

Application No: 11/4548N
Location: LAND SOUTH OF NEWCASTLE ROAD, HOUGH
Proposal: Outline Application for Development of Fourteen 3 & 4 Bed Semi-Detached Affordable Houses
Applicant: Mr T Bartlam
Expiry Date: 15-Jun-2012

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Housing Need
- Sustainability of the Site
- Amenity
- Design
- Flood Prevention/Drainage
- Highways
- Renewable Energy Provision
- Trees
- Ecology

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

REFERRAL

The application is referred to the Southern Planning Committee as the application relates to a residential development of more than 10 dwellings.

There has also been a call-in request from Cllr Clowes for the following reason;

'The Hough and Chorlton Parish Council and local residents have contacted me to express deep concerns regarding this application which they believe are worthy of material consideration.

Their material concerns are as follows:-

- 1 No housing need, affordable or otherwise has been identified within the community following the Housing Needs Assessment Survey (2011 – 2030)*
- 2 It contravenes current planning guidelines and policies (as stated and identified above).*
- 3 Potential Brownfield sites have been by-passed in preference to opportunistic development of Green Field land.*
- 4 This proposal is situated outside the established settlement boundaries of Hough Village.*

5 This proposal is a physical and visual intrusion into the Open Countryside which is detrimental to the visual amenity of the village.

6 In the light of very limited village amenities, this application represents an unsustainable development that cannot materially support or create local employment opportunities or services for local people associated with the Village or surrounding Parish Area.

7 In a small village such as Hough, this development, situated beyond the settlement boundaries will be undermined by a physical separation from the community that will undermine and prohibit community cohesion and effective integration.

It is also felt that this application fails, in any particular, to adhere to the principles of economic, social or ecological sustainable development as described in the new National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)'

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

This application relates to a parcel of land to the southern side of Newcastle Road within the Open Countryside as defined by the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. Immediately to the west of the site is the settlement of Hough.

The application is currently undeveloped land which is currently in agricultural use. To the west of the site is the detached residential property and barn which form Corner Farm, to the south of the site is agricultural land and to the west of the site is a wooded area which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

To the front of the site is four large Poplar trees, there is an existing field gate to north-west corner of the site.

2. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This is an outline application for the erection of 14 dwellings. Access is to be determined at this stage with all other matters reserved.

3. PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

The site has no planning history.

4. PLANNING POLICIES

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework

Local Plan Policy

BE.1 (Amenity)

BE.2 (Design Standards)

BE.3 (Access and Parking)

BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)

BE.5 (Infrastructure)

NE.2 (Open Countryside)

NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats)

NE.9 (Protected Species)
RES.2 (Unallocated Housing Sites)
RES.3 (Housing Densities)
RES.8 (Affordable Housing in Rural Areas outside Settlement Boundaries)

Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1 – Spatial Principles
DP2 – Promote Sustainable Communities
DP4 – Make the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure
RDF2 – Rural Areas
L5 – Affordable Housing
EM18 – Decentralised Energy Supply

Other Considerations

The EC Habitats Directive 1992
Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010
Circular 6/2005 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System
Interim Planning Statement Affordable Housing
Interim Planning Statement Release of Housing Land
Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010

5. OBSERVATIONS OF CONSULTEES

United Utilities: No objection; the site must be drained on a separate system with only foul drainage connected to the foul sewer.

Highways Authority: Subject to a safety audit and some minor amendments, in principal there are no highways objections. The safety audit will be covered under a section 38 agreement and after reviewing the design the Highways Authority are happy that in design terms, the access, visibility and crossing facilities are all designed in accordance with CEC specification.

