protected from adverse impacts whilst those designated as wildlife sites are fully safeguarded. Proposals which would threaten an established wildlife link or network of such will not be permitted.
- 6.46 In accordance with Policy DM18 of the SDPD, new development should make provision for tree planting within the application site to maintain the character and appearance of the area and provide for biodiversity.
- 6.47 The site's perimeter is occupied with dense vegetation and part of the vegetation along the north eastern site boundary is identified within the Council's Proposals Map (2012) as part of the wider Green Network under Policy DM17 of the SDPD. To enhance this network the proposed landscaping will include native species and will be incorporated with the wider vegetation to create a habitat corridor. Other ecological enhancements proposed including the installation of bird and bat boxes.
- 6.48 The ecology report submitted with the application concludes that the proposals would not adversely affect any ecological designations within the area and recommends mitigation measures during construction to ensure the proposals will not impact protected species. Further bat and bird surveys may be required prior to the commencement of development, and if required may be secured by planning condition. The proposed landscaping scheme including the mitigation measures and ecological enhancements expressed within the Phase I report ensures the proposal will not have an adverse impact upon local flora and fauna. As such, the proposals are in accordance with Policies CS36, DM17, DM18.

Sustainability:

- 6.49 Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy requires that new development maximises the use of energy efficiency and conservation measures in their design, layout and orientation and incorporates sustainable urban drainage facilities that minimise the size of impermeable areas so that peak run-off is reduced where possible and no greater than the original conditions of the site.
- 6.50 The proposed development is of modular construction. The construction methods for this type of development have improved significantly in recent years. Each unit is designed and engineered with particular attention to thermal and acoustic performance and have fire resistant walls. This means each unit is better insulated and is warmer, safer and quieter. All fenestrations will be installed with double glazed UPVC for optimum thermal performance and solar heat gain efficiency.
- 6.51 For maximum solar gain, the buildings are orientated within 20 degrees of north to maximise the windows facing the south west. The development is surrounded by a dense belt of vegetation which would act as a wind and rain buffer or provide shade to the amenity space at various times of the day. Cross ventilation and appropriate internal shading such as blinds and curtains will mitigate against the effects of overheating from the sun.
- 6.52 Water use will be conserved by installing flow restrictors to taps and showers, including installation of a dual flush toilet. During construction, waste residues will be minimal on the basis that the modular units will be constructed offsite. Any waste generated onsite will be dealt with responsibly and in accordance with the waste hierarchy, opting to reuse and recycle where possible. Adequate waste and recycling storage has been incorporated into the layout, ensuring that recyclables and waste is separated before collection.
- 6.53 No on-site energy generation is proposed due to the temporary nature of the development and limited availability to funding (scheme viability). As far as practicable, sustainability measures have been incorporated into the development.
- 6.54 A statement to confirm that the proposed site layout and characteristics are suitable for surface water run-off management has been requested. However, given the expansive and natural site borders and open space provision made within the site layout this is not likely to be an issue for concern.
- 6.55 The measures identified above confirm that the development would comply for the most part with the objectives of Policies CS1 and CS2 of the Core Strategy and DM1 of the SDPD, which in this instance is accepted in light of the identified urgent need for this type of accommodation.

Local Infrastructure:

- 6.56 The site comprises previously developed land within an urban area which is residential in character. The site is within close proximity to bus routes, local shops, schools and open space.

Facilities within walking distance of the site include

- Rosemore House (approx. 200m E) with local shops and takeaways;
- a mini recycling centre;
- public transport bus services from Lowfield Road (Reading Bus Route No. 23 every 20-30 mins and Community Link No. 28);
- Micklands Primary School (approx. 330m SW); and
- Caversham Park to the north

As such, the proposed use and its location is considered sustainable.

- 6.57 The Council's Education Service confirmed in the report to the Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Services Committee in November that this area has capacity in terms of the likely demand for school places which the accommodation would generate.

- 6.58 Community Infrastructure Levy charges do not apply to temporary structures and thus there is no requirement in this regard.

Matters Raised in Representation

- 6.59 These have been addressed elsewhere in the report, summarised in 4.3 above and under the relevant headings in the Appraisal.

