

PART A	
Report of: Head of Development Management	
Date of committee:	6th September 2017
Site address:	37, Bucks Avenue, Watford
Reference Number :	Hertsmere Borough Council ref.17/1260/FUL
Description of Development:	<p>Consultation from Hertsmere Borough Council on development adjoining the Borough:</p> <p>Demolition of 37 Bucks Avenue and equestrian facility, removal of hardstanding, ménages, buildings and structures and the redevelopment of the site to include 27 dwellings (including 9 affordable dwellings) comprising 1 x 1 bed and 4 x 2 bed apartments, 14 x 3 bed houses and 8 x 4 bed houses with associated parking, informal play area and open space, all to be served by the proposed modified access from Bucks Avenue/Sherwoods Road, as approved under ref. 16/01621/FUL.</p>
Applicant:	Shanly Homes Limited
Date Received:	Consultation received 30th June 2017
21 day response date:	21st July 2017
Ward:	Oxhey

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report relates to a consultation received from Hertsmere Borough Council on an amended planning application for the redevelopment of the Bucks Meadow Riding School at 37, Bucks Avenue, located within their borough. Watford Council has also received a duplicate amended planning application for the same development although only the access to the site is located within Watford Borough and therefore falls within the Council's jurisdiction as the local planning authority. All of the proposed dwellings and associated development (roads, car parking, open space, etc.) are located within Hertsmere Borough and they will determine the application for this development.
- 1.2 This consultation from Hertsmere is to seek the Council's views on their application. In respect of the planning application submitted to Watford, this is the subject of a

separate report on the committee agenda and relates only to the proposed access arrangements and associated traffic impacts arising from the proposal. As such, this report does not consider these issues and the Committee should make no reference to these matters in their response to Hertsmere.

- 1.3 This consultation follows a previous consultation in November 2015 in relation to a scheme for the development of the site for 34 dwellings and a consultation in February 2017 in relation to a scheme for the development of the site for 24 dwellings. This is referenced in Section 4.0 of this report.

2.0 Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The site is located almost entirely within Hertsmere Borough with its access off Bucks Avenue, at the junction with Sherwoods Road, within Watford Borough. The overall area of the site is approximately 4.2 hectares and comprises a dwelling, the Bucks Meadow Riding School, outdoor ménages, paddocks and extensive grazing fields extending from the site entrance to the east. The site itself is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The riding school closed in September 2015.
- 2.2 The site comprises a large number of existing buildings in various states of repair. The largest building on the site is an indoor ménage (2 storey) with a number of other single storey buildings including stables, store buildings and other ancillary buildings. Various areas of parking and hardstanding also exist.
- 2.3 The site is adjoined to the north, west and south by the residential areas of Oxhey, with Talbot Avenue to the north, Bucks Avenue to the west and Sherwoods Road, Lowson Grove and Elm Avenue to the south. These roads are characterised by detached and semi-detached houses with detached bungalows on Lowson Grove on Elm Grove. Most of the dwellings were developed in the 1920s and 1930s as individual plots and are typical of their era. Consequently, designs and materials are very varied and include a number of mock-Tudor designs. Only those properties on Wilcot Avenue and Talbot Avenue are more uniform in their appearance. To the north-east, the site adjoins the Paddock Road Allotments site.

3.0 Proposed development

- 3.1 The proposal is an amended scheme following the approval of a scheme for 24 dwellings by both Watford and Hertsmere councils earlier in 2017. It involves the demolition of all existing buildings on the site and the erection of 27 dwellings, comprising 1 x 1 bed and 4 x 2 bed apartments, 14 x 3 bed houses and 8 x 4 bed houses with associated parking, informal play area and open space. The development is to be served by the proposed modified access from Bucks

Avenue/Sherwoods Road, as approved under ref. 16/01621/FUL. The flats are provided in a single block and the houses provided as detached and semi-detached houses. The block of flats is sited at the entrance to the site with the houses and their associated parking arranged in an open horseshoe shape on the outside of the internal access road, with the central area occupied by landscaped open space. This follows the same site layout as the recently approved scheme for 24 dwellings.

