

Planning Reference No:	09/1252N
Application Address:	55-57 Remer Street Crewe CW1 4LU
Proposal:	Outline application for residential development
Applicant:	Mr R Harrison
Application Type:	Outline
Grid Reference:	370811357113
Ward:	Crewe East
Earliest Determination Date:	8 July 2009
Expiry Dated:	10 August 2009
Date of Officer's Site Visit:	10 June 2009
Date Report Prepared:	17 July 2009
Constraints:	

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE

MAIN ISSUES:

- Impact on the character of the area
- Siting and design
- Impact on amenity
- Impact on highway safety
- Drainage issues
- Loss of employment site

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is to be determined by the Cheshire East Council Southern Planning Committee as the application relates to the creation of over ten residential units.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises a former fruit and vegetable warehouse building which is currently vacant and the surrounding hardstanding. The site is bounded by 2m high palisade fencing with hedging towards 248a Middlewich Road although this is not within the application site.

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Crewe and is surrounded by residential development.

3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This is an outline application for the erection of 12 dwellinghouses at land at 55- 57 Remer Street which is located to the rear of 53 Remer Street.

Approval is sought for access with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for subsequent approval.

There is an existing fruit and vegetable warehouse and car park on the site at present which are proposed to be removed as part of the proposals.

An indicative site layout plan has been submitted which shows a cul de sac formation with four sets of three terraced properties. Each property has a minimum of two off street car parking spaces.

4. RELEVANT HISTORY

None relevant

5. POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy

None relevant

Local Plan Policy

Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011

NE.9 Protected Species
BE.1 Amenity
BE.2 Design Standards
BE.3 Access And Parking
BE.4 Drainage, Utilities And Resources
E.7 Existing Employment Areas
RES.2 Unallocated Housing Sites
RES.3 Housing Densities
TRAN.5 Provision For Cyclists
TRAN.1 Public Transport
TRAN.9 Car Parking Standards

Other Material Considerations

SPD Development on Backland and Gardens 2008

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS3: Housing
PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

6. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways: No response at time of writing report

Environmental Health: No response at time of writing report

7. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of representation received from the occupiers of 43-51 Remer Street, 248a Middlewich Street, 6 Hawthorn Grove raising the following points:

- Concerns over drainage
- Request dwellings restricted to 2 storeys
- Concerns over access arrangements
- Concerns regarding overlooking and loss of privacy
- Concerns regarding increased flooding
- Concerns over noise and disturbance

8. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Protected Species Survey (May 2009 by Ecologically Bats)

- No evidence of bats
- No bat mitigation required
- Suggests best practice measures and conservation measures to enhance the development site for wildlife

Design and Access Statement (May 2009 by Building Plans and Design)

- Location is within walking distance of shops etc
- Existing building erected in 1987 and used as a fruit and vegetable business employing 28 staff
- Approximately 80 vehicles used the site at any one time
- Business hours of 6am-6pm Monday – Saturday
- Owners have tried to market the property for 6 months and advertised with Butters John Bee for 6 months
- Existing site area is exposed and vulnerable therefore the design and position of the proposed dwellings will help to reduce the risk of crime and opportunities for vandalism and also produce a more secure area for the existing houses in the immediate area
- Proposal meets the criteria within the relevant local plan policies and complies with the council's minimum spacing standards
- The proposed dwellings would be compatible with surrounding land uses and does not prejudice the amenity of future occupiers or the occupiers of adjacent properties
- The proposed dwellings would not generate such levels of traffic that the development would prejudice the safe movement of traffic on surrounding roads or have an adverse impact on neighbouring uses
- The proposed dwellings would not lead to an increase in air, noise or water pollution insofar as this might have an adverse effect on the other use of land.

9. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Residential Development and Housing Densities

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Crewe and is classed as an unallocated Brownfield site. RES.2 of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 states that development on such sites will be permitted subject to policies BE.1-BE.5. Residential development on the site is therefore acceptable in principle, subject to detailed matters of design, amenity, car parking, access and drainage considerations.

PPS3: Housing states that most additional housing development should be concentrated in urban areas. This should involve the more efficient use of land by maximising the re-use of brownfield urban land to minimise the amount of greenfield land being taken for new development. Annex B of PPS 3 (Housing) classes the curtilage of a building as previously developed land. Accordingly, the site is not regarded as greenfield. In light of this, and considering the proximity of this site in relation to public transport and local services, the broad principle of residential development in this location is considered acceptable. However, to fully accord with Policy RES.2 (Unallocated Housing Sites), the development must also be in keeping with the requirements of policies BE.1 – BE.5.

PPS3 does not offer any density threshold for new developments; it only stipulates a minimum of 30 dph. That said, policy RES.3 suggests between 30-50 dph where the quality of the local environment is not compromised and provided that this is on a scale in keeping with the character of the area. In this instance, the proposals achieve a density of 41.3 dph however regard must also be had to the character of the area which is at lower densities in this section of the Borough.

