

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT CONTROL) COMMITTEE
10TH FEBRUARY 2009

**Planning Consultation by Malvern Hills District Council:-
 Proposed development of the site to create up to 58 live/work units,
 800sq m of B1 office space and 700sq m of hub space at
 Larford Quarry, Astley, Stourport on Severn
 08/1111/LPAC**

OPEN	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
CONTACT OFFICER:	Paul Round – Extension 2516 Paul.Round@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES:	None

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To make a decision on the Planning Consultation received from Malvern Hill District Council in respect of the proposed development at Larford Quarry, Astley.

2. RECOMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to resolve to OBJECT to the application 08/01970/FUL submitted to Malvern Hills District Council on the following grounds:**

1. **The proposed development is located in the open countryside where particular control is given to development. To allow development on the scale proposed would cause harm to character of the locality and undermine the restrictive controls contained with policies DS12, DS14 of the Malvern Hills District Local Plan and D10 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan on this particular important Green Wedge between the urban area of Stourport-on-Severn and the rural villages. This scale of development should be fully considered through the Local Development Framework, where it would be subject to options testing and sustainability appraisal and not purely as a windfall site.**

2. **The location of the site proposed is not considered to be a sustainable location for the scale of the development proposed which has not been justified through a sustainability appraisal. To approve the development would put significant pressure on services within the Wyre Forest District Council boundary and a heavy reliance on unsustainable means of transport contrary to advice in policies DS1 and DS2 of the Malvern Hills District Local Plan SD4, SD8 and T1 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan, T2 of the Regional Spatial Strategy and Government Advice in PPS1, PPS3 and PPS7.**
3. **The proposed development includes the provision of Office space which the District Council considers to be unsustainable and unjustified in its location. In addition the provision of this space will result reduction in the demand for such uses within sustainable locations such as Stourport-on-Severn and the Stourport Road Corridor where this scale of development should be located. This unjustified approach is in conflict with policies DS13, DS15, EP3 of the Malvern Hills District Local Plan, SD8, SD9 D26 and D27 of Worcestershire County Structure Plan, PA14 of the Regional Spatial Strategy**
4. **The District Council consider that this type and scale of development should incorporate a contribution towards affordable housing and education contributions as required by the Malvern Hills District Local Plan and the Worcestershire County Council Structure Plan. There is an example of such a development within the District where these matters were secured.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The District Council received a planning consultation from Malvern Hills District Council on 29th December 2008. The consultation relates to development located just outside the District boundary to the south of Stourport on Severn and to the west of the River Severn at Larford Quarry, Astley.
- 3.2 The site was previously used for industrial purposes through the haulage of reconstituted stone and as a quarry. The site forms a 7ha site with a number of portal framed buildings providing approximately 4000 sq metres of floor space.

- 3.3 The proposal represents a development of 58 live work units and 1,500 sq metres of office/hub space, following demolition of the existing buildings on site, providing a total built footprint of 5,800 sq metres.
- 3.4 The consultation process allows the District Council to have an input into the determination process of Malvern Hills District Council putting forward comments of how the scheme impacts on Wyre Forest. In this regard comments on the detail of the scheme will be kept to a minimum concentrating on more strategic issues.

4. COMMENTS ON THE CONSULTATION

The Principle of Development in this Location

- 4.1 The site is located within the open countryside outside any settlement boundaries with the Malvern Hill District Local Plan (MHDLP). It is accessed via a minor road that loops around past Larford Farm returning the main B4196 Astley Road via The Burf.
- 4.2 This area has been the subject of extreme pressure to effectively extend the urban area of Stourport-on-Severn via the Local Plan / Local Development Framework route. Such proposals have been resisted by both Wyre Forest and Malvern Hills to date due to the significant impact on the Landscape, the sustainability of the area, and reduction of the protection between the urban area and the rural villages beyond.
- 4.3 The proposal to site 58 live work units along with office accommodation is a substantial development within a rural area of sporadic development. Whilst it is acknowledged that the existence of the quarry site represents a material consideration for balancing in favour of the development it is my contention that the pure scale of the development proposed is over and above that which should be allowed as 'windfall' development in this location. Such a size of development should be addressed and brought forward through the Local Development Framework.
- 4.4 The restrictive nature of this land is supported through the Malvern Hill District Local Plan and the Worcestershire County Structure Plan, along with Government Advice in PPS3 and PPS7. The thrust of these policies is to restrict development in sensitive locations and seek to locate them within sustainable settlements as set out clearly in the Malvern Hill District Local Plan.
- 4.5 On this basis I consider that the development location is unacceptable from a strategic point of view and is of a scale of development that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework.

