

Planning application no.	17/01089/FUL	
Site	Former Wednesfield High School, Lakefield Road, Wolverhampton WV11 3ES	
Proposal	Proposed residential development comprising 210 houses and 56 apartments with associated landscaping, highway amendments, parking and ancillary buildings	
Ward	Wednesfield South	
Applicant	City of Wolverhampton Council	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John C Reynolds Cabinet Member for City Economy	
Accountable Director	Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy	
Originating service	Planning	
Accountable employee	Stephen Alexander	Head of Planning
	Tel	01902 55610
	Email	Stephen.alexander@wolverhampton.gov.uk

1.0 Summary recommendation

1.1 Grant subject to conditions

2.0 Background

2.1 This application was deferred at Planning Committee on 14 November 2017 for further information on school placements, flooding, provision of medical facilities, unadopted roads and density/design. These issues are all addressed in the report.

3.0 Application site

3.1 The site is approximately 4.8km to the east of Wolverhampton City Centre and is the site of a former senior school consisting of school buildings which have now been demolished and school playing fields.

3.2 The site is adjoined to the north by the playing fields and multi-use games area of Wednesfield High School. To the east and south are residential properties and to the

west, Lakefield Road, which is a tree lined road with grass verges which runs parallel to the site.

- 3.3 The site is 6.9 hectares and predominantly flat, sloping gently from north-west to south-east.

4.0 Application details

- 4.1 The development proposes 266 units and comprises two, three and four bed houses and two-bedroom apartments. There would be a mix of tenure offering market sale, market rent and 25% affordable housing (affordable rent and shared ownership). The breakdown of those units is:

- 43 two-bedroom, two-storey houses
- 60 three-bedroom, two-storey houses
- 51 three-bedroom three-storey houses
- 9 four-bedroom, two-storey houses
- 47 four-bedroom, three-storey houses
- 56 two-bedroom apartments.

- 4.2 The apartments comprise two, four-storey blocks on the northern boundary of the site. The blocks are rectangular in shape with amenity areas to the west and centre of the blocks. Balconies would provide private amenity space. Parking is provided to the east, west and south of both blocks with provision for cycle parking and bin stores.
- 4.3 There would be one new vehicular access road built to adoptable standards to serve the whole site located opposite the junction with Green Meadow. The junction with Lakefield Road and Meadow Green would be a new signalised junction with associated widening of Lakefield Road.
- 4.4 The layout adopts a place-making approach with three distinct character areas; boulevard, shared surface area and private lane. The boulevard exhibits a more urban aesthetic with a greater height along a wider road. The shared surface area has a mews house type of similar appearance but two-storey in height and the houses on the private roads are more suburban comprising two-storey houses in a more generous setting.
- 4.5 The houses would be of a contemporary design constructed of traditional brick and tiles. The apartments would be constructed of brick, with coloured render inserts and some timber cladding and steel profile roof sheeting.
- 4.6 An area of open space with attenuation basin is proposed in the south-east corner of the site, north of the electricity substation.
- 4.7 Pedestrian access is proposed through two routes created north and south of the main access on Lakefield Road. No pedestrian or vehicular access is proposed through the development site towards the existing housing development adjoining the site to the east (Coltsfoot Close or Heather Close) or to the south (March End Road).

- 4.8 Parking for the houses is primarily within curtilage although in some areas parking is provided on street.
- 4.9 The development will result in the loss of some trees to facilitate the proposed development. A band of trees can be retained on the frontage retaining a wildlife corridor. An area of Millennium planting which is overgrown and comprising mainly shrubs will be removed in part and the planting which remains will be thinned. Additional tree planting is proposed across the whole site.
- 4.10 Accompanying the application are several supporting reports and surveys detailed below:
- Transport Assessment – Aecom – 27 January 2017
 - Framework Travel Plan – Aecom – October 2017
 - Air Quality Assessment – Aecom – October 2017
 - Outline Drainage Design – Aecom – 22 September 2017
 - Sports Pitch Disposal Strategy – 15 September 2017
 - Ecology Report – Camlad – November 2016
 - Flood Risk Assessment – URS – November 2014
 - Environmental Noise Study and Assessment – Noise.co.uk – 10 May 2017
 - Ground Investigation Report – GIP Ltd. – 14 July 2017
 - Arboricultural Advice – Midland Forestry Ltd. – 11 April 2016

