

KNIGHTSTONE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS AND THE ERECTION OF 66 No FLEXIBLE LIVING RETIREMENT FLATS AND 12 No ASSISTED LIVING FLATS FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT PARMIN CLOSE, TAUNTON AS AMENDED BY LETTER DATED 13 JANUARY 2015.

Location: STREET RECORD, PARMIN CLOSE, TAUNTON

Grid Reference: 324018.124394

Full Planning Permission

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

Subject to a Section 106 Agreement to control the age and occupancy of persons in the two blocks and subject to no Highway Authority objection by 3 February the Assistant Director Planning and Environment be authorised to determine in consultation with the Chair Vice Chair.

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- (A4) DrNo 3225/101 Location Plan
- (A1) DrNo 3225-001 Rev A Ground Floor Plan
- (A1) DrNo 3225-002 Rev A First Floor Plan
- (A1) DrNo 3225-003 Second Floor Plan
- (A1) DrNo 3225-004 Rev A Third Floor Plan
- (A1) DrNo 3225-005 Rev A Roof Plan
- (A0) DrNo 3225-006 Rev A Site Plan
- (A1) DrNo 3225-010 Rev A Elevations Flexible Retirement Block
- (A1) DrNo 3225-011 Rev A Elevations Flexible Retirement Block
- (A1) DrNo 3225-012 Rev A Typical Section Trough Main Block & Typical Section Trough Site
- (A3) DrNo 3225-020 Ground Floor Plan - West Block
- (A3) DrNo 3225-021 First Floor Plan - West Block
- (A3) DrNo 3225-022 Second Floor Plan - West Block
- (A3) DrNo 3225-023 Roof Plan - West Block

(A1) DrNo 3225-024 Elevations - West Block
(A0) DrNo 3225/205 Digital Survey

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out and thereafter retained as such, in accordance with the approved details as above, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

4.
 - (i) Before any part of the permitted development is commenced, a landscaping scheme, which shall include details of the species, siting and numbers to be planted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
 - (ii) The scheme shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development, or as otherwise extended with the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority.
 - (iii) For a period of five years after the completion of each landscaping scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a healthy weed free condition and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species, or the appropriate trees or shrubs as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

5. Before development commences (including site clearance and any other preparatory works) a scheme for the protection of trees to be retained shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such a scheme shall include a plan showing the location of the protective fencing, and shall specify the type of protective fencing, all in accordance with BS 5837:2012. Such fencing shall be erected prior to commencement of any other site operations and at least two working days notice shall be given to the Local Planning Authority that it has been erected. It shall be maintained and retained for the full duration of works or until such time as agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. No activities whatsoever shall take place within the protected areas without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Note: The protective fencing should be as specified at Chapter 9 and detailed in figures 2 and 3 of BS 5837:2012.

Reason: To ensure the enhancement of the development by the retention of existing trees and natural features during the construction phase in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S2 and EN8.

6. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until details of a strategy to protect wildlife has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall be based on the advice of Encompass Ecology Ltd submitted reports (Extended Ecological Assessment and A Bat Roost and Activity assessment,) dated September and October 2014 , and include:
1. Details of protective measures to include method statements to avoid impacts on protected species during all stages of development;
 2. Details of the timing of works to avoid periods of work when the species could be harmed by disturbance
 3. Measures for the retention and replacement and enhancement of places of rest for the bats and nesting birds
 4. Details of a sensitive lighting scheme.

Once approved the works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timing of the works unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter the resting places and agreed accesses for bats and nesting birds shall be permanently maintained. The development shall not be occupied until the scheme for the maintenance and provision of the new bird and bat boxes and related accesses have been fully implemented.

Reason: To protect and accommodate wildlife.

7. No flats shall be occupied until the parking spaces as shown on the approved drawing have been provided within the site **and surfaced and marked out**.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

8. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until a new footway link is constructed from Parmin Way to Ruskin Close in accordance with details which shall have been previously submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of providing suitable footpath links to the surrounding area.

9. The Travel Plan Statement submitted for this development shall be implemented within one month of the development being first used or occupied. A person shall be identified as a co-ordinator and point of contact for the purposes of the Plan. The Travel Plan measures shall be carried out

as approved.