Sustainability of the Development

- 4.6 There is an increasing emphasis from Government on sustainability both in respect of buildings and their locations. This advice has filtered down through the structure plan and at a local level. The general policy context is that development should be located within sustainable locations within the Districts. This is particularly important in this context due to the size of the development proposed.
- 4.7 The location of development is within an area that is not well serviced by a range of transport modes. The nearest convenience store is located within Areley Kings approximately 1.5 miles away from the site, with the nearest Supermarket being in Stourport-on-Severn Town Centre approximately 3 miles away.
- 4.8 A bus service is in operation every Friday travelling past the site in the morning and returning in the afternoon. However this is not viewed as providing sustainable accessibility in this location. In fact there becomes a heavy reliance on car transportation. Whilst it is acknowledged that the concept of 'live work' is meant to reduce the need to travel, however due to the site location and its juxtaposition with other services, such as schools, doctors, shops, post offices I consider that the sustainability of this site and development has to be called into question, particularly as the development is providing three and four bedroom properties.
- 4.9 On the basis of the submitted information and this argument I conclude that the scale of the development proposed in this location is not sustainable and would be hugely reliant on the car as the main mode of transport.

Location of Office Space

- 4.10 As detailed above in addition to the live work units there is the provision of 1,500 sq metres (16,147 sq feet) of office/hub space. There is a distinct emphasis within all levels of planning policy to locate office development with sustainable areas such as town centres. The prevailing policy even within the Malvern Hills Local Plan is to apply a sequential approach to the provision of office accommodation, looking at Town Centres and urban areas first before looking at sustainable settlements. There is no evidence in the submission that this has been followed.

- 4.11 The lack of this appraisal has resulted in the development being located in an unsustainable location where access to and from the development is wholly reliant on car based travel. This argument has been stated above. It also results in the provision of office development being taken away from strategic locations such as Stourport Town Centre and the Stourport Road Corridor where office accommodation should be located. Whilst the provision of small scale office development is tolerated within rural areas on the basis of providing a range of opportunities and rural renaissance, I take the view that the scale of the office development proposed will strategically remove the emphasis of the need for creating the desired office accommodation in sustainable areas within Wyre Forest where it is required.

Affordable Housing Provision

- 4.12 As it has been noted above the detail of the application should rest with Malvern Hills throughout their determination process. However, I feel that a matter of affordable housing provision should be highlighted as this could impact strategically on Wyre Forest.
- 4.13 At present despite the number of units proposed there is not provision for affordable housing within the scheme. The applicants make the case that live work units are not dwellings but a commercial use. I do not accept this argument on the basis that the predominant use of the development is through residential floorspace. Members will recall the similar development within Wyre Forest at the Stone Depot, where this Council secured 30% affordable housing on that scheme.
- 4.14 I see no valid reason why Malvern Hills should not actively pursue the maximum provision of affordable housing on this site. To ignore this opportunity would fly in the face of the strategic aims at County and Regional Levels and indeed the Malvern Hill District Local Plan. If development on this site is to be pursued in some form there is a need to provide affordable units through a Registered Social Landlord.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal or policy implications

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The consultation on the Larford Quarry site has been assessed on a strategic level considering its impact on Wyre Forest District. It is considered that development by virtue of the scale proposed would be unsustainable, unsuitable in its location both of residential and commercial elements and is of a nature that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework incorporating a sustainability appraisal. In addition the lack of provision of affordable housing results in a lost opportunity and flies in the face of national, regional, and local policy.
- 7.2 It is therefore recommended that Wyre Forest District Council **OBJECT** to this development for the reasons set out in paragraph 2.1.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 There are no risk management issues.

