

Planning Policy Comments

Application No: 69463

Location: Station Works, Bury Road, Radcliffe, M26 2UA

Proposal: Development for 30 no. dwellings with associated road, landscaping and infrastructure works.

The application site is currently vacant having previously been occupied by a warehouse/industrial buildings. As the site was last used as an employment site the principle of any proposed development should be assessed against UDP Policy EC2/2.

Under Policy EC2/2, the Council will seek to retain the employment use of sites unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the land and premises are no longer suited, in land use terms, to continued employment use.

SPD14 provides additional guidance on how the Council will implement Policy EC2/2 and, in doing so, sets out a more flexible approach whereby, in addition to assessing the suitability of the site from a purely land use perspective, also considers whether there is a realistic prospect of an existing site being retained in employment use – including consideration of whether there is market demand.

The Council has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of all employment sites within the Borough and this concluded that the site is suitable, in land use terms, for continued employment use.

An outline application for a mixed-use development comprising two apartment blocks and employment building was approved in 2020. The approval of the mixed-use scheme and, in particular, the inclusion of an element of employment development was seen as being sufficient to offset the loss of the wider employment site.

This current proposal is for a 100% residential scheme which comprises a mix of shared ownership and affordable rent properties. The applicant is contending that the mixed-use scheme (as was previously approved) is not viable. In order to clearly demonstrate that this is the case, the applicant should, in line with paragraphs 3.10 to 3.17 of SPD14, clearly demonstrate that the employment element of the previous approval has been actively and robustly marketed at a realistic price that reflects the employment use. Evidence of marketing for the employment – including the marketing particulars - should be provided so that full consideration can be given to how robustly the employment market has been tested and whether this was marketed at a realistic value for continued employment use.

If, once this evidence is submitted, the Council is satisfied that there is clear market evidence that there is not currently any realistic prospect of the employment element of the mixed-use approval being delivered, then the Council may consider alternative uses subject to a one-off payment to compensate for the loss of the employment site.

As noted above, the inclusion of an element of employment development in the approved mixed use scheme was seen as being sufficient to off-set the loss of the wider employment site. However, if the whole site is to be lost to residential, it would need to be off-set through a one-off payment. For a site of this size (0.57 ha.), the contribution would amount to £222,300.

The applicant has provided information to demonstrate that there is insufficient demand for employment uses on the site.

The applicant has further provided information in relation to viability of the proposed scheme. The applicant's position is that a one-off payment of £222,300 for the loss of the employment site would contribute to rendering the scheme unviable. The Council accepts this position.

Given the above and on balance, it is considered that the application site is a sustainable location close to existing services and public transport. The proposal will bring forward a vacant brownfield site and provide much needed affordable homes in Radcliffe. The proposal would comply with UDP policy EC2/2 and SPD14 without the payment of a one-off employment land contribution.

Housing Land Supply and Principle of Residential Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be treated as a material planning consideration and it emphasises the need for local planning authorities to boost the supply of housing to meet local housing targets in both the short and long term. The Framework states that unless they have an adopted plan that is less than five years old that identified a five year supply of specific deliverable sites at the time of conclusion of the examination, then local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific developable sites to provide either a minimum of five years' worth of housing, or a minimum of four years' worth of housing in certain circumstances set out in NPPF paragraph 226.

Bury's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sets out the latest housing supply position, which is made up of sites that have an extant planning permission and sites that have potential to obtain planning permission in the future. This shows that there are a number of sites within the Borough with the potential to deliver a significant amount of housing. However, not all of these sites will contribute to the deliverable land supply calculations as many sites will take longer than five years to come forward and be fully developed (e.g. some large sites could take up to ten years to be completed). As such, latest monitoring indicates that the Council is unable to demonstrate a four or five year supply of deliverable housing land when assessed against the Local Housing Need calculated using the standard method set out in Government guidance. However, the joint Places for Everyone Plan is at a very advanced stage and is considered to have significant weight in decision making. Using the targets and sites in PfE the Council is able to demonstrate a 5 year supply.

The National Planning Policy Framework also sets out the Housing Delivery Test, which is an assessment of net additional dwellings provided over the previous three years against the homes required. Where the test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) of

the housing requirement over the previous years, this needs to be taken into account in the decision-taking process. The latest results published by the Government show that Bury has a housing delivery test result of less than 75%, and therefore, this needs to be treated as a material factor when determining applications for residential development.

Therefore, in relation to the proposed scheme, paragraph 11d) of the National Planning Policy Framework states that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas, or assets of particular importance, provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework, taken as a whole.

In this case the 'tilted balance' applies and planning permission should be granted unless the above points Para 11(d) i or ii apply.

The site is considered to be in a sustainable location for housing, being a brownfield site within the urban area, and can contribute towards meeting local housing needs.

On balance, therefore, the principle of residential development on this employment site is considered to be acceptable given its sustainable location and the contribution that it would have to meeting local housing needs, and specifically the need for affordable housing. The adverse impacts of developing this site without a contribution for loss of employment land (which the applicant has been demonstrated would render the scheme unviable) are not considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of delivering affordable housing when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole.

Officer: DW/FS/PB
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