Reason: To ensure a transport choice is provided and to ensure that staff will travel to and from work by means other than the private car in accordance with the relevant guidance in Section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

10. None of the dwellings shall be occupied until the surface water drainage strategy for the site has been completed in accordance with the details to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, including the maintenance programme and who will carry it out. The scheme shall be carried out as approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent increase in surface water discharge into nearby drains/water courses in accordance with Policy CP1(C) of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

11. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification) the western facing window of flat 10 in the western block, the south facing kitchen windows in flats 32, 50 and 66 of the main block and west facing windows to flats 36 and 37 to be installed in the main block shall be obscured glazed and non-opening (unless the parts of the window which can be opened are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed). The type of obscure glazing shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to its installation and shall thereafter be so retained.

Reason: To protect the amenities of nearby dwellings in accordance with Policy DM1(E) of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the applicant and entered into pre-application discussions to enable the grant of planning permission.
2. You are advised to discuss with any contractor construction hours and delivery times to avoid conflict with local residents as much as possible.
3. Most resident nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

It should be noted that the protection afforded to species under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and the developer should ensure that any activity they undertake on the application site (regardless of the need for planning consent) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.

4. You are advised to contact Wessex Water in respect of infrastructure charges which may be payable in respect of the development. You are advised that the water main which serves the site will require diversion to accommodate the new layout; buildings above two storeys will require on site boosted storage. There must be no tree planting within 6 metres of Wessex apparatus.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to demolish the existing buildings on the site that provide 31 dwellings in a mix of bungalows and flats and erect 66 flexible retirement flats, together with 12 assisted living flats for people with learning disabilities on land at Parmin Close. The scheme has been amended from a C2 care use to one for retirement flats and a C3 use.

The main building will consist of 66 flats in a 3 and 4 storey block, that will provide 12 x 2 bed and 54 x 1 bed flats. The accommodation will provide independent living for older and less able people of 55 or more constituting a C3 use.

The redevelopment provides an opportunity to make more efficient use of the land and to expand housing options for specific sectors of the community in housing need. It is intended to retain the public footpath but divert it around the perimeter of the new development. Parking provision for 33 vehicles is provided on site.

The application includes a Design & Access Statement, a Planning Statement, a Transport Statement, Travel Plan, Ecology Report, Bat Survey, Tree Report, Drainage Strategy and Statement of Community Involvement.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The site extends to 0.92ha, located to the east of the town centre in a highly sustainable location. The site consists of a cul-de-sac of retirement bungalows and flats with warden's house and communal hall. The site is in largely a residential area, characterised by a mix of flats, bungalows, semi-detached and terraced two storey dwellings built in the 1960s and 70s (31 units). The Thales factory lies to the east of the site, while new development at Ruskin Close, comprising apartments and houses of contemporary design is located to the north. An existing footpath runs through the site from Parmin Way to the new development in Wordsworth Drive and Ruskin Close.

There is no relevant planning history of applications on the site.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP – Comment as follows:

Recommendation

No objection is raised to this application subject to conditions.

Travel Plan

The use of the site is confusing as submitted. The description of development shows the erection of 66 flexible retirement flats but the application details show a care home of 5792.8m². If these were to be treated as flats, the need for a Travel Plan, as opposed to a Travel Plan Statement, would be necessary. Even as a care home of this size, a full Travel Plan would be necessary. The supporting documents explain that the increase in number of dwellings will effectively be 48 which takes it below the threshold for a Travel plan contained in the Somerset County Council Travel Plan Guidance.

In this sustainable location with good links to the town centre, there is a real opportunity to establish good walking and cycling habits cutting down on the number of movements associated with the site. Securing the Travel Plan by condition will not achieve the necessary incentive for sustainable travel and a full Travel plan secured by Section 106 agreement is felt to be appropriate.

There is currently a right of way that passes through the site, in part on the footway alongside the adopted road with the remainder provided by adopted urban footpath. The maintenance of this right of way is mentioned in the documents but there is no evidence on the site plan of where this link will be and what form it will take. The link should be as direct as possible and it must be of suitable width and form to provide an attractive pedestrian link. Evidence of the route and form of this link must be provided and agreed prior to any commencement on site. There are various gated areas shown on the site plan, and it is essential that the footpath link is maintained at all times of the day and night for the use of pedestrians.

