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Heritage Impact Assessment Relating to the Proposed residential development of land on the eastern edge of Eardisland village Herefordshire

Context

Eardisland is a very picturesque historic Herefordshire village set adjacent to the principal crossing point of the River Arrow. The village has a strategic location along the main B4529 route into Wales from Leominster recognised by the Normans who built a Castle and church here. The church contains the remains of the motte and moat which are now a scheduled ancient monument.



The Church of St. Mary is the oldest surviving structure in the village dating to the early C13 with some additions dating to the C14 and C18.



The settlement has evolved over 1000 years characterised by its timber framed cottages and grand houses associated with farming the fertile lands of the Arrow valley.



The small-scale former farmsteads were constructed in an irregular pattern along the main road and back lanes creating an organic layout form with buildings in parallel and at right angles to the road. Also there exists many associated outbuildings similarly constructed within a property curtilage.



This is in contrast to the higher density ordered street scenes of Pembridge Weobley and Dilwyn villages close by.



Whilst the 17th and 18th century character of the settlement has attracted national attention, the village has continued to evolve with contemporary infil development of vernacular character reinforcing the overall traditional appearance.



There is no set building line and so projection and recession of physical form creates a somewhat chaotic rhythm which coalesces into an attractive whole.



Whilst the timber framed former farmhouses and cottages remain preeminent, development from the 18th century has utilised brick, stone and render as materials of choice, but nevertheless maintaining a traditional form of pitched roofs and small modular windows to complement the older properties. As frontage plots were built upon, larger developments were set on land along the back lanes or set to the rear of established houses in the spacious former kitchen gardens or paddock areas. Such development has reinforced the nucleated nature of the village and helped maintain its vitality and the retention of essential public/community facilities. Eardisland's variety of housing types and mix of population from the young to elderly is a key attraction of the village with an active community life. This element set amidst great social change in rural areas has witnessed a diminishing agricultural workforce replaced by new residents. This has been critical to the renaissance of the settlement and maintenance of a more balanced age profile of inhabitants. This contrasts with other villages in North Herefordshire which have seen a contraction in population to a point where local services cannot be sustained, and they become effectively dormitory settlements.

The local authority has recognised this aspect and acknowledged a need for the settlement to continue its evolution with permission being granted over the past 50

years or so for local authority housing, new private developments and large characterful housing in prominent positions in and around the village.

The architectural approach to the new housing has been to embrace the traditional form and detailing of existing development in the village and use a palette of materials closely related to the vernacular of the area. It complements the established character of the village and underpins its viability as a service centre and tourist destination. Such a factor is key to maintaining the attractiveness of the settlement which in turn supports the upkeep and well being of historic buildings in Eardisland.

The Proposed Development Site

The application site is a rectangular parcel of agricultural land to the north side of the B4529 on the eastern approach to Eardisland from Leominster. It lies just outside, but immediately adjacent to the designated boundary of the Eardisland conservation area. It rises from the road and forms the transition between the built extent of the village and the open countryside beyond.





The Proposal

It is proposed to construct 4 two storey dwellings designed in a vernacular form with pitched plain tile roofs, brick, render and timber frame walls with traditionally detailed window and door joinery. The development extends up the plot away from the road with access from a new driveway, serving the three additional houses set at right angles to the main road thus presenting glimpses of their main facades to views from land in the direction of Shirl Heath. The frontage property is parallel to the main road maintaining the established building pattern along the entrance to the village

Significance of the Site

The site is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Eardisland Conservation Area and any redevelopment will alter the existing view of the village as it unfolds along the B4529. It forms the immediate setting to the Conservation Area which then continues unbroken into the open fields beyond.

Impact of the Proposal on Eardisland Conservation Area

This development will incur change to the established scene and as the Conservation Officer states, in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework this will result in less than substantial harm to an interest of acknowledged importance. Whilst the site is adjacent to but outside of the settlement boundary defined in The Eardisland Neighbourhood Development Plan, it forms a natural adjunct to the

village which will not impact upon the defining elements of its heritage significance which are focused on the vicinity of the bridge. Because of its immediate proximity to the built area of the village scope exists for sensitive redevelopment without compromising the status of the village as being visually distinct from the open countryside beyond.





It is a logical extension site on the edge of the built environment of Eardisland which will be read as part of the developed settlement and not as a projection into the open countryside. It will impact upon the existing configuration of setting but not in a

manner so adverse that it precludes the continued evolution of the village. The curvature of the road and the existing established and proposed boundary planting contribute to its recession away from the main vantage points along the approach route.