- 3.2 The comparison of dwelling sizes between the approved and proposed schemes is shown in the table below:

Dwelling size	Approved scheme	Proposed scheme	Change
1 bed flat	2	1	-1
2 bed flat	2	4	+2
3 bed house	16	14	-2
4 bed house	4	8	+4
Total	24	27	+3

- 3.3 All of the proposed buildings remain two storey in scale, with accommodation in the roofspace of some of the houses. The design approach is of traditional suburban housing drawing on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 3.4 The single access from Bucks Avenue splits into 2 spurs and serves the various parking areas serving the dwellings. Parking is provided in the form of frontage parking to the houses and small parking courts. Visitor parking is shown on the 2 spurs of the internal road.

4.0 Relevant planning history

- 4.1 The riding school has been established on the site since the 1950s (albeit with a break in use in the 1980s, recommencing in 1991) with the indoor ménage built in 1992. The existing house was built in the 1960s. The use as a riding school ceased in early 2016.
- 4.2 There is an extensive planning history on the site, however the 3 cases detailed below are considered the most relevant.
- 4.3 16/2272/FUL (Hertsmere) - This application was for the erection of 24 dwellings and was considered by Hertsmere Borough Council on 16th March 2017 . Hertsmere

resolved to grant planning permission for this application.

4.4 15/01542/FUL (Appeal B) - The appeal Inspector concluded as follows:

35. The access and associated works would not be inappropriate development. The highway and transport impacts of the development would be acceptable in compliance with WDP policy T21 and the guidance of MfS [Manual for Streets] and RiH [Roads in Hertfordshire]. However, the acceptability of this proposal is directly linked to that under Appeal A because the access justification derives from the nature of the development on the larger site. For this reason, Appeal B fails.

4.5 16/01621/FUL (Watford) - Demolition of 37 Bucks Avenue and equestrian facility, removal of hardstanding, ménages, buildings and structures and the redevelopment of the site to include 24 dwellings (including 8 affordable dwellings) comprising 2 x 1 bed and 2 x 2 bed apartments, 16 x 3 bed houses and 4 x 4 bed houses with associated parking, informal play area and open space, all to be served by modifying the existing access from Bucks Avenue/Sherwoods Road (amended scheme). (Duplicate application to Hertsmere Borough Council). Conditional planning permission was granted by the Council on 19th April 2017.

5.0 Planning policies

Although the Committee is not determining the planning application, which Hertsmere must determine against their own Development Plan policies, the following policies of the Development Plan for Watford are relevant in the consideration of the proposal.

5.1 Development plan

In accordance with s.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan for Watford comprises:

- (a) *Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31;*
- (b) *the continuing “saved” policies of the Watford District Plan 2000;*
- (c) *the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2011-2026; and*
- (d) *the Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016.*

5.2 The *Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31* was adopted in January 2013. The *Core Strategy* policies, together with the “saved policies” of the *Watford District Plan 2000* (adopted December 2003), constitute the “development plan” policies which, together with any relevant policies from the County Council’s *Waste Core*

Strategy and the *Minerals Local Plan*, must be afforded considerable weight in decision making on planning applications. The following policies are relevant to this application.

5.3 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

The following Supplementary Planning Documents are relevant to the determination of this application, and must be taken into account as a material planning consideration.

Residential Design Guide

Watford Character of Area Study

5.4 **National Planning Policy Framework**

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The following provisions are relevant to the determination of this application, and must be taken into account as a material planning consideration:

Achieving sustainable development

The presumption in favour of sustainable development

Core planning principles

Section 1 Building a strong, competitive economy

Section 4 Promoting sustainable transport

Section 6 Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Section 7 Requiring good design

Section 8 Promoting healthy communities

Section 9 Protecting Green Belt land

Section 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Section 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Decision taking

6.0 **Consultations**

- 6.1 No neighbour notifications or technical consultations have been undertaken in respect of this consultation. All notifications, consultations and publicity relating to the application have been undertaken by Hertsmere.

7.0 **Appraisal**

7.1 **Main issues**

The main issues to be considered in respect of this proposal are:

- (a) Impacts on the Green Belt
- (b) Loss of the existing riding school as a community facility
- (c) General housing policies
- (d) Design, scale and appearance
- (e) Character of the area
- (f) Impacts on adjoining properties
- (g) Car parking provision

7.2 (a) Impacts on the Green Belt

National policy relating to development in the Green Belt is set out in paragraphs 87-89 of the NPPF. This states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (para 87). When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations (para 88).

- 7.2.1 New buildings in Green Belt should be considered as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless the development complies with one of 6 exceptions (para 89). The only exception relevant to this application is the following:

“Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land) which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development”.