The reports are all publicly available on the Council's website on the following link:
<http://planningonline.wolverhampton.gov.uk:2707/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=OWBBQ7RWJ4A00>

5.0 Relevant policy documents

- 5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 5.2 The Development Plan:
Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)

6.0 Publicity

- 6.1 Three letters of objection have been received. The planning related concerns are mainly:
- Drainage/flooding
 - Pedestrian access through the site
 - Loss of green space
 - Traffic congestion
 - Overdevelopment
 - Noise during construction

- 6.2 The Council's Housing Development team undertook two community engagement events inviting local residents and local ward councillors to view the proposals, giving an opportunity to comment. The meetings were held on the 7 December 2016 and 22 February 2017 at the Wednesfield Community Centre and Library Hub in Well Lane, Wednesfield. Residents had concerns about the lack of open space, no plans for additional GP surgeries, schools or public transport and a large increase in traffic on an already busy road, the boundary with March End Road, access through the site to Foxglove/Coltsfoot area, loss of trees and the layout generally.
- 6.3 In between the two community engagement events a petition of 91 signatories against the redevelopment of the site was submitted on 11 January 2017 to the Council's Housing Development team. The objections were based on the matters raised at the community engagement event.
- 6.4 Councillor Brackenridge has raised several concerns about the proposal including the operation of the signal controlled junction, impact on Pinfold Bridge and the road network generally from increased traffic, road safety (given the proximity to Wednesfield High School), flooding, pedestrian links through the development, mitigation for loss of playing pitches and lack of school places.
- 7.0 Consultees**
- 7.1 Highways – refer to appraisal
- 7.2 Environmental Health – No objections subject to conditions requiring electric charging points and a Travel Plan to achieve the air quality objectives of the Core Strategy Policy ENV8 and details of ground remediation and gas protection measures recommended by the submitted ground investigation report reference CEB/24095.
- 7.3 The Environmental Noise Study and Assessment dated 10 May 2017 was submitted and recommends acoustic glazing and acoustic vents for residential properties overlooking the substation, and thermal double glazing and acoustic vents for all other properties. In addition, officers also recommend acoustic glazing for residential properties which might be affected by the Multi Use Games Area to the north of the apartments.
- 7.4 Ecology – The Ecological and protected species survey dated November 2016 by Camlad is satisfactory and no further ecological survey work is required but any permission should include a condition requiring the recommendations of the report to be implemented.
- 7.5 Landscape - The development will result in the loss of many mature and young trees. A landscaping scheme has been submitted but should include additional tree planting on site to mitigate for the loss of trees which have to be removed. Some proposed tree species shown are too large for the proposed locations and need to be revised. The final landscape scheme when submitted should include hedge planting along the boundary with the school as it will provide a wildlife corridor along the edge of the playing fields which are relatively barren from a biodiversity perspective.

- 7.6 Education – see appraisal.
- 7.7 Police – there are some issues with surveillance of some small areas of parking within certain parts of the site which should be amended if the developer wants to achieve Secured by Design and the public open space should be well lit to maximise surveillance.
- 7.8 Drainage – The submitted Drainage Strategy demonstrates that the options available would not increase surface water run-off or result in the risk of flooding and subject to a suitably worded condition there are no objections in principle.
- 7.9 Sport England – no objections.
- 7.10 Western Power– no comments.
- 7.11 Archaeology – no objections subject to a condition for a programme of works to be submitted to ensure any archaeology is identified and recorded prior to and during construction.
- 7.12 NHS – Wolverhampton - Clinical Commissioning Group – see appraisal.

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
[LD/03012017/A]

9.0 Appraisal

- 9.1 The main issues for consideration are:
- Principle of development (including provision for education and health care)
 - Loss of playing fields
 - Highways and road safety
 - Loss of trees/ecology
 - Drainage
 - Layout, design and density
 - Impact on adjacent occupiers
 - Other matters
- 9.2 Principle of development (including provision for education and health care) – This site was identified as a housing site in the Wolverhampton Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in 2011 after the former school buildings and playing fields became surplus to requirements when the pupils moved from this site to the main school buildings on the adjacent Wednesfield High School. The SHLAA is a record of sites identified as suitable for housing and for inclusion in updated Development Plan proposals.