Transport Statement

There is no reason to doubt the details contained in the Transport Statement. The assumptions made in determining the existing and proposed traffic levels are sound and except that the prediction for the care home will be quite light compared to flats for independent living which is stated in the description. This distinction needs to be cleared up before an accurate determination can be made. It is very unlikely that this distinction will lead to an unacceptable level of traffic generation but consistency would help to be sure.

The stopping up of the existing public highway on the site can be achieved through the 1990 TCPA Section 247 route but there is no guarantee that the stopping up will be permitted. There can be objections to the stopping up from the Parish Council, from the Statutory Undertakers who may have apparatus in the highway and from members of the public. Any of these objections, if they are upheld, could prevent the highway being stopped up. The Highway Authority would not like to see the stopping up being granted without the footpath link being provided. To achieve this we would ask the Department of Transport that the stopping up be subject to a condition insisting on the footpath provision before the stopping up is granted. To be clear, the footpath link will have to be provided in full before the stopping up will be permitted.

Site Access

The site access will be gained from Parmin Way a circular residential road where traffic levels and speeds are likely to be low. Visibility for emerging vehicles is likely to be sufficient based on the submitted plans. The proposed geometry should be adequate for the ingress and egress of the types of vehicle expected at the site. The parking level is selected for the care home use and the level for 66 flats for independent living would be different. Once again, clarification is necessary for a full evaluation.

Conditions

The Highway Authority is reluctant to recommend refusal of this application because the likely impact on the highway network will be minimal. Provided that a full Travel Plan is provided and secured by Section 106 agreement, no objection to this proposal is raised subject to the following conditions:

There shall be no commencement of development until a car parking scheme for the site in accordance with the County Parking Strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme is to be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

The proposed access shall be maintained in the same form as the existing access. Once construction has been completed, the access shall be maintained in that condition at all times thereafter.

Prior to any stopping up of the adopted highway, a footpath link equivalent to the existing link is to be provided built to a design that has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. That link is to be constructed in accordance with the agreed design unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

SCC - FLOOD RISK MANAGER - The proposal to attenuate surface water discharge from the site is for an underground tank. It would be preferable if this were to be an open pond that could give water quality and amenity benefits as well as controlling run off. Responsibility for maintenance of the drainage system including the attenuation feature is assumed to be the site owner but should be confirmed.

DRAINAGE ENGINEER - I note in section 5 Surface Water Drainage of the FRA dated October 2014, the comment is made that following infiltration testing the ground has been deemed to be unsuitable for discharge to the underground strata. However further in the section the comment is made that an area of parking will be constructed with permeable block paving affording extra attenuation etc. No details however are shown as to how the 'treated/attenuated surface water run-off from this area will be disposed of, either by soakaways or a connection to the proposed surface water drainage system, and what effect this has on the total storage volume of 227m³. No details are given as to how and by whom the surface water drainage

system, including the car parking area and storage tank are to be maintained. This information should be provided before any planning approval is given.

I am happy with a suitably worded condition to reflect the discussion I had with Ted Stokes of Hydrock as outlined in his email dated 11 December.

WESSEX WATER - The site will be served by separate systems of drainage constructed to current adoptable standards please see Wessex Water's Advice Note 16 for further guidance.

Redevelopment of the site will result in minimal impact upon our systems and as such capacity exists within our foul and water supply networks subject to agreement of flow rates.

Existing sewers may need to be abandoned (sealed at the point of connection) as appropriate to accommodate the new layout of the site to achieve appropriate easements. The developer should note that the 225mm existing foul sewer draining from south east to north east also serves upstream properties, services to which must be maintained.

Similarly the water main which serves the site will require diversion to accommodate the new layout; buildings above two storeys will require on site boosted storage.

There must be no tree planting within 6 metres of our apparatus.

The applicant has proposed to drain surface water via SuDs arrangements and to a council maintained culvert which will require the approval of your Authority.

LANDSCAPE - I consider this to be an interesting scheme and am pleased that the majority of trees are to be retained. I suggest the conditions covering the protection of trees and landscaping.

BIODIVERSITY - The application is for the demolition of 1960's buildings and the erection of 66 flexible retirement flats at Parmin Close, Taunton.