- 7.2.2 The NPPF also gives a definition of previously developed land which includes land which is occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. Various exclusions from this definition are given, including agricultural and forestry buildings and residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments.

- 7.2.3 The existing dwelling and the various buildings and areas of hardstanding and car parking associated with the riding school constitute previously developed land (brownfield land). These are clustered in the eastern corner of the site close to the existing access and occupy an area of approximately 0.7 hectare. The 3 existing outdoor ménages adjoining the buildings to the east are not considered brownfield land and are excluded from this area. The proposal is for the redevelopment of the site under the exception set out in paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

7.2.4 In respect of the approved scheme for 24 dwellings, the layout of the houses was more open than the previously refused scheme, which was clustered tightly within the brownfield land. The layout of the houses in the approved scheme is in the form of an open horseshoe, with the western spur (backing on to Lowson Grove) within the existing footprint of the buildings and parking areas. The eastern spur, which extended towards the boundary with the adjoining allotments, is partially outside of the previously developed land, and extends onto one of the grassed ménages. Eight of the proposed houses are sited outside of the brownfield land. As such, the proposal does not fall wholly within the brownfield land exception in the NPPF.

7.2.5 In mitigation of this, the existing buildings are tightly clustered together, preventing views through to the Green Belt beyond, whereas the approved scheme is very open in its layout, allowing the open nature of the Green Belt to penetrate deep into the site. Overall, it was considered by both councils that this open layout would enhance the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it compared to the existing development on the site.

7.2.6 The current scheme increases the number of dwellings by 3 but does not extend the approved area of development of the 24 dwelling scheme. The main changes to the scheme involve replacing several large, 4 bedroom detached houses within large plots with smaller, detached houses within smaller plots. Overall, the volume of development increases from 11,338m³ in the approved 24 dwelling scheme to 11,508m³ in the proposed 27 dwelling scheme. Whilst this is an increase of 170m³ (1.5%) it is almost exactly the same as the volume of the existing buildings on the site at 11,510m³. The footprint of the buildings also increases by 73m² but this still remains considerably below the footprint of the existing buildings on the site (1,868m² compared to 2,999m²). The area of hardstanding, car parking, roadway and footpaths also remains significantly less than the existing situation.

7.2.7 In conclusion, the open layout of the development and the area of developed land will remain unchanged from the approved scheme with only small and insignificant changes to the building footprints and building volumes. The proposed scheme will, therefore, have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, or any other purpose for including land within the Green Belt, than the approved scheme but will retain all the benefits of the approved scheme over the existing situation on the site.

7.3 (b) Loss of the existing riding school as a community facility

The loss of the riding school has been accepted by both councils and by the appeal Inspector.

7.4 (c) General housing policies

The principle of developing this site for residential use has been accepted by both councils and the appeal Inspector.

- 7.4.1 The applicant is proposing 9 units as affordable housing (33%) with a mix of 5 flats and 4 houses, which accords with Hertsmere's requirement for 35% affordable housing. The internal floorareas for the proposed dwellings meet or exceed the nationally described space standards. Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

7.5 (d) Design, scale and appearance

The approved scheme proposed a single block of 4 flats towards the entrance of the site, designed to have the appearance of a pair of semi-detached houses, 6 pairs of semi-detached houses and 8 detached houses. The design style drew heavily upon the suburban, Edwardian vernacular that is seen within the surrounding area.

Materials proposed included buff London Stock brick, brown and red brick, reconstituted Portland stone, smooth render, clay roof tiles and artificial slate tiles.

- 7.5.1 The proposed scheme still incorporates a single block of flats near the entrance with detached and semi-detached houses forming the rest of the development. Although the style of buildings has changed to a degree, they all remain of a traditional design incorporating hipped roofs and gable projections, utilising traditional materials. Although no details of the materials are given, they are shown to be predominantly facing brick and render for the elevations and roof tiles.
- 7.5.2 Overall, the proposed houses are of a typology, scale and design that complement and reinforce the character and appearance of the surrounding residential area.

7.6 (e) Character of the area

The general character of the area is of detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows, with the bungalows predominantly located on Elm Grove and Lowson Grove. With the exception of the houses on Wilcot Avenue and Talbot Avenue, which are more uniform in their style and materials, the remaining houses and bungalows are very varied in their design and materials, with an eclectic mix ranging from brown, pebbledash rendered semi-detached houses to large mock-Tudor houses.