9. CONSULTEES

- 9.1 The Forward Planning Manager and the Regeneration and Economic Regeneration Manager have been consulted on this development and their comments have been included within the Report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Consultation 08/1111/LPAC
Malvern Hills District Council Planning Application 08/01970/FUL
Malvern Hills District Local Plan
Worcestershire County Structure Plan
Regional Spatial Strategy
Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing
Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT CONTROL) COMMITTEE

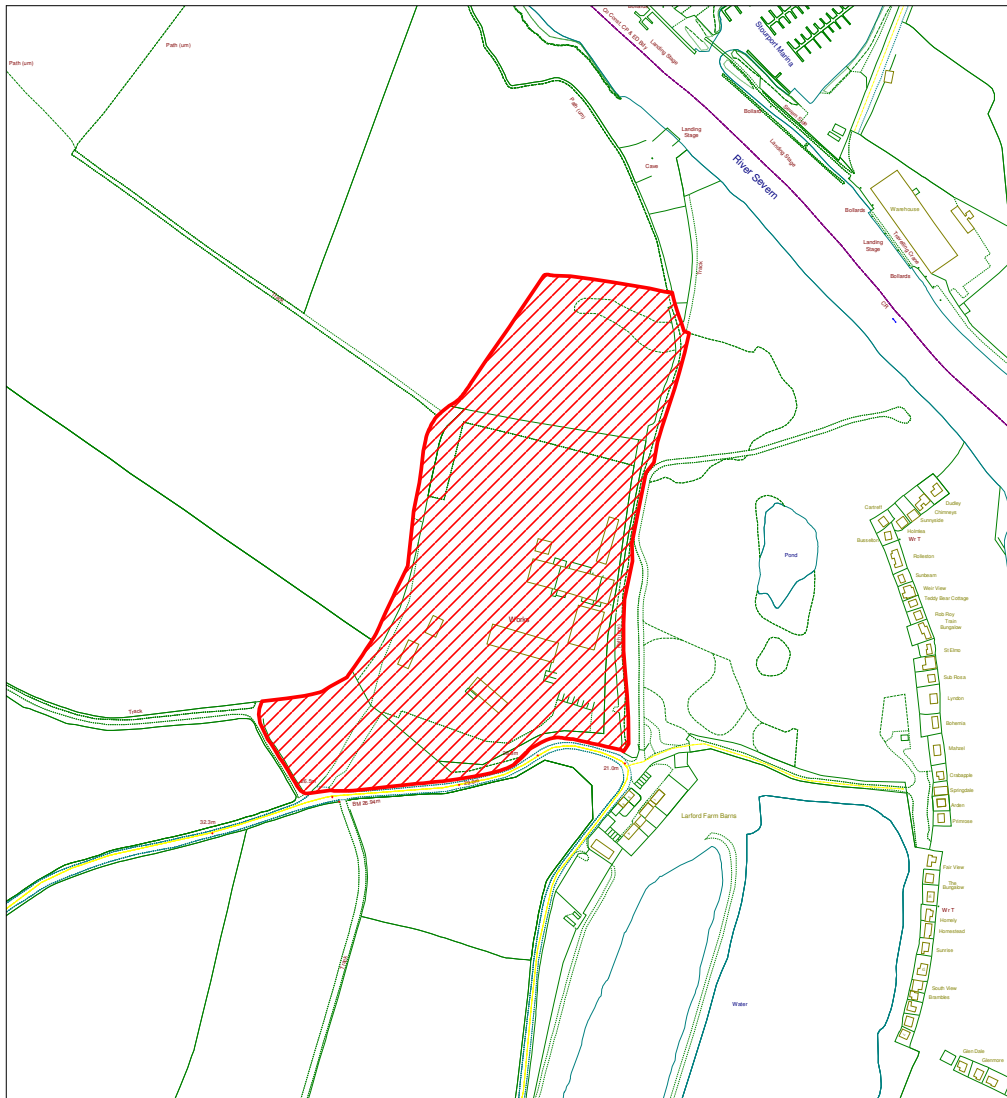
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