

**Notes of informal meeting to discuss Weaver Vale housing Trust's
plans for Oathills Lea.
12th February 2020, Tarporley Community Centre.**

Present:

Tarporley Parish Council (TPC):

Cllr Toni Burke, Cllr Gill Clough, Cllr Catherine Helm, Cllr Lisa Miller, Cllr Gordon Pearson.
Ann Wright (Clerk)

Weaver Vale Housing Trust (WVHT):

Jo Fallon – Assistant Director for Development

Cheshire West & Chester Council:

Ward Councillor Eveleigh Moore Dutton

Purpose of meeting: To receive update proposed development of Oathills Lea.

The findings of the housing needs survey were considered including the need to provide affordable housing for both the younger and older generations. It was noted that all applicants would undergo an affordability assessment to check they can afford monthly rent payments.

Redevelopment Principles

The following redevelopment principles discussed at previous meetings were highlighted:

- Preference for 1 and 2 bed properties
- Tenure – ‘affordable’ rented noting that some properties may need to be sold as shared ownership to make the scheme financially viable.
- Affordability – rental rates will take into account local income levels and the local housing allowance.

It was noted the rent can be set anywhere up to 80% market value, however due to high market values in Tarporley it was stressed that properties set at 70% market value have not been affordable to local people. It was confirmed that average market values are set at a Borough level.

It was noted that the intention was to have a 100% rented development however this cannot be confirmed until the scheme has been valued.

It was noted that WVHT do not have to make a profit on the development but do need to break even, WVHT expect to obtain a grant of 25 to 30% of the scheme from Homes England, however there is some uncertainty about grant funding as the current funding ends in March 2022 and as yet no announcement has been made about future funding, although this may be included in the March budget, as such it is important that the scheme is delivered as soon as possible and before March 2022.

- All properties will have their own front door on ground level.
- There will be no communal space other than garden areas.
- Ground floor apartments will be more accessible and prioritised for older or disabled tenants.
- The scheme must include adequate parking including mobility scooter parking.
- Must have high quality open space.

It was noted by Councillors that a planning application/approval needs to take account of access of the public footpath which runs up the side of Poppy Lane Car park past the development site, it was noted this needs to be made accessible for residents including those using wheelchairs or mobility scooters as this is the nearest route to the High Street and the alternative route is very steep.

It was understood by WVHT the path is owned by CW&C, although the Parish Council had previously been advise the lighting on the path was the responsibility of WVHT, it was confirmed the lights get power from the WVHT property.

It was agreed there would be a need to look at differing ground levels between the path and development.

Ms Fallon suggested that WVHT will consider including the path in the development area of the application (within the red line).

It was noted a full project team is now in place and a large amount of work has already been done to get to this stage, feasibility studies have been completed and reports are expected shortly.

It was confirmed that work needs to be undertaken regarding access to the site taking account of residents in that area.

A pre-application submission has been made to CW&C looking at the principle of the development, scale, massing and density once this has been commented on by CW&C WVHT plan to carryout public consultation on the scheme.

Proposed Scheme (Draft)

The following scheme was discussed, it was noted that there was still work to be done on the design and that the scheme was not finalised and depending on CW&C, Parish Council and public comment it could be adapted.

- The scheme comprised of two blocks, 1 of 12, 1 bed apartments, and 1 of 8, 2 bed apartments, 20 apartments in total.
- Space standards were based on government national standards, 54sq m for the 1 bed apartments and 61sq m for the two bed.
- Work is still being done on internal layouts to allow for wheelchair access and movement.
- Consideration was still being given to orientation of the apartments.
- Parking was designed with at least 40 parking spaces but it was not yet agreed how these should be allocated.
- Different surface treatments were being considered to prevent the feel of a sea of tarmac.
- The development was all 2 storey.
- The proposed development is deliberately low density to accommodate open space and parking.
- Allocation would be based on the allocation scheme in the neighbourhood plan, councillors highlighted a desire to give priority to the elderly and disabled on the site as the future development of affordable housing on Brook Road would be more suitable for young people and families.
- It was noted a good area of outside space had been retained including a good number of trees.
- It was noted that the lighting and details for the car park, waste storage and mobility scooter parking will be included in the detailed application. Councillors highlighted the need to provide lighting which did not impact neighbouring properties.
- The scheme included large windows to create light airy apartments, with Juliet balconies on the 1st floor.
- It was suggested by Councillors that the brick work needed to be broken up possibly with some rendering to create something more like a Tarporley street scene. It was suggested that WVHT review the Tarporley Village Design Statement.

- It was suggested that small raised beds be considered for ground floor apartments outside the large windows.

Public Footpath

It was discussed that public access should be retained off the public footpath through the site although it was noted this needed to be balanced with resident's privacy and security. It was noted that connectivity of new developments with the existing village was included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Stairs

It was noted all first-floor apartments will have their own private staircase; councillors suggested that these should be capable of accommodating a stair lift if required.

Bin & Mobility Scooter Stores

More work is to be done on the mobility scooter store as this needs to comply with regulations relating to battery charging and storage.

There is expected to be one central bin store possibly near the access for ease of waste collection.

To meet planning regulations each dwelling will have a vehicle charging point, the design and siting of these is still to be agreed.

Internal Layout

It was noted that the layout of the properties needs to take account of the target occupants. Currently the scheme includes wet rooms for ground floor apartments with baths with electric showers on the first floor.

Ms Fallon stated that WVHT standard building specification included installing drains in anticipation of changes to bathrooms in the future for accessibility.

Timescales

It was hoped by the end of May the public consultation could be carried out and a planning application submitted.

June – August work will be done with neighbouring residents about access to the site and the tendering process will begin.

It was hoped between September and November 2020 work would commence on site with completion estimated in early 2022.

The advertising and allocation the properties was expected to take place 6 to 8 weeks before hand over to allow enough time for adaptations to any of the properties.

Community Consultation

It was hoped the consultation event would be held in May:

- The event would be used to raise awareness and understanding of the scheme.
- The proposal will still be flexible enough to be altered as a result of comments if required.
- WVHT will be able to provide an update on rental rates although these will not be finalised until the development nears completion.
- There will be details about internal layouts, bin storage and mobility scooter storage.

Affordability

Councillors emphasised the success of the scheme would large rely on its affordability.

It was agreed at the public consultation there needed to be an indication of rental costs and information on how to register and apply for properties. It was confirmed the consultation will be attended by both WVHT development team and the housing management team.

It was reported one of the biggest challenges was the cost of building contractors at the moment as prices have and are continuing to increase. As such until the contract is in place WVHT cannot confirm rental rates and if there will be a need to be a number of properties for sale through a shared ownership scheme.

CW&C Cllr Moore Dutton asked that the local eligibility criteria covers the ward rather than just the Parish Council area.

Future Steps

It was confirmed WVHT will continue to keep the Council updated on progress including the outcome of the pre-application to CW&C, and it was suggested that there is another meeting before the public consultation to provide an update on the consultation information.

The Clerk agreed she would check if the time capsule on site has been retrieved.

It was noted there is a public bench by the current building entrance in memory of a Parish Councillor, it was agreed the Parish Council would consider what should be done with this.

Ms Fallon confirmed she would check if plants in the garden area could be relocated by the Parish Council to other areas in the village which require planting including Poppy Lane Car Park.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Ann Wright
13-02-20.