The site consists of amenity grass, scattered trees, hard surfaces and built form. The surrounding area is characterised by dense housing stock but on the eastern boundary is a large industrial facility, shielded by a line of mature trees. Encompass Ecology Ltd carried out an Extended Ecological Assessment of the site dated September 2014.

A Bat Roost and Activity assessment, also by Encompass Ecology Ltd, was carried out in September and October 2014.

Findings of the surveys are as follows

Bats

The surveyor considered that the relatively modern buildings on site are likely to have only low potential for bats. However as bats can be present in any building, he recommended that further surveys took place prior to demolition. These surveys were carried out in September and October 2014.

The surveys found that the majority of bat activity was recorded in the NW corner of the site when common pipistrelles were observed foraging in the vicinity. No bats

were observed to have emerged from buildings or trees on site. I support the proposal for the new build to incorporate in built bat boxes. Lighting design on site is also an important consideration for bats

Birds

The trees on and off site are likely to support nesting and foraging birds. Tree surgery and tree removal should only take place outside of the bird nesting season. It is likely that the buildings may also be used by nesting birds so demolition should also take place outside of the bird nesting season.

I would like to see in- built bird boxes incorporated within the cavity wall of the new build as recommended in the report.

Reptiles

The surveyor is aware of significant numbers of slow worms within residential gardens 900 m to the north. However, it is unlikely that reptiles are present on this site due to the well maintained nature of the amenity grass areas on site.

Badger

No badger setts were evident on site but a reasonably well used badger run was evident along the tree lined eastern boundary. I agree that current access points under the existing fence should be maintained to allow badger foraging to continue on site.

Suggest Condition for protected species.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH - NOISE & POLLUTION - No comment.

DIVERSIONS ORDER OFFICER - Mr Edwards - No observations.

HOUSING ENABLING - Housing Enabling fully supports this planning proposal. The 66 flexible retirement flats will provide homes for local people who need varying levels of support. Furthermore the Assisted Living flats will provide independent living for people with learning difficulties. All these new homes will provide cost effective day to day living and ensure increased independence with the assurance of support when needed.

This development will go some way to satisfy the local need for specialised housing and to encourage an increased degree of independent living

CIL OFFICER - I am aware residents can only be referred by medical specialists and all residents will receive a level of care dependent on needs. Therefore if development is use class C2 there will be no CIL liability. If development or part of development is Class C3 liability will be at a rate of £70 per sqm but all affordable housing so CIL relief will be claimed.

Representations

1 letter from 2 Ward Councillors advising

We are both supportive as ward councillors of the development but we are concerned about any disturbance for existing people who live in this area whilst the development is taking place. Would it be possible for there to be a recommendation of work only to take place between 8am and 6pm to avoid disturbance during early morning and late evening and at weekends?

I think this has been done before on other development sites.

10 letters raising concerns over

- too many housing units,
- size at 4 storey is out of keeping with area,
- materials out of keeping,
- overlooking and loss of privacy,
- will swamp bungalow,
- loss of light,
- loss of amenity land,
- increase in noise and smell,
- increase in risk of crime,
- loss of some trees and bat habitat,
- insufficient dedicated parking will lead to parking in Parmin Way,
- increase in traffic will pose a safety problem - Thales site should be utilised,
- estate roads will not cope,
- path should be lit at night,
- service vehicles will cause obstruction,
- with soil structure would 4 storey building be sustainable,
- detrimental impact on road surface of Parmin Way,
- devaluation of properties,
- need for road resurfacing on completion.
- and construction period:
- access unsuitable
- parking in area during demolition,
- increase in traffic,
- impact on roads with mud causing accident hazard,
- cause cracking or subsidence to property,
- dust and noise pollution,
- hazards to children, mobility scooters, cyclists and emergency vehicle access;

PLANNING POLICIES

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework,

SD1 - SD 1 TDBC Presumption in Favour of Sustain. Dev,

SP1 - TD CORE STRATEGY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS,

CP1 - TD CORE STRAT. CLIMATE CHANGE,

CP4 - TD CORE STRATEGY - HOUSING,

CP5 - TD CORE STRATEGY INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES,

CP6 - TD CORE STRATEGY - TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY,

CP8 - CP 8 ENVIRONMENT,
DM1 - TD CORE STRATEGY - GENERAL REQUIREMENTS,
EN8 - TDBCLP - Trees in and around Settlements,

LOCAL FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

As the proposal is for an affordable housing scheme there would be no CIL liability.