It is proposed to use a rich orange colour brick for the housing which will appear in the same viewing pane as the existing Arrow Lea house and elsewhere in Eardisland to give a ready correlation with the established local building character.







The vernacular character of the housing and the use of a palette of locally occurring building materials will reinforce the established composition and not clash with its defined significance. It is acknowledged that scope exists to reorientate some of the units to achieve a form more akin to a farmstead with ancillary structures and so avoid the criticism of the cul de sac character.

Overall, it is considered that it is a reasonable amendment to the established scene.

Impact of the proposal on heritage assets close by

Arrow Lea is a non designated heritage asset immediately adjacent to the west of the proposed development site. Whilst the site is currently occupied by a number of mobile residential caravans the proposed development will interject between Arrow Lea and the open countryside and thus constitute substantial change. The current layout does however locate the proposed housing to the western most boundary of the site with a parking court and landscape/garden area immediately adjacent.



Opposite Arrow Lea is Swandrift a non designated heritage asset. Whilst not directly affecting the property or its curtilage the presence of housing diagonally opposite will change its outlook and the operational characteristics of the site.



(Courtesy of Google Maps)

On the south side of the B4529 between Swandrift and the bridge is Staick Cottage grade II listed.



It is considered that the proposed development will not materially impact upon the cottage.

On the north side of the B4529 close to the bridge is the Staick House a Grade II* listed building.



It is considered that the proposed development will not materially impact upon the listed building.

The proposal will be judged within a Planning Policy Context of National Planning Law and Conservation Principles

Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 of the Act explains the responsibilities of local planning authorities administering planning applications concerning proposals which could impact on heritage assets.

The Act states:- ‘In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’.

More detailed guidance was set out in Planning Policy Statement No.5. This introduced a new term in planning legislation - the ‘heritage asset’. This is a building or site which may not be individually designated but is nevertheless deemed to contribute to the special historic character of a locality.

In an attempt to coordinate the fragmented legislative control of planning applications the Government issued new guidance published in March 2012, updated July 2021 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) —which replaced all other separate Planning Policy Guidelines and Planning Policy Statements. The NPPF referred to ‘heritage assets’ as ‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.

In terms of how the legislation affects applicants proposing works to historic buildings and sites, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should require applicants: ‘...to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance’ The NPPF dictates that approval for development proposals should normally be granted unless ‘any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’

Specific issues relating to heritage considerations in the Herefordshire Core Strategy 2011-2031 are included as follows; -

Summary of environmental issues, problems and challenges

- Protect, conserve and where possible enhance the county’s rich natural and historic assets
- Address climate change and flooding

- Plan for the potential impact of climate change in new developments
- Ensure new developments are of high-quality design and construction reflecting Herefordshire's distinctive character
- Use resources efficiently
- Improve air and water quality

3.14 New development will be designed and constructed in ways to ensure that local distinctiveness is reinforced. The wider impacts of climate change will be addressed by reducing carbon emissions, minimising pollution and the risk of flooding, ensuring availability of natural resources.

3.16 The area's valued heritage and significant environmental resource, including its natural beauty and quality of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, built environment and cultural heritage, will be protected, conserved and enhanced. It will underpin and foster growth and innovation in businesses and jobs; being accessed, appreciated and actively supported by more people, for more purposes, in all walks of life.

The marriage of traditional design and detailing of vernacular character will require both established craftsmen and infrastructure engineers to undertake the work therefore supporting a skill base essential to protect and safeguard the recognised character of local properties and the Eardisland community taking it forward into the modern age..

Policy SS6 - Environmental quality and local distinctiveness

Development proposals should conserve and enhance those environmental assets that contribute towards the county's distinctiveness, in particular its settlement pattern, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets and especially those with specific environmental designations. In addition, proposals should maintain and improve the effectiveness of those ecosystems essential to the health and wellbeing of the county's residents and its economy. Development proposals should be shaped through an integrated approach to planning the following environmental components from the outset, and based upon sufficient information to determine the effect upon each where they are relevant:

landscape, townscape and local distinctiveness, especially in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

biodiversity and geodiversity especially Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific interest; historic environment and heritage assets, especially Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings.

the network of green infrastructure.

local amenity, including light pollution, air quality and tranquillity.

agricultural and food productivity.

physical resources, including minerals, soils, management of waste, the water environment, renewable energy and energy conservation.

