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**Planning Case Report
for
Residential Redevelopment
Proposals for the Former
Ward Green Infants School,
Worsborough
Barnsley M.D.C.**



LANDLORD & TENANT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning case report has been prepared as part of the full planning application for residential development of the former Infant Block of Ward Green Primary School site at Ward Green, Worsborough, a residential District of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. The former Infant Block was closed in November 2010 further to the Council declaring it as surplus to their requirements. The report has been produced by Clive A. Brook FRTPI on behalf of Harron Homes Ltd who have contracted to buy the now redundant property from the Council. The pupils from the Infant Block have been transferred to the adjacent Ward Green Junior School.
- 1.2 Harron Homes have appointed the following team to prepare the application proposals and to advise them throughout the planning negotiations:-
- Downes Illingsworth Partnership – Architects
Alan Davies – Development Transport Planning Consultancy Ltd
Paul Waite Associates – Geotechnical and Civil Engineering
Martin Popplewell Associates – Landscape Architects and Arboricultural advisors
Dacres Commercial – Planning and Project Co-ordinators
Haycock & Todd Ltd – Topographical Surveys
Andrew McCarthy – Ecological Consultants
- 1.3 The proposals comprise a re-development scheme of 19 dwellings on this site of 0.71Ha (1.75acres). The site lies within a generally residential locality.
- 1.4 This planning case report appraises the site and location context, assesses the proposals in relation to national, regional and local planning policies and then advocates the case for the replacement development. This site has been used for education purposes for a substantial period of time and consequently there is no other planning history of relevance to these proposals.

2.0 LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site is located in the residential neighbourhood of Ward Green part of the Worsborough district of Barnsley. The town centre of Barnsley is approximately 3.2kms to the north. The site is approached from the south via Vernon Road which in turn connects with the A61 and junction 36 of the M1 some 2.5kms to the south of the site.
- 2.2 The application site is the former Ward Green Infants School which has been vacant for some months and the buildings are now boarded up. A number of local facilities including a total of six retail outlets are located just to the north of the site and accessed off Vernon Road. These outlets include a pharmacy, sandwich/hotfood takeaway, general store/off licence, hairdressers, fish and chip shop and a large furniture store and warehouse immediately to the north of the site on higher ground and accessed off Genn Lane. To the east of the site is the local Baptist church and its grounds. Further to the south east on the opposite side of Vernon Road is the Ward Green Junior School and nursery. Bus stops are located on either side of Vernon road within 100 metres of the site entrance and on either side of Genn Lane a similar distance from the centre of the site. The bus services in operation are the 7/7A and 8/8A which run to Barnsley with a service frequency of approximately every two hours or hourly respectively. The former Kingwell Centre at the south west quadrant of the Vernon Road/Genn Lane junction was a large community building associated with the Baptist Church which is now vacant and boarded up. This together with the boarded up Infants School building gives a partially dilapidated air to the immediate locality. Mount Vernon Hospital is also located 1.5kms to the north.
- 2.3 The land to the west of the site comprises open playing fields which are the end user on a reclaimed landfill site. This landfill was for inert construction, demolition and excavation materials which were deposited between 1981 and 1989 and as a result of the nature of the materials and the elapsed time no landfill gas is expected by the expert engineers who have provided information.
- 2.4 To the south of the site are residential properties, mainly bungalows aligned along the access road known as High Ridge. The residential neighbourhood extends to the north of Genn Lane and further to the south and south east beyond High Ridge. To the east and north of the Junior School is a smaller group of residential properties some of which are accessed off Kingwell Lane which joins Vernon Road at its junction with Genn Lane. Beyond this group of properties and to the north east of the junction there is open land.

- 2.5 The general topography of the area rises from the south to the north and becomes steeper to the north of the site. The application site is however on a small 'bench' of land which has a much more gradual fall from north to south with a height difference of around 4 metres. To the south, from certain parts of the site, and from the Vernon Road locality there are extensive views of open countryside.
- 2.6 The neighbourhood has a very varied residential character with brick bungalows along High Ridge to the south, three storey modern brick town houses and two storey semis on the northern side of Genn Lane; on Kingwell Lane there are brick, stone and rendered houses and north west of the Vernon Road/Genn Lane junction utilitarian semis in light buff brick cladding.
- 2.7 The site is bounded to the west and east by hawthorn hedges of approximately one metre in height with a few trees alongside the eastern edge of which some are just outside the site. The northern boundary is formed by the rear walls of the furniture warehouse in breeze block and brick which are particularly unsightly in immediate views. Trees are also interspersed along this northern boundary and are generally of poor quality (see tree report). The southern boundary is formed by a breeze block wall and a variety of wooden fencing. The caretaker's bungalow also forms part of the application site and will be demolished.
- 2.8 The school buildings are themselves of a utilitarian nature constructed of block and glazing with flat roofs. The buildings relatively low profile results in little impact within the wider landscape. The school drive is a relatively wide access some 40 metres from the junction of High Ridge with Vernon Road. This is essentially a small transition site within a generally residential area surrounded by open countryside to the west and the south. However given the proximity of development to all boundaries with the exception of the western one the capacity of the site to visually absorb development is very high.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The relevant national, regional and local policy context in relation to this application is as follows:-

- PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) and Climate Change Supplement (2007)
- PPS3 Housing (Revised version June 2010)
- PPG13 Transport (2001)
- RSS (May 2008)
- Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (December 2000)
- Barnsley emerging Core Strategy

NATIONAL

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development – 2005 and Climate Change Supplement (2007).