Environmental Health: Conditions suggested in relation to construction hours and pile driving. An advisory note is suggested in relation to contaminated land.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust: The Cheshire Wildlife Trust has the following comments to make;

- Agree with Natural England that the development will not have an impact upon the Wybunbury Moss SSSI.
- It would have been useful to view the bird surveys carried out by the Hough Residents Action Group. However the number of breeding birds on site is at odds with the available site habitat.
- There are some inconsistencies relating to the assessment of ponds and their connectivity to the site.
- The Natural England standing advice suggests that GCN Surveys are required prior to determination.
- The indicative layout is likely to place undue stress on the existing TPO trees to the west of the site. There is likely to be damage to the canopies of the trees, the root spread and future pressures to reduce tree canopies.

Natural England: This application is in close proximity to Wybunbury Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, given the nature and scale of this proposal, Natural England raises no objection to the proposal being carried out according to the terms and conditions of the application and submitted plans on account of the impact on designated sites. In terms of protected species reference should be made to Natural England's Standing Advice.

6. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of objection have been received from 164 households in the area raising the following points;

Principal of Development

- There is no great demand for housing in Hough
- The Parish Councils assessment does not find any need for affordable housing
- The site is outside the settlement boundary
- The site is within the Green Gap
- Contrary to local plan policies
- Brownfield sites should be developed first
- The site is not sustainable
- Impact upon the Green Belt
- Unfinished developments within Crewe
- The proposal is contrary to the NPPF
- The proposal does not comply with the interim planning policy on the release of housing land
- There should be no social housing in Hough

Infrastructure

- There is no infrastructure within Hough
- There is no employment within the village
- There are no local schools, shops or doctors
- The schools within Shavington are at capacity
- Leighton Hospital is full to capacity
- There is no public transport within Hough
- There is no provision for pedestrians

Design

- The development does not respect the character of the area
- Loss of rural character
- The proposal is high density and is not appropriate

Green issues

- Impact upon wildlife
- Loss of trees onto the site frontage
- Impact upon Wybunbury Moss SSSI
- Impact upon the TPO trees
- Impact upon protected species

Highways

- Road safety
- The site is located on a blind bend
- Poor visibility at the site access point
- Rope Lane should be widened
- The existing highway network is in a poor condition
- Increased traffic congestion

Other issues

- The sewer serving the site cannot cope with any more houses
- The Localism Bill requires the consideration of the views of the local community
- Lack of pre-application consultation
- Impact upon the setting of Hough Hall
- Allowing this development will make it harder to resist other schemes
- Poor internet connection in the area
- Drainage issues in the area
- There are more suitable sites within Shavington
- This is the first phase of a larger scheme
- Loss of agricultural land
- Increased flooding
- Increased pollution

A petition signed by 11 local residents has been received opposing the development.

An objection has been received from Cllr Brickhill raising the following points;

- Strongly object to planning application 11/4548 for 14 houses at Newcastle Rd /Pit Lane Hough
- The road junction is suicidal already without any additional traffic. Traffic on the main road does not slow down sufficiently for the bend and cannot see round it. Traffic turning right into Pit Lane from the Shavington direction cannot see oncoming traffic which can hit it from the front and also get rammed in the boot by following traffic that fails to slow down. Sometimes both happens. Minor RTCs are commonplace.
- There are quite enough applications for housing in Shavington (currently 250+ and likely to be 500+) with affordable 33%. With the policy of using industrial sites for housing there is likely to another thousand houses on the two Basford estates within a mile of this site. So there is no requirement for these houses providing in total 650 affordable homes
- Hough is a village of D E and F band houses. Affordable A or B band housing will be out of keeping with the remainder of the village.
- The site is outside the settlement boundary and within the green gap between Hough and Shavington
- The site is a green agricultural field providing interesting flora and fauna and protected trees.
- There is not sufficient infrastructure to support these extra houses. The village already suffers from power outages and reduced voltages. The water pressure often reduces to a trickle. The sewers overflow when it rains heavily. There is no school, no shops, no doctors just a gastro pub which wont interest affordable housing dwellers.
- There are no employment opportunities in Hough. No work time buses either.
- There is thus NO basis for any exception to any of the planning policies preventing development on this site.