The development of this site would result in payment to the Council of the New Homes Bonus.

1 Year Payment

Taunton Deane Borough Council (Lower Tier Authority)	£84,167
Somerset County Council (Upper Tier Authority)	£21,042

6 Year Payment

Taunton Deane Borough Council (Lower Tier Authority)	£505,004
Somerset County Council (Upper Tier Authority)	£126,251

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The site is located in an area where residential development, in principle, would be acceptable as it is an existing residential area to the east of the town centre. The main considerations with the proposal are the design in relation to the character of the area and amenity impact and the relationship between the proposed buildings and the existing development adjacent to the site, together with any highway impacts.

Policy

The site is a sustainable location within the existing town and the principle of the development here is considered to accord with policies SD1, CP1, CP4 and CP5 of the Core Strategy. CP4 relating to housing requires an affordable provision as part of any sheltered scheme. This development is being proposed in conjunction with the applicant, who is a registered housing provider, and all of the units in this instance would constitute as being affordable. The existing hall that is being demolished is being compensated for by the provision of a community hub facility within the new building. This area and adjacent cafe will be open to non-residents and is considered to replace the existing facility and comply with policy CP5.

Design

The existing site consists of brick bungalows and two storey flats built over 40 years ago which are not considered to be of any merit in design terms. The new scheme is of a contemporary design and is designed to read visually and comprehensively with

the schemes at Wordsworth Drive and Ruskin Close to the north. The proposal provides buildings at 2, 3 and 4 storey heights but using flat roofs in the design effectively results in up to 3 storey in massing. This creates an architectural link with the development to the north. The main block is made up of 3 and 4 storey elements while the smaller block consists of 2 and 3 storeys. The design promotes a form of development with a distinct character that reflects the nearby development to the north and creates a continuity of style. The materials include a zinc standing seam roof and walls in brick, render and a mix of Rockpanel cladding colours. The roof also incorporates solar panels. The design and materials and space around the building are considered an acceptable design approach that will blend in with the recently approved schemes.

Amenity

The scale of the 2, 3 and 4 storey blocks have raised some concerns in terms of their scale and potential to cause overlooking and loss of privacy. The smaller 2 and 3 storey block has been designed so that the building closest to the boundary of the site to the west is only 2 storey and has no windows in the west elevation which is 3m away. The other two storey element of the building facing west has windows serving halls and a bedroom and is 16m to the boundary which is considered an acceptable distance to maintain privacy and prevent any significant overlooking. The two windows at third floor level facing west serve a hall and kitchen and are 16.5m and 11m off the boundary respectively.

The windows on the north elevation of the assisted living flats face into the site and are considered acceptable in amenity terms while the eastern facing windows are over 36m from the site boundary and are also not considered to cause any adverse amenity issues. The windows on the south elevation are 12 to 14m away from the southern boundary and again are considered sufficient distance away from the boundary with other residential property so as not to cause a significant adverse amenity impact.

With regard to the larger retirement block which extends to 4 stories in height, the north (west) elevation is off set from the new flats off Wordsworth Drive and the building is around 20m from these flats and around 40m from the new properties in Ruskin Close. At this distance and orientation there is not considered to be any adverse impact on existing amenity. The eastern elevation faces directly towards the light industrial building on the adjacent site. The site boundary however is well screened by trees and the building is over 25m from the boundary and there are not considered to be any significant amenity issues as a result. One issue with the elevation is the provision of first floor balconies to two flats on the southern end of the building, however these are 17.25m to the southern boundary and at this distance with bin store and substation in between there is not considered to be any adverse overlooking issues.

