

**Addendum
Development Control Committee
25 March 2010**

<p>Item 2 10/00086/FUL Site of 93 Greensward Lane, Hockley</p>	<p>Woodlands Section</p> <p>Four silver birch trees are affected by the proposed access into the site.</p> <p>Each tree is approximately 5m in height, has a crown spread of 4m (north – south) and a stem diameter at 1.5m high of 100cms. They are early mature specimens all planted at the same time; each tree has been subject to recent poor crown reduction works. This has resulted in a loss of amenity and due to the weak anatomy of birch, a possible reduction in plant health. The natural, elongated, open crown has been lost and with it the grace that you would normally expect with this particular species.</p> <p>The submitted landscaping scheme seems fine. The suggested trees are suitable replacements for the trees to be removed.</p>
<p>Item R3 10/00020/FUL Site Of 125A To 125D High Road Rayleigh</p>	<p>Content:</p> <p>1: Applicants' Letter – Mr James Brown (agent) 2: Applicants' Letter – Mr Jonathan Mullins (Regional Development Manager Sanctuary Housing Group) 3: Neighbour Representation 4: Additional Consultation Response</p> <p>1: Applicant's Letter (agent) One letter has been received from the applicant's agent which makes the following comments:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicants consider that the level of car parking provision is appropriate and was agreed with planning, highway and design officers in pre-application discussions. • The re-development of the site before the end of 2010 represents a commitment made between RDC and Rochford Housing at the point of transfer of the housing stock. • The existing dilapidated building comprised 4 bedsit units and so it is necessary to achieve an uplift in units in order to make the scheme viable and also to ensure that affordable units are maximised on this limited opportunity.

- The size of the site is limited and, therefore, careful design and discussions with planning officers, ECC highway officers and ECC design officers was undertaken to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between built form, amenity space, landscaping and car parking provision.
- The site is well served by public transport with a bus stop located right outside the site and another on the opposite side of the High Road in very easy walking distance.
- Following detailed pre-application discussions design and highway officers confirmed they were happy with the proposals and this is reflected in their consultation responses.
- There is an acute need to provide affordable housing units in Rochford as highlighted in the 2009 Annual Monitoring Report and reaffirmed at the February Rochford Review Committee and in a recent press article. This application is one of two current applications that have been submitted by Rochford Housing and represents one of only a very limited number of sites which are suitable for re-development, owned outright by Rochford Housing and can be brought forward immediately for development.
- The 2009 car parking standards clearly allow for flexibility in their application, for example paragraph 2.5.1: "For main urban areas a reduction to the vehicle parking standard may be considered, particularly for residential development." This position is clearly reflected in the lack of objection from ECC Highways.

Officer comment

The application has been recommended for refusal by officers due to the shortfall in car parking spaces. The adopted standard requires 13 spaces with only 8 provided, two of which are in a tandem arrangement. It is considered that the application site is not situated within a sustainable location such that a relaxation of the standard is appropriate in this case. It does not meet the definition for such a relaxation in the new 2009 car parking standards.

Whilst the provision of affordable housing within the District is material to the determination of the application, it is not felt that this consideration prevails over the recommendation.

2: Applicant's Letter (Sanctuary Housing)

One letter has been received on behalf of the applicants (Sanctuary Housing) by their Regional Development Manager. This expresses disappointment with the recommendation for refusal based on parking provision. A number of concerns are raised as summarised below: -

- Sanctuary Housing Association originally submitted a planning application for The Chestnuts on 6 June 2009 (09/00298/FUL). After initial pre-application discussions with officers a response from Essex County Highways was received raising concerns that

the level of proposed parking was overbearing as well as additional comments on design. It became clear that refusal would be likely and the application was withdrawn.

Officer comment

The above comment is based on the position that the application was withdrawn following receipt of a highways response that was likely to lead to refusal. This view is a misunderstanding. The Highway Authority consultation response (received 8 July 2009) did not raise any objection to the application which proposed 8 spaces. However, the consultation response from Essex County Council Urban Design (received 13 July 2009) did raise concerns about the cramped layout of the parking and its dominance to Brook Road in conjunction with further concern regarding design, appearance of proposed amenity space.

- Following withdrawal of the application a new design team engaged with officers in pre-application discussion over a period of five months with discussions being held on 4 August 2009, by letter on 27 August 2009 and also 8 December 2009. During this period at no time was the issue of car parking density raised as a concern. Following the approval of Essex County Council Highways and the planning officer a revised application was submitted which was expected to be recommended for approval.

Officer comment

During the period between the withdrawal of the previous scheme in July 2009 and submission of a revised scheme in February 2010 new parking standards, as set out in the Essex County Council document "Parking Standards: Design and Good Practice" September 2009, were endorsed by the Council by an Executive Decision of Endorsement by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation on 13 November 2009. Much of the pre-application advice given pre-dates publication of this document and its subsequent endorsement by the Council. During the meeting held on 8 December 2009 the applicants and their agents were informed that the Council's parking standards had changed and that under the new standards the proposal would require 13 spaces.

- The 2009 car parking standards clearly allow for flexibility in their interpretation. The site has a bus stop immediately outside and one a short distance on the opposite side. Had it been raised as a strict policy to be enforced we would have attempted to address the concern in earlier designs. Importantly our meeting of 8 December with Anne Clayton, Essex County Highways, and your officer specifically addressed such issues.

- The scheme is acceptable not only to Essex County Highways but provides an adequate parking arrangement for 6 affordable homes in a sustainable location.

Officer comment

As detailed above, the applicants were informed at the 8 December meeting that new parking standards would require 13 spaces. However, Essex County Council have not raised an objection to the current application, which provides for only 8 spaces. This has been raised verbally with the Highway Authority who advise:-

1. *The Highway Authority considers the fact that as detailed discussions (following the earlier planning application) were held prior to the introduction of the new parking standards some licence should be given in their application to this particular scheme*

Officers maintain the view that the site does not meet the definition of main urban areas which are described at paragraph 2.5.1 as “those having frequent and extensive public transport and cycling and walking links, accessing education, healthcare, food shopping and employment.” In particular the location is not considered to meet the criterion of ‘frequent and extensive public transport links’. However, discussions over some months concerning this proposal did pre-date the new standard and Members may wish to take a view on this aspect.

- Evidence across the affordable housing sector and within Sanctuary Group suggests car parking ratios of less than 1:1 among tenants.

3: Neighbour Representation

Two letters have been received from the occupiers of dwellings in High Road and Glasseys Lane which make the following main points:-

- Bats possibly on site despite claims in application.
- Negative effect of development on protected trees (canopy, roots).
- May lead to increase in traffic turning right into the High Road despite restrictions on doing so.
- Level of parking insufficient.
- Existing accommodation could be affordably upgraded and extended.
- Balconies, window ventilation inoperable due to traffic noise from A127, fumes from pub kitchen.
- Elevations out of character with area.
- Perspective views are deceptive.
- Materials and design unsuitable for location.
- Concern that approval of a three storey building will set a precedent.

- Query as to whether the application has the support of Rochford Housing Association.

4: Additional Consultation Response

RDC Strategic Housing

The Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment estimates that there is a net annual need for 131 affordable homes each year in the Rochford District. Current delivery in the District by all social housing providers is low, with only 14 new affordable homes with support for people with learning difficulties being provided in 2009/10, and no new affordable general needs homes for rent.

This proposed development would provide six rented homes for people who are on the Council's Housing Register and who are in housing need.