- This essentially urban development is totally out of keeping with the rural nature of the village e.g. the scale character and appearance of the village. It will be totally out of place and ruin a quiet peaceful neighbourhood.

An objection has been received from Hough Residents Action Group raising the following points;

- The application should be refused this is based on a recent and extensive housing needs survey undertaken by the Hough & Chorlton Parish Council of all of the residents of Hough, as part of the 2011 LDF Place Shaping consultation exercise and also on the current planning policies.

- An extensive Housing Needs survey has been conducted by Hough & Chorlton Parish Council in which the overwhelming priority identified by respondents is that there is no need for any more housing in Hough and that providing more affordable housing is viewed by respondents as the lowest housing priority.

- The applicant base their case on an extrapolation of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) data that the Cheshire East Council produced in 2010, relating to the Shavington, Wybunbury and Stapeley wards and support it with an inadequate housing needs survey. The applicants Housing survey draws conclusions from 37 responses, only 6 of which were from Hough residents and a majority of which were from Shavington, which with a population in excess of over 3,000, would not form part of a rural housing needs survey.

- There are potential brownfield sites where there are empty properties in the Parish that could be brought back into use.

- In response to the Cheshire East Council 2011 Local Development Framework process, the Hough & Chorlton Parish Council's Parish Shaping Plan explicitly concluded that there was ample provision of housing within the Village of Hough and its surrounding areas, with no pressing need for new, mixed or affordable housing for the foreseeable future.

- The SHLAA completed by Cheshire East in 2010 contains at least 37 developable sites within 3.5 miles of this site being assessed for housing development, with a site capacity ranging from 670 houses to under 10 and all of those approved will have the requisite proportion of affordable housing within their planning conditions.

- There is no desire to support development that encroaches onto green space.

- Hough Village has no school, no retail presence, no bus service that would allow residents without access to a vehicle to attend regular full time work or local schools. As a result this is not sustainable development.

- It is questionable how the economics of such a build will be feasible.

- It is proposed that the foul water outflow would connect into the Pit Lane Sewer and use soakaways for rainwater. This sewer is already notoriously over used and has constant problems of flooding.

- Taking into account the amount of surface water generated from the proposed development and the current surrounding watercourses, this may cause flooding issues in the area.

- The proposal is contrary to PPS3

- The developer plans to remove hedgerow

- The number of homes on a proposed rural exception site such as this should be based on the housing need for this Parish. The type of tenure proposed is also inappropriate as a basis for a rural exception site.

- Damage to the adjacent TPO

- Of the 56 species of birds recorded in the area of the site, 9 are on the Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (BoCC3) Red List and 5 of these species are also categorised as Species of European Conservation Concern. A further 14 species are on the BoCC3 Amber List and 5 of these are also categorised as Species of European Conservation Concern.
- Several species of insects, amphibians and mammals populate this area, including potentially the great crested newt.
- There is no doubt that if the development of this site goes ahead this would result in significant loss of wildlife, including areas of habitat prioritised within the England Biodiversity Action Plan and that the ecological value of the protected wood and lake would be greatly diminished once they were surrounded by houses.
- Increased traffic would be a road safety hazard
- The access to the site is adjacent to a blind corner
- The area is not well served by public transport
- Existing pedestrian paths and cycle ways are well used for leisure, but will not in any way serve commuter purposes. Residents will have to rely on private cars.
- The Village has no school and the current school population across the area is almost at capacity, with very few places left at the local Primary and Junior Schools.
- There is no grocery store or retail facilities in the Village, the nearest being a garage in Shavington, which sells a very limited range of emergency provisions.
- There is a lack of any outdoor sports facilities and no designated equipped outdoor children's play area in the Village.
- The haste and overall lack of consultation implies a desperate attempt to utilise a disappearing Policy

7. PARISH COUNCIL

Hough and Chorlton Parish Council: In summary Hough & Chorlton Parish Council urge Cheshire East Council to refuse this application on the following grounds;