The south elevation has been designed with the eastern most window canted to face south west so there is no direct overlooking of neighbours. The next 3 windows along serve a corridor, void and a secondary kitchen windows to flats 32, 50 and 66 and it considered that these flat windows can be conditioned to be obscure glazed. Beyond this the windows face out onto the car parking area and there is not considered to be direct overlooking issues of existing properties. The west elevation

faces towards the rear of Wordsworth Drive properties and due to the 'L' shaped nature of the new building the majority of flats are over 45m from the boundary. The nearest flats are around 16m from the boundary, however the windows on this elevation are either secondary windows or windows serving the corridors and so second floor level windows can be conditioned to be obscure glazed. There is a third floor terrace on this elevation which could have given rise to overlooking issues, however this has been amended to reduce the size of the terrace and the elevation facing Wordsworth Drive has been amended with a set back to prevent direct overlooking of the gardens. This is considered to comply with policy DM1.

Concern has been raised over construction disturbance and a note to the applicant is proposed to address this. It is not considered appropriate to condition controls over deliveries or construction times as this could not be satisfactorily enforced. Environmental Health have separate controls over noise and disturbance.

Access and Parking

The access to the site is off Parmin Way and this would not change as part of the redevelopment scheme. The Highway Authority is satisfied that the existing access roads are suitable with adequate visibility and that the traffic generated by the proposal would not be of a scale to be harmful to the area.

There is an existing highway and footway through the site and the proposal seeks to stop up the highway and re-direct the footway through the site. This is considered acceptable in principle and a condition to secure the new footway before occupation of the flats is considered appropriate. The access into the site itself will remain unchanged.

An addendum to the Transport Statement has been submitted to address the use of retirement flats. The site lies within Taunton and the parking standard in the County Strategy seeks 1 space per 8 bedrooms for retirement facilities in locations such as this. The parking levels sought for assisted care retirement sites in the recent past has been 1 space per 3 units of accommodation. On this basis the 33 spaces shown, including 4 disabled spaces, for the 78 units is considered more than adequate and there are not considered to be grounds for objection for lack of parking, despite concerns of local residents. The scheme is designed to provide housing for the elderly and a legal agreement in respect of limiting the age and occupation is considered necessary to ensure the units are occupied as such to limit future parking needs. The parking layout is considered acceptable and a condition to provide a parking scheme is considered unnecessary.

A Travel Plan Statement has been submitted with the scheme which seeks to provide a range of measures and initiatives that accord with the County Council guidance for reducing car travel. These include encouraging cycling and walking through notice boards, staff travel information packs, cycle and motorcycle parking and showers and changing room facilities. The Travel Plan statement is considered appropriate given the nature of the use and the location of the site within the existing built up area and the replacement of existing dwellings and consequently a condition is considered appropriate in this instance.

Drainage

The site lies within Flood Zone 1, an area identified as at low risk of flooding and the area is served by existing foul and surface water drainage. Wessex Water has confirmed that there is existing capacity to provide for foul drainage to serve the site. The water main through the site will need diverting and this will need to be agreed with Wessex Water.

In terms of surface water the proposed scheme will increase the impermeable area and so would increase run off from the site. It is proposed to regulate run-off flows to no greater than the existing rate and a storage facility in the form of an underground tank is proposed to limit run off during major storms. The Drainage Officer is satisfied that this is suitable. It is considered appropriate to condition the surface water drainage strategy proposed in order to ensure the risk of increased surface water run-off is avoided and this is considered to comply with policy CP8 of the Core Strategy.

Landscape

The proposal is to demolish the existing dwellings on site and construct new retirement flats. A tree survey has been submitted with the application and indicates that 3 trees will need to be removed (2 maple and an alder), however the majority of trees will be retained and new trees will be planted. The Landscape Officer is satisfied with the scheme and recommends conditions in respect of new planting and tree protection.

Wildlife

An Ecological Survey and Bat Survey have been submitted with the scheme and there were no bats identified as roosting in the demolished buildings or trees to be removed. There was some bat activity to the north west of the site and the scheme incorporates bat boxes to improve habitat in the area. No other protected species were identified as being affected by the development of the site and the Biodiversity Officer recommends a condition to safeguard habitat and species during construction and beyond.

Summary and conclusion

In conclusion the proposed development provides a beneficial residential re-use of an existing site to provide an affordable retirement flats and accommodation for those with learning difficulties in a sustainable location. There are not considered to be any adverse amenity, drainage, wildlife or access and parking issues and the development is recommended for approval subject to a Section 106 to control occupancy and appropriate conditions.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: Mr G Clifford Tel: 01823 356398