- 9.3 Wolverhampton, along with all other areas of the country, has to provide a five-year housing land supply to meet the governments targets for providing new homes. This is a large site and if it were not included in the SHLAA for housing, the housing targets set for Wolverhampton could not be achieved without other sites coming forward. This could expose the Council to speculative planning applications in potentially inappropriate locations such as green belt, which would be increasingly difficult to resist. Therefore, identifying suitable sites such as this are key to delivering new homes and the development of this site for 266 homes will make a significant contribution to those housing targets.
- 9.4 The local authority has known for some time through the identification of the site in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment about the potential redevelopment of this site for housing. Levels of surplus places across the city are actively monitored by the Education Department through the School Organisation Team; at present place availability in the Wednesfield area of the city is constrained.
- 9.5 A yield for potential additional pupils from proposed development has been included in the pupil projections which show that there will be very low levels of surplus places available. It is therefore highly likely that additional school places will be required in both primary and secondary phases as the proposed dwellings are built out and the occupancy of the site grows.
- 9.6 There are primary schools in the area which are likely to have the capacity for expansion. Any school expansions would be identified in accordance with the Council's Primary School Organisation Strategy. A proposal has been made by the Education Department to keep the site of the former Wednesfield Village School as a contingency site as opposed to it being disposed of to further meet housing needs.
- 9.7 Demand for secondary school places is increasing across the city and plans are in place for the introduction of additional places for September 2018. This marks the start of a period of sustained growth in secondary age pupils which will require investment in additional secondary school places in the short to medium term.
- 9.8 The expansion of Coppice Performing Arts School and Wednesfield High School is not possible at this point as Central Government policy only allows for the expansion of schools that are rated by OFSTED as Good or Outstanding. At present neither of the two schools meet this requirement, however it should be noted that both schools are on a journey of improvement and may be able to be considered for expansion in future years.
- 9.9 The Council has a statutory requirement to provide a school place for every child that requires one. While the Council do receive some funding for school places from Central Government, historically it has not proved to be sufficient and the Council is therefore required to address any shortfall in Capital and Revenue costs.
- 9.10 There is no Development Plan policy requirement to take account of local health facilities or provision of doctor's surgeries when determining planning applications for a site of this scale and nature. However, it has been confirmed by the Clinical Commissioning Group

(CCG) which is part of the NHS that their main focus is the expansion of the Alfred Squire Road surgery to bring in additional GP support. The CCG is aware of the proposed redevelopment of this site for new housing and the proposed surgery expansion plans are to help provide for this. The GP practice are confident they can cope with that expansion with the extra space to be developed. Planning permission was granted on 25 November 2016 (planning application reference 16/01199/FUL) and construction is likely to start in February 2018, to be completed in Spring. This extension will enable them to have two more consulting rooms in the surgery to provide for additional GP and nursing staff.

- 9.11 In summary, there is a balance between the provision of much needed new homes, particularly of the high quality proposed and the impact such a development will have on existing service provision such as schools and GP surgeries. However, in this case, the local education authority is exploring options for expanding both primary and secondary school places across the City and is continuing its review of education provision in the Wednesfield area and the healthcare agencies already have expansion plans in place for the potential increase in patients as a result of this development.
- 9.12 On this basis, planning permission could not be refused and the principle of residential development is therefore acceptable.
- 9.13 Loss of playing fields – The development would be built on the former playing fields of the school site which have been unused for many years. At the time of the redevelopment of the former Jennie Lee Centre (opposite) for housing it was agreed with Sport England that as mitigation for the loss of playing fields, together with the future loss of playing fields at the Wednesfield High School site, (as the site was identified for redevelopment for housing at that time), replacement pitches would be provided at Coleman Avenue. These pitches have now been provided, and Sport England have no objection.
- 9.14 Highways and road safety – A Transport Assessment has been submitted as part of the planning application which has been conducted to a nationally recognised methodology. It demonstrates that the wider highway network can accommodate the increase in traffic generated from the proposed development.
- 9.15 The Transport Assessment has taken account of the wider highway network. There has been an 18-tonne weight limit on Pinfold bridge for several years which was a structural weight limit due to the condition of the bridge. Now that the bridge has been reinforced, a 7.5 tonne environmental weight limit will be implemented to replace the structural limit as it would not be appropriate for Lichfield Road/Pinfold bridge route to become a major HGV thoroughfare. This is unlikely to lead to a significant displacement of HGV traffic as the existing 18 tonne structural limit currently restricts the level of commercial though traffic over Pinfold Bridge. These restrictions do not apply to public passenger transport buses or coaches.