- No housing need, affordable or otherwise has been identified within the community following the Housing Needs Assessment Survey (2011-2030)
- It contravenes current planning guidelines and policies, namely Policy NE.2.
- Potential brownfield sites have been by-passed in preference to opportunistic development of Greenfield land
- The proposal is outside the Hough Settlement Boundary
- The proposal is a physical and visual intrusion into the Open Countryside which is detrimental to the visual amenity of the village
- In light of the very limited village amenities, the application represents an unsustainable development that cannot materially support or create local employment opportunities or services for local people associated with the village or the surrounding parish area
- In a small village such as Hough, this development situated beyond the settlement boundary will be undermined by a physical separation from the community that will undermine and prohibit community cohesion and effective integration.

Although the Parish Council are strongly against the application and will continue to oppose it vigorously, should the plans be approved, the Parish Council would like to make the following representations on any Heads of Agreement and ask that the Council take note and that these will form part of the planning report before the Planning Committee.

- To ensure that the Heads of Agreement submitted as part of the Applicant's submission includes a requirement for a sum of money from the sale proceeds of the land to be lodged in escrow, (i.e. a monetary bond) until the development is completely finalised, so if there is any failure on the part of the developer this sum can be used towards completing the development. We feel that this is critical to ensuring that the economics of the scheme do stack up and that it prevents a half finished development being left in the middle of our rural village.
- Furthermore, we would request that there be an obligation on the developer to develop in blocks of two or three houses and a restriction to move on to the next block until such time as the previous block has been physically completed. This would at least ensure that houses are more likely to be completed in full rather than a whole number of partly finished houses be left, if there are insufficient funds to complete the development.

8. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Design and Access Statement (Produced by Oligra Town planning and dated November 2011)

Phase 1 Habitat and Protected Species Survey (Produced by EVR Ecology and dated February 2012)

Planning Statement (Produced by Oligra Town planning and dated November 2011)

Localised Housing Needs Survey (Produced by Oligra Town planning and dated November 2011)

Addendum to Planning Statement Tenure (Produced by Oligra Town planning and dated December 2011)

These documents are available to view on the Councils website.

9. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

On 23rd March 2011 the Minister for Decentralisation Greg Clark published a statement entitled 'Planning for Growth'. On 15th June 2011 this was supplemented by a statement highlighting a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' which has now been published in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking this means;

'Where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:

- *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted'*

In relation to rural exception sites the NPPF at paragraph 54 states that;

'local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. Local planning authorities should in particular consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs'

The site is located outside the Hough Settlement Boundary and within the Open Countryside, where Policy NE.2 carries a general presumption against new residential development.

Policy RES.8 of the Replacement Local Plan makes an exception to the general policy of restraint for affordable housing, subject to compliance with three criteria which states that:

- the housing will meet the needs of people previously shown to be in local need in a survey specifically undertaken for that purpose;
- the site is in a sustainable location immediately adjacent to an existing settlement boundary
- the scale, layout and design of the scheme are appropriate to the character of the settlement.

In relation to the rural exception sites the Interim Planning Policy on Affordable Housing requires that a local housing needs survey is carried out before submitting a planning application in order to determine the extent of any need. Subject to need being identified the IPP identifies that *'Priority will be given to sites within or on the edge of villages with a reasonable level of services and public transport'*.

Housing Need

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010 (SHMA) shows that for the sub-area of Wybunbury & Shavington which is where Hough is located, there is a requirement for 155 new affordable homes between 2009/10 – 2013/14, this equates to 31 new affordable units per year, made up of a need for 5 x 1 bed units, 10 x 2 bed units, 4 x 3 bed units, 7 x 4/5 bed units and 4 x 1/2 bed older persons units. However, this information on its own is insufficient to identify the need in Hough and does not provide justification for a rural exceptions site in this parish.

The Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing states that *'In respect of rural housing schemes, the council will require that a local housing needs survey is carried out before submitting a planning application in order to establish the extent of any need'*. The IPS also states that *'Unless the survey indicates a need for such provision, planning permission will not be granted'*.

In support of the application a Rural Housing Needs Survey (RHNS) has been carried out by the applicant. However the focus of the survey was not in Hough where the proposed development is located. The RHNS carried out by the applicant was a sample survey of 150 households in the wider area of Shavington, Wybunbury and Hough.

Only 25 of the 150 households surveyed were from the Hough Parish. The response rate of the RHNS was 25% which is 37 households, split as 18 households from Shavington, 13 households from Wybunbury and 6 households from Hough.

The report gives the following concluding points;

- The 25% response rate identifies two key factors: demand for affordable housing from young adult dependents who will shortly seek to leave home and support for the provision of affordable housing
- Some young adults are expected to settle elsewhere in Cheshire East with those living in Hough and Wybunbury expected to leave within the next 2 to 3 years, whilst those living in Shavington are expected to leave within the next 3 to 5 years
- Affordability is a critical issue for those young adults about to enter the job market and for those already in employment
- 39% of all respondents were in favour of affordable housing being provided within their settlements

The response rate of 6 households from Hough does not give an accurate enough picture of affordable housing need in the area as the results will have to have been extrapolated. The developer has not provided the results for the 6 responses that he obtained from Hough but relied on the results from the other parishes. In particular he relies on the results from Shavington which has a population well in excess of 3000 and is therefore not rural. The Affordable Housing IPS states that in relation to Rural Exception sites *'The first stage will be a rigorous assessment of local housing needs by means of a survey of all households in the Parish'* which has not been done. Also point 4.8 of Oligra's Housing Needs Survey is not accurate; the reference in the Affordable Housing IPS to adjoining parishes is in relation to occupancy criteria.

Due to the limited nature of the evidence base of affordable housing need for Hough it is not possible to support the proposal as it is unclear if there is a need for 14 dwellings, or a need for 3 and 4 bed semi-detached units. In addition the proposal that all the units are provided as discounted for sale housing may not meet the affordable housing need for the area and does not meet the tenure mix that we would normally require which is 65% rented affordable housing and 35% intermediate affordable housing.

As there has not been a rigorous assessment of local housing need of all households within Hough, it is not possible to identify the need for such provision and this issue will form a reason for refusal.

It should be noted that a housing need survey has been conducted by Hough Parish Council. This questionnaire is based on opinions rather than facts and some results are not provided. Therefore it is considered that little weight can be given to this document.

Sustainability of the site

Letters of objection refer to Hough not being a sustainable settlement. However the proposal would meet the second point of Policy RES.8, which states that the site is;

'in a sustainable location, immediately adjacent to an existing settlement boundary (with reference to Policy RES.4)'

In this case the site is immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of Hough which is listed as a settlement within Policy RES.4.

In this case Hough has facilities in the form of a Public House, Village Hall, public open space and outdoor sports pitches. There is also a petrol station and small shop located 625 metres to the west of the site which can be accessed via an existing footpath. Given the wording contained within Policy RES.8 and the facilities available nearby it is considered that Hough is a sustainable settlement.

Amenity

The application is outline with only access to be determined at this stage. The indicative plan shows that a development can be achieved on this site without having a detrimental impact upon the adjoin property at Corner Farm.

Due to the large separation distances the development would not have a detrimental impact upon the residential amenities of any other property.

Design

The development would consist of two-storey dwellings at a density of 23 dwellings per hectare which is acceptable in this location. The indicative plan does have weaknesses in that it is car dominated in parts of the site and it would include an over-engineered internal highway layout. However as this is an outline application the appearance, scale, layout and landscaping will be determined at a later date.

It is considered that an appropriate design can be achieved as part of the reserved matters applications.