Loss of Employment Site

Policy E.7 states that loss of employment sites will only be permitted where the present use harms the character and amenities of the surrounding area, is not capable of satisfactory use for employment or it can be demonstrated that there would be no detrimental impact on the supply of employment land or premises in the borough.

Considerable pressure exists for the conversion of employment sites to non employment uses, such as housing, and the cumulative loss of such sites close to local centres of population would reduce the availability of local jobs, resulting in higher local unemployment and/ or increased commuting.

Inspectors have held that whilst a requirement for a marketing assessment is not explicit in the policy, some form of assessment of the current supply of employment land and premises in the Borough needs to be made along with the impact of the loss of sites on such provision.

In this instance, the existing business was relocated in 2007 and the business has since ceased trading. The Design and Access Statement indicates that the premises were advertised for 6 months privately and for 6 months with Butters John Bee latterly. This is a smaller unit which may be of benefit to a local employer seeking to increase the size of their premises. The applicant has failed to provide the necessary information to demonstrate that the building is no longer suitable for alternative employment uses. To permit the development would be contrary to policy E.7 within the Local Plan.

Design Standards

Both national and local plan policies relating to design promote high quality design which enhances the character of the built environment.

The character of the area comprises a mix of semidetached 1940/ 1950 two storey dwellings and detached and terraced 19th century dwellings.

The area is characterised by properties set back from the road frontage. There is even spacing between properties and a suburban development density.

The illustrative layout submitted proposes 12 dwellings in groups of three terraced properties in a cul de sac formation. Whilst layout is not to be determined at this stage it is considered that there is sufficient variation in existing dwelling styles and types and given the backland location, this layout is considered to respect the character and appearance of the area.

Whilst appearance is also reserved for subsequent approval the existence of a uniform build height necessitates a restrictive condition limiting the buildings to no more than 7.5m high. This will also ensure that the backland location which should remain in the background does not attract undue attention or become unduly prominent.

Amenity

The most pertinent issues relating to amenity relate to the impact of the development on neighbouring amenity through overlooking, visual intrusion, overshadowing and loss of light and the impact on the highways network. Highway safety issues are considered in the section below.

It is considered that the construction of a new housing development within an established residential area is compatible with surrounding land uses.

No's 5 and 6 Hawthorn Grove and No's 43-53 Remer Street have principal windows facing the development site. That said, this has been addressed within the indicative site layout which proposes blank gable ends facing no's 5 and 6 and principal elevations in excess of 21m away from the rear elevations of properties fronting Remer Street. Whilst this layout is indicative only, it demonstrates that any overlooking issue to these properties could be easily overcome.

In terms of the impact to no. 248a, this property has no windows facing the development site and the proposed dwellings do not raise any concerns relating to overdomination.

The proposals also appear to provide the minimum 50 sq. m of garden space required per dwelling.

Protected Species

Disused buildings are suitable habitats for bats which are listed as a protected species under schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Whilst this planning consent cannot implement other legislation, protected species are considered to be a material consideration in the determination of a planning application, and therefore any impact must be considered and mitigated accordingly.

Circular 06/2005 paragraph; 99 states that 'it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision.' This guidance does go on to state that 'developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of species being present.

A protected species survey has been submitted with the application which indicates that no evidence of bats was found and suggests best practice measures to be employed during demolition. If planning permission is issued this can be conditioned accordingly.

Car Parking and Access

PPG13 promotes a flexible approach to car parking standards and seeks promote more sustainable transport choices through spatial planning.

Manual for Streets offers more inventive options for car parking within residential settings for larger schemes such as this.

'Car Parking What Works Where' also suggests alternative means of accommodating car parking, however given the constraints relating to the size of the site, available access points and the character of Remer Street as a classified road providing a main thoroughfare into Crewe, off street car parking provision will be necessary.

Policies TRAN.1 seeks to encourage developments well served by public transport.

The proposals show the provision of two car parking spaces per dwelling which accords with the minimum requirements for a dwelling within Appendix 8.1.

The proposals will utilise the existing point of access which is over 5m wide and has good visibility. The layout provides sufficient space to manoeuvre a vehicle so that motorvehicles can exit the site in a forward gear.

The views of the Highways engineer are awaited.

Drainage

The proposals will be drained via the mains sewer; in light of the comments from neighbours regarding the drainage issues within the local area a drainage scheme will be conditioned accordingly.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The proposals are acceptable in terms of the impact on protected species, highway safety, drainage and neighbouring amenity. However, there are fundamental concerns regarding the loss of an employment site and which warrant a refusal of planning permission.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

REFUSE Reasons

1. The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposals will result in the loss of an employment site. The submission fails to demonstrate that the present use harms the character or amenities of the area and that the site is not capable of satisfactory use for employment or that there will be no detrimental impact on the supply of employment land or premises in the locality in the event that the development is allowed. To allow the development would be contrary to Policy E.7 (Existing Employment Sites) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011.

LOCATION PLAN:



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