In addition; -

Policy E2 of the Eardisland Neighbourhood Development Plan requires all new development to preserve and enhance the positive attributes of heritage assets and their settings.

The proposal has been carefully designed in an understated manner to ensure that the pre-eminence of Eardisland Conservation Area is not adversely impacted by the proposal and the rural character of the location is safeguarded.

Policy LD1 – Landscape and townscape

Development proposals should:

- demonstrate that character of the landscape and townscape has positively influenced the design, scale, nature and site selection, protection and enhancement of the setting of settlements and designated areas;
- conserve and enhance the natural, historic and scenic beauty of important landscapes and features, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, nationally and locally designated parks and gardens and conservation areas; through the protection of the area's character and by enabling appropriate uses, design and management;
- incorporate new landscape schemes and their management to ensure development integrates appropriately into its surroundings; and
- maintain and extend tree cover where important to amenity, through the retention of important trees, appropriate replacement of trees lost through development and new planting to support green infrastructure.

The relatively small scale of the proposal extending away from the road and its vernacular character with many similar elevational treatments within Eardisland community ensures that a gentle transition occurs between the building and the rural landscape beyond.

Historic environment and heritage assets

5.3.23 The historic environment is defined as all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora. Those elements of significance with statutory protection are referred to as designated heritage assets. Policy LD4 is applicable to heritage assets throughout Herefordshire whether formally designated e.g. listed buildings and conservation areas, or not, ranging from individual structures and their settings, archaeological remains, to larger neighbourhoods of historic value, parks, gardens and other green spaces of local interest.

Policy LD4 – Historic environment and heritage assets

Development proposals affecting heritage assets and the wider historic environment should:

1. Protect, conserve, and where possible enhance heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance through appropriate management,

uses and sympathetic design, in particular emphasising the original form and function where possible.

2. where opportunities exist, contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the townscape or wider environment, especially within conservation areas.
3. retain, repair and sustainably reuse heritage assets to provide a focus for wider regeneration schemes.
4. record and advance the understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) and to make this evidence or archive generated publicly accessible and
5. where appropriate, improve the understanding of and public access to the heritage asset.

5.3.29 High quality design and well-planned developments can enhance community cohesion through maintaining or creating a sense of place. New development should be designed to preserve and enhance locally distinctive characteristics and positively contribute to the appearance of the locality. To achieve this, it is important that new development is successfully integrated into the existing built, natural and historic environment; however recognising that architectural styles change over time. Policy SD1 does not seek to stifle architectural innovation, contemporary design or reject advances in design and technology.

The vernacular design character of this scheme will provide for an assimilation into the established scene and with its traditional detailing provide a sympathetic transition between the village and the countryside beyond.

Policy SD1 – Sustainable design and energy efficiency Development proposals should create safe, sustainable, well integrated environments for all members of the community. In conjunction with this, all development proposals should incorporate the following requirements: • ensure that proposals make efficient use of land - taking into account the local context and site characteristics; • new buildings should be designed to maintain local distinctiveness through incorporating local architectural detailing and materials and respecting scale, height, proportions and massing of surrounding development, while making a positive contribution to the architectural diversity and character of the area including, where appropriate, through innovative design; • safeguard residential amenity for existing and proposed residents; • ensure new development does not contribute to, or suffer from, adverse impacts arising from noise, light or air contamination, land instability or cause ground water pollution;

• where contaminated land is present, undertake appropriate remediation where it can be demonstrated that this will be effective; • ensure that distinctive features of existing buildings and their setting are safeguarded and where appropriate, restored; • utilise physical sustainability measures that include, in particular, orientation of buildings, the provision of water conservation measures, storage for bicycles and waste including provision for recycling, and enabling renewable energy and energy conservation infrastructure; • where possible, on-site renewable energy generation should also be incorporated;

The description of the design ethos of this proposal outlines much of what is referred to in Policy SD1 but in addition the works will create a tranche of housing with high

thermal efficiency and a higher energy conservation rating whilst maintaining a traditional aesthetic appearance.

Conclusion

Eardisland is a heritage centre of great significance where the historic character of its constituent buildings and their juxtaposition one to another creates a picturesque entity which depicts the evolution of the settlement over many centuries. Interjecting new development into that composition can be particularly disruptive and disrupt setting considerably. The proposed development site constitutes an additive change on the fringe of the settlement which does not impact upon the core elements of the village and being an adjunct to the built edge of the community alters yet maintains its overall relationship with the open rural area beyond.

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