Flood Prevention/Drainage

A number of the letters of objection refer to drainage and flooding in the area. In this case the application is outline and such details would be agreed at a later date. As part of this application United Utilities have been consulted and raised no objection to the development subject to foul drainage being connected to the foul sewer. In terms of surface water run-off there would be opportunities to secure SUDS Drainage as part of the reserved matters applications.

Highways

The application is outline with access to be determined at this stage. A single vehicular access point is proposed and this would be positioned towards the western boundary of the site. Newcastle Road at this point has a 40mph speed limit and the access point would have visibility splays of 120m to the east and 120m to the west. The traffic generation from this site would be minimal given the number of dwellings proposed and would have no significant impact upon the highway network. The access arrangements are considered to be acceptable and no objection has been raised by the Highways Officer subject to a safety audit as part of a Section 38 Agreement.

Renewable Energy Provision

Policy EM18 (Decentralised Energy Supply) of the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 requires that *'all residential developments comprising 10 or more units should secure at least 10% of their renewable energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources, unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable'*. This will be controlled through the imposition of a planning condition.

Trees

The Planning Statement includes a letter reporting on the survey of the four Poplar trees to the front of the site which are not covered by a TPO. The letter dates from 2005 and suggests that one of the trees required urgent removal and that the remainder would present a major hazard if allowed to remain (the shelter and root firmness of the groups being mutually dependent). This survey is clearly out of date however; the Poplar trees have also been inspected more recently by a Cheshire East Tree Officer who did not consider them to be suitable for long term retention. There is evidence of branch break out in several specimens and one tree has extensive basal decay.

To the west of the site there is woodland subject of TPO protection with several trees overhanging the site. The proposed site plan suggested that this overhanging canopy is to be cut back with agreement with Hough Hall. Under the TPO, the consent of the LPA would also be required and it is considered that there is not sufficient information in respect to the impact upon these trees. There is no tree survey in relation to these trees and there are concerns that the extent of reduction required in order to accommodate the indicative layout provided would be potentially harmful to the trees in question. Further, even if crown reduction was permitted, the proposed plot 14 would have very poor private amenity resulting from over-dominance by trees located to the south and west. This situation is likely to result in pressure to prune or even fell protected trees in the longer term.

The submission is considered to be inadequate in respect of tree survey data and it appears there could be threat to protected trees in the longer term. This issue will form a reason for refusal.

Ecology

Habitats

The habitat survey completed as part of the ecological assessment was undertaken in February a poor time of year to complete botanical surveys. However, the Councils Ecologist has visited the site (on 3rd May) and is satisfied that the habitats present on site are of limited ecological value.

Protected Species

The EC Habitats Directive 1992 requires the UK to maintain a system of strict protection for protected species and their habitats. The Directive only allows disturbance, or deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places,

- in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment

and provided that there is

- no satisfactory alternative and
- no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in their natural range

The UK implements the Directive in the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 which contain two layers of protection

- a requirement on Local Planning Authorities (“LPAs”) to have regard to the Directive’s requirements above, and
- a licensing system administered by Natural England.

Circular 6/2005 advises LPAs to give due weight to the presence of protected species on a development site to reflect EC requirements. “This may potentially justify a refusal of planning permission.”

The converse of this advice is that if issues of detriment to the species, satisfactory alternatives and public interest seem likely to be satisfied, no impediment to planning permission arises under the Directive and Regulations. In this case Bats and Great Crested Newts are European Protected Species and need to be considered in line with the above.

Great Crested Newts

A number of ponds are present within 500m of the proposed development. The application site however, has relatively limited value as terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newt and is relatively small. Therefore the Councils Ecologist advises that it is reasonable to only consider those ponds within 250m of the proposed development of which there are two.

Pond 1 is located adjacent to the development and was not subject to a detailed inspection as part of the submitted ecological assessment. The Councils Ecologist has inspected the pond and whilst it has some limited potential to support GCN the pond is shaded and there is a total lack of aquatic vegetation. The Councils Ecologist does not consider that GCN are likely to be present at this pond due to the suboptimal habitat offered.