- 7.6.1 The approved scheme, comprising predominantly detached and semi-detached houses, was considered to complement and reinforce the character and appearance of the surrounding residential area. Although the detailed design of the houses now proposed has changed, the scheme remains predominantly detached and semi-detached houses of a traditional design. This is acceptable.

7.7 (f) Impacts on adjoining properties

Several properties in Watford Borough directly adjoin the site and the potential impact on these properties needs to be assessed.

7.7.1 *1, Sherwoods Road* – This property adjoins the entrance to the site on its southern side and its side garden boundary is shared with the application site. The nearest proposed building to this property is a pair of semi-detached houses (Plots 26-27) sited in line with the rear boundary of the property. The relationship of Plots 26-27 to 1, Sherwoods Road remains unchanged and they will have no adverse impact on this property.

7.7.2 *35, Bucks Avenue* – This property is sited on the northern side of the site entrance and also shares its side garden boundary with the application site. A row of trees is sited along this boundary and is to be retained. The nearest proposed building is the block of 5 flats (Plots 1-5), which is a 2 storey building with a single storey rear extension. The relationship of Plots 1-5 to 35, Bucks Avenue remains unchanged and they will have no adverse impact on this property.

7.7.3 Adjacent to Plots 1-5 to the north is a pair of semi-detached houses (Plots 6-7). One of these houses faces toward the end of the garden of 35, Bucks Avenue. This is set back 12m from the boundary and also exceeds the minimum guideline distance of 11m. The relationship of Plots 1-5 to 35, Bucks Avenue remains unchanged and they will have no adverse impact on this property.

7.7.4 *22-30, Talbot Avenue* – These properties back onto the northern boundary of the site. The nearest proposed buildings are Plots 7-11, all semi-detached houses. These houses are sited 37-47m from the rear elevations of the houses in Talbot Road. The relationship of Plots 7-11 to nos. 22-30, Talbot Avenue remains unchanged and they will have no adverse impact on these properties.

7.7.5 *1a-6, Lowson Grove* – These properties all share a rear boundary with the site and have relatively short garden depths of 5-12m. Plots 19-25 are sited adjacent to this boundary and comprise 3 detached houses and 2 pairs of semi-detached houses. These houses are set back 14-22m from the boundary, in excess of the Council's minimum 11m guideline. The distances between the rear elevations of these proposed houses and the existing bungalows in Lowson Grove is 28.1-29.7m. All therefore meet the minimum back-to-back distance of 27.5m in the Residential Design Guide. The relationship of Plots 19-25 to nos. 1a-6, Lowson Grove remains unchanged and they will have no adverse impact on these properties.

7.8 (g) Car parking provision

The proposal provides 72 parking spaces for the proposed 27 dwellings, including

13 visitor spaces, a ratio of 2.67 spaces per dwelling (a slight increase from the previous scheme of 2.62 spaces per dwelling). This level of provision exceeds the Council's maximum standard of 62.75 spaces for the proposed development. This level of provision is considered acceptable in order to ensure no overspill parking will occur on Bucks Avenue and Sherwoods Road.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This is a consultation from Hertsmere Borough Council on a revised application for the redevelopment of the existing Bucks Meadow Riding School. The proposal is for the redevelopment of the riding school with 27 dwellings following the approval of a previous scheme for 24 dwellings.
 - 8.2 The revised scheme has been considered against national policy relating to Green Belt land, the Council's development plan policies and the previously approved scheme for 24 dwellings. It is considered that the revised scheme will have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the approved scheme and is acceptable.
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9.0 RECOMMENDATION

That Hertsmere Borough Council be advised that Watford Borough Council has no objection to the application but would wish to see conditions imposed on any grant of permission to cover the following matters:

- 1. That no part of the development shall be occupied until the existing access to Bucks Avenue has been modified and constructed in full, as shown on drawing no. 4933/001 Rev. A (Bellamy Roberts).

Reason: To ensure safe access to the site in the interests of vehicular and pedestrian users of the highway.

- 2. That the trees along the south-western boundary and along the north-western boundary are retained and measures installed to protect the trees during demolition and construction works.

Reason: These are an important visual amenity to adjoining residential occupiers and will help to mitigate the visual impact of the development.

- 3. The development shall provide at least 62 car parking spaces.

Reason: To prevent overspill parking on the adjoining highway on Bucks Avenue and Sherwoods Road.

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