- 9.16 The single vehicle access point into the proposed development site from A4124 Lakefield Road is acceptable. The location of this access opposite Green Meadow will create a crossroads junction layout that will need to be controlled via a traffic signal junction for road safety reasons and to allow vehicles, especially those turning right in and right out, to access and egress the development safely. The signals would be optimised to prioritise traffic flows on the main road (Lakefield Road) to minimise traffic impacts of the development on the nearby highway network. The signals will include a vehicle detection system to detect vehicles on all approaches and optimise traffic throughout whilst minimising delays on all arms of the junction.
- 9.17 The proposed signal controlled junction would also incorporate a pedestrian crossing facility that would replace the existing pedestrian crossing facility located further south on Lakefield Road. The development includes two emergency access points for emergency services.
- 9.18 Most of this development is located in an area that has been identified as being outside of a 'highly accessible' area according to the criteria set out in the City of Wolverhampton Councils Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The 'unique' nature of the layout has demonstrated that the proposed road space \ carriageway space is of sufficient width to accommodate the general and visitor parking that will be required, whilst still allowing an appropriate level of space for the largest vehicles anticipated to require access to the properties to manoeuvre around the site in a safe manner. The proposed car parking provision comprises both in-curtilage and on-street parking. The provision of tandem parking is not the preferred option but where these are proposed, additional on-street parking is provided.
- 9.19 The proposed car parking provision for the apartments is very slightly below the recommended requirement for residential use. However, this provision is acceptable for the apartment complex. It is acknowledged that none of the apartments are being specifically designed for disabled use however, the four larger parking spaces are in a good location and can be turned into disabled parking bays should the need arise in future. The quantity and location of the cycle parking for the apartments is acceptable and the location of the single bin store is acceptable for the refuse collection vehicle and operatives to easily access.
- 9.20 There is a hierarchy to the carriageway design. The main boulevard is a more traditional layout with footways on both sides and has been widened to accommodate on-street parking spaces due to the number of large dwellings with triple tandem parking arrangements. Traffic calming is generally acceptable and can be conditioned.
- 9.21 The shared surfaces have a minimum highway corridor width of 7.5 metres to allow for two-way traffic and safe areas either side of the main carriageway for the movement of pedestrians. There needs to be a clear definition between the corridor boundary and the space that will be part of the residential properties and to accommodate the needs of the partially sighted which can be achieved with appropriate use of materials and kerb height.
- 9.22 There are a small number of private access roads proposed which consist of five dwellings or less. These areas consist of two or three properties either side of a short

road length and would satisfy the requirements of the City of Wolverhampton Council standards. Their layouts are designed so that all the vehicles anticipated to require access to that part of the development are able to manoeuvre in and out of the private drives in a safe manner.

- 9.23 Loss of trees and ecology – The development would result in the loss of a number of trees on the frontage and on the eastern boundary of the site in the area of the Millennium Forest. A replacement planting scheme is proposed and the retention of a linear tree belt along Lakefield Road and management of the remaining Millennium planting will significantly enhance the wildlife habitat. Additional tree planting should be incorporated into the final scheme but this can be conditioned.
- 9.24 The submitted ecology report also recommends the retention of existing mature trees of value for nesting birds where possible, the younger woodland planting on the eastern boundary of the site should be selectively thinned so as to retain the oak, birch, willow, alder, wild cherry and field maple with hawthorn and hazel, mature trees with a stem diameter of over 500mm should be checked for bat roosts before felling. If the site is cleared during the bird breeding season from mid-March until the end of August advice should be sought from an ecologist before clearance starts and bird and bat boxes should be provided on mature trees, on the new buildings and on poles. These recommendations can be conditioned.
- 9.25 Drainage – The outline strategy proposes the use of an attenuation basin to restrict surface water discharge from the site and this is acceptable in principle. The report submitted indicates that a gravity solution is achievable and in a situation where the amount of surface water was too great to discharge by gravity a pump is proposed but this is not the favoured solution and measures would need to be in place should the pump fail, or the attenuation storage was full or a design storm occurred. One alternative is to have a wider and shallower attenuation basin to discharge as much surface water run-off through a gravity system as possible. Other alternatives include oversized pipes and underground tanks which are options also being explored. A sewer capacity study is being undertaken but will not be available until mid-January 2018. This will determine the most appropriate drainage solution. There are drainage solutions available and the details can be satisfactorily dealt with by condition on the basis that if the details are not satisfactory, the condition will not be discharged.
- 9.26 Layout, design and density – The housing is set back over 20 metres from Lakefield Road as a result of an underground sewer but this set back enables a large number of mature and established trees and a wildlife corridor along a busy urban route to be retained. This creates a green and natural setting to enhance the new development.
- 9.27 The site is within close proximity to nine-storey high-rise flats and a two/three-storey school building. The proposed four-storey height and massing of the proposed