Pond 2 has been assessed as being of average potential for GCN and it is possible that this pond may be used by breeding GCN. The terrestrial habitat offered by the site is however limited and there are no strong habitat linkages between this pond and the application site. Therefore it is not reasonable likely that even if GCN are present at pond 2 that they would be significantly affected by the proposed development.

Bats

Within the Phase 1 Habitat Survey a Tree (tree 1) has been identified as having potential to support roosting bats and this tree would be removed as part of the proposed development. No detailed survey of this tree for roosting bats has been provided and as a result it is not possible to assess the impact upon bats and this issue will form a reason for refusal.

Other Protected Species

Evidence of other protected species has been recorded on this site; however no setts were recorded as being present within the application boundary. The survey however appears to have been limited to the land ownership of the applicant and no survey effort appears to have been undertaken within the wooded area to the west of the application site.

A further protected species survey should be carried out and extended to include all land within 30m of the application boundary. This further survey has not been provided and as a result it is not possible to fully assess the impact of the development upon other protected species and this issue will form a reason for refusal.

Breeding Birds

If planning consent is granted standard conditions could be attached to safeguard breeding birds.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development relates to the provision of affordable housing outside the settlement boundary of Hough. This type of development is appropriate in the open countryside when it is adjacent to a settlement boundary as identified in Policy RES.4. In this case a rigorous assessment of local housing need of all households within Hough has not been produced and it is not possible to identify the need for such provision. This is a requirement of Policy RES.8, the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing and paragraph 54 of the NPPF which states that LPA's should be '*responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs*'.

There is limited information with this application and it is not possible to determine the impact that the proposal will have upon trees, bats and other protected species.

The application is in outline form with access to be determined at this stage, it is considered that the development would have an acceptable access arrangement and the indicative plan shows that the development would not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity and an acceptable design could be achieved.

Finally it is considered that the site is located within a sustainable location and that no issues relating to flooding or drainage have been identified and such issues could be resolved at a later date.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

REFUSE

- 1. The Proposed development relates to the provision of affordable housing within the open countryside adjacent to the Hough Settlement Boundary. The application is not supported by an adequate rural housing needs survey which relates to the Parish of Hough. Due to the limited evidence base it is not possible to identify an affordable housing need in Hough for the proposed dwelling types and tenure. Furthermore the proposal to provide units as discounted for sale units would not meet the affordable housing need for the area and the tenure mix is not considered to be acceptable. As a result the proposed development would not be sustainable development and would be contrary to Policy RES.8 (Affordable Housing in Rural Areas Outside the Settlement Boundaries) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2012, the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing and the NPPF.**
- 2. The submitted plans show that four trees would be removed as part of the proposed development. The Phase 1 Habitat Survey submitted with the application identifies that one of these trees could offer a potential habitat for bats. No Protected Species Survey has been submitted as part of this application to identify whether or not Bats are present within the tree or any mitigation measures to protect this species during the construction works. In the absence of this information, to allow this development would be contrary to Policy NE.9 (Protected Species) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011, Circular 6/2005 and the NPPF**
- 3. The application site is used by Badgers as identified by the Phase 1 Habitat Survey submitted with this application. The submitted survey does not extend to all land within 30 metres of the site which could support a Badger Sett. Without this information it is not possible to fully assess the impact of the development upon Badgers or identify if any mitigation is required. In the absence of this information, to allow this development would be contrary to Policy NE.9 (Protected Species) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011, Circular 6/2005 and the NPPF.**
- 4. The proposed development would be located adjacent to woodland which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order. This woodland overhangs the application site and no tree survey has been provided in relation to these trees. The extent of tree reduction to accommodate the proposed development could harm the trees in question and there is not sufficient information in respect to the impact upon these trees. The development would be contrary to Policy NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and the NPPF.**

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