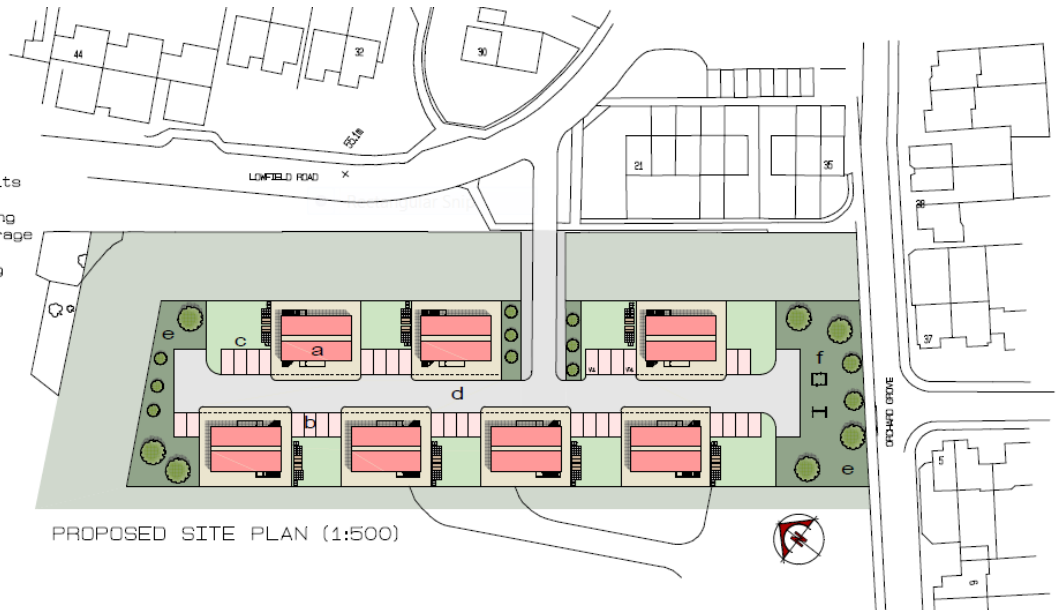
Equalities Act

- 6.60 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The current use being sought is comparable to that when this land was being used for temporary housing purposes until 2006. The application site is allocated under Policy SA8h of the adopted LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document for residential development. In the long term this land is therefore suitable for permanent dwellings. However there is a clearly identified and urgent need to provide temporary accommodation for homeless persons and families in the Borough, and the proposal is considered the most cost-effective short-term solution to help resolve this

SITE PLAN KEY
 a new dwelling units
 b car parking
 c amenity, including drying areas, storage and refuse
 e soft landscaping
 f play space

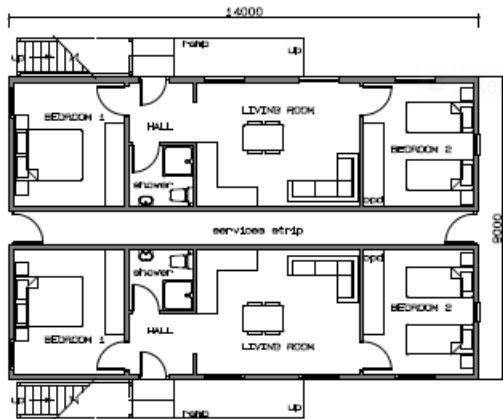


PROPOSED SITE PLAN (1:500)

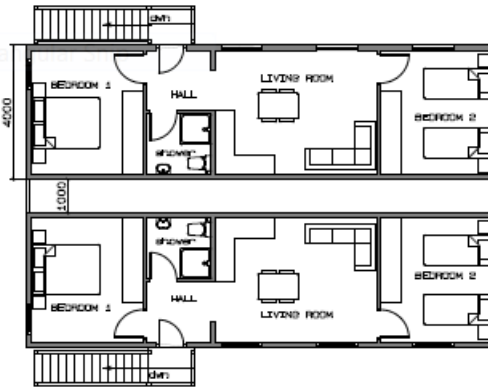


FRONTING ONTO ACCESS ROAD SIDE(S) FACING AWAY FROM ACCESS ROAD SIDE(S)
 PROPOSED ELEVATIONS & SECTION (1:100)

FINISHES:
 HALLS - GLED WITH ROBERTY - NATURAL TIMBER FLOORING
 KITCHEN - ALUMINIA EVAPORON GEMBLE FLY MEMBRANE - SLATE GREY
 KITCHENS - WILKIN PROTECTIVE OR LINO KITCHENS
 DOORS - 20 DOORS, 85% COMPOSITE CONSTRUCTION
 STAIRWAYS - PAINTED METAL
 SANITARIES - 30%



GROUND FLOOR
 PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS (1:50)



FIRST FLOOR



PROPOSED STREET SCENE (viewed from internal access road) (1:250)