apartments is in-keeping with the scale of its surroundings. The two/three-storey houses are in-keeping with the scale and height of existing residential properties.

- 9.28 The development would provide a contemporary bespoke design with traditional building materials. The hierarchy of streets resulting in a strong urban rhythm on the main route, which is reduced in scale towards the rest of the site is an appropriate design solution and adopts the fundamental principles of a successful housing layout and in general terms is acceptable in planning terms.
- 9.29 The development would provide a density of 49 dwellings per hectare. BCCS policy HOU2 – Housing Density, Type and Accessibility identifies a density of between 45 – 60 as high density but is suitable for family housing. The density is at the lower end of the spectrum and is one indication that the proposal would not result in overdevelopment. The separation distances between the rear boundaries of the new houses meet the minimum standards of SPG3 – Residential development and in many cases, exceed the minimum distance of 22 metres. The garden shape and sizes varies across the development but all meet the minimum overall size of 55 square metres.
- 9.30 The development includes an area of land which is undeveloped for housing and will be used as public open space. The useable area measures approximately 50m x 60m and will provide a natural landscape setting within a modern urban city location. The development would provide sufficient parking and therefore in all regards the development is not considered to result in over development.
- 9.31 Impact on adjacent occupiers – There would be a distance in excess of 12 metres between the rear of existing properties in March End Road and the proposed side gables of the houses along the southern boundary which is the minimum separation distance specified in SPG3 – Residential Development. Together with proposed landscaping there would be no overlooking or loss of privacy to existing occupiers.
- 9.32 Other Matters – An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted and has demonstrated that the development would fall within the ‘medium’ category which requires that a travel plan and where practicable, electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) should be installed for each house and one EVCP should be installed for every 10 parking spaces for the apartment blocks. This can be secured through condition.
- 9.33 The planning system has a role to play in creating healthy, inclusive communities by improving access to, and providing opportunities for sports and recreational facilities which can improve the health and well-being of communities. The development includes a well-designed and useable area of open space which has appeal to all ages and abilities and without play structures to minimise the risk of creating opportunities for anti-social behaviour and which future residents often seek to have removed. There are sufficient local play facilities in the Wednesfield area and therefore additional provision is not required.

10.0 Conclusion

10.1 The development is acceptable in principle and would provide much needed housing in the City, creating new communities with housing of an appropriate tenure mix and high quality bespoke design. The development would be acceptable in highway terms subject to a new traffic signal junction and relocation of the existing pedestrian crossing. The development is unlikely to result in any flooding with the final details to be submitted by condition. The development is acceptable in planning terms and in accordance with development plan policies.

11.0 Detail recommendation

11.1 That planning application 17/01089/FUL be granted planning permission subject to conditions including those below:

- Affordable housing
- Submission of materials
- Landscaping (including street furniture)
- Accordance with recommendations of ecology survey
- Bird and bat boxes
- Signalised junction improvements
- Archaeological watching brief
- Submission of drainage details
- Travel Plan
- Traffic calming measures
- Electric charging points
- Renewable energy
- Boundary treatments
- Management company
- Tree protection fencing
- Construction Management Plan
- Acoustic/thermal glazing and vents
- Bin store design
- Provision of cycle storage
- Finished floor levels
- Lighting for public open space
- Land remediation and gas protection measures.

Note for Information – Mining advisory