- 3.2 PPS1 provides general guidance on creating sustainable development and good design and encourages development where it is accessible to a range of services and jobs. Planning is expected to facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development. Good planning should also protect and enhance the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside and existing communities. High quality development is sought through good design and the efficient use of resources. Good access to jobs and services should be available to all members of the community.
- 3.3 This PPS provides specific guidance on the achievement of high quality design. "Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted."
- 3.4 Paragraphs 33 – 39 deal specifically with design issues, stating that "good design ensures attractive usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development...High quality and inclusive design should create well-mixed and integrated developments which avoid segregation and have well-planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation."
- 3.5 It goes on to state specific factors that a good design should incorporate. These are that good design should:

- address the connections between people and places by considering the needs of people to access jobs and key services;
- be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environments;
- be an integral part of the processes for ensuring successful, safe and inclusive villages, towns and cities;
- create an environment where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities available to members of society; and
- consider the direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment."

3.6 This PPS seeks to ensure that Local Authorities protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole.

3.7 The supplement to PPS1, published on 17 December 2007, reflects the Government's more recent emphasis on the priority of tackling climate change via the planning system. The supplement places climate change at the heart of the planning process. Additionally a consultation version of a revised Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS1 was published in March 2010. The Design and Access Statement that forms part of the suite of application documents covers the PPS1 design issues in relation to the proposed residential development.

PPS3 – Housing (Revised version June 2010)

3.8 The 6th July DCLG guidance informed that a 5 year land supply is still required as well as a broader 15 year housing delivery. The guidance also reinforces the need for Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments.

3.9 PPS3 was first published at the end of November 2006 and came into force on 1st April 2007. It replaced PPG3 – Housing (2000). While PPS3 maintains a drive towards the development of brownfield sites, this is not at the expense of delivering a balanced supply of housing in market areas as was the case with PPG3. The emphasis in PPS3 is on the development of sustainable sites in suitable locations. This change of approach allows for the development of greenfield sites in sustainable locations. The revised version of PPS3 published by the new Government in June 2010 makes only two changes to the policy guidance in the November 2006 version. The first change removes the national minimum density requirement of 30 dwellings/hectare. The second

relates to the re-designation of gardens as greenfield sites and is not relevant to the current application.

3.10 PPS3 states that the Government's key objectives for planning for housing are to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. In order to achieve this, the Government set out four strategic housing policy objectives whereby they are seeking:

- To achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing, to address the requirements of the community;
- To widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need;
- To improve affordability across the housing market, including by increasing the supply of housing;
- To create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural.

3.11 In achieving the strategic housing policy objectives, the outcome of the planning system is envisaged to deliver:

- High quality housing that is well-designed and built to a high standard.
- A mix of housing, both market and affordable, particularly in terms of tenure and price, to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural.
- A sufficient quantity of housing taking account of need and demand and seeking to improve choice.
- Housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.
- A flexible, responsive supply of land – managed in a way that makes efficient and effective use of land, including re-use of previously-developed land, where appropriate.

3.12 Paragraphs 12 to 19 of PPS3 deal with design and very much reflect the policy in PPS1 on good design. Paragraph 16 highlights various matters to consider when assessing design quality which includes the extent to which proposed development:

- is easily accessible and well-connected to public transport and community facilities and services, and is well laid out so that all the space is used efficiently, is safe, accessible and user-friendly,

- provides, or enables good access to, community and green and open amenity and recreational space (including play space) as well as private outdoor space such as residential gardens, patios and balconies, and
- is well integrated with, and complements, the neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access.

3.13 PPS3 suggests Local Development Documents (LDD's) should set an overall (plan wide) target for the amount of affordable housing to be provided. Paragraph 29 refers to the need to "reflect an assessment of the likely economic viability of land for housing within the area, taking account of risks to delivery and drawing on informed assessments of the likely levels of finance available for affordable housing, including public subsidy and the level of developer contribution that can reasonably be secured." In doing so, Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) should aim to ensure that provision of affordable housing meets the needs of both current and future occupiers, taking into account information from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Further guidance on affordable housing is available in the Government's Affordable Housing Policy Statement 'Delivering Affordable Housing Policy Statement' (November 2006).

3.14 Paragraph 29 advises that LPA's should set separate targets for social-rented and intermediate affordable housing and specify the size and type of affordable housing. In terms of the threshold within which to apply affordable housing requirements, the national indicative minimum site size threshold is 15 dwellings, but LPA's can set lower minimum thresholds, where viable and practicable. The provision of affordable housing is generally required on site although LDD's may set out requirements where a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision may be appropriate.

3.15 PPS3 paragraphs 32 – 39 advise on the form and content of housing policies in the two tiers of the new development plan system. For a relatively short period the regional tier of the development plan system was revoked by the Secretary of State's policy declaration of the 6th July. However, as a result of the Cala Homes High Court decision in November the RSS is now re-instated for the foreseeable future. PPS3 states that Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) should set out:

- the level of housing provision for at least 15 years broadly illustrated in a housing delivery trajectory and distributed amongst constituent housing market and LPA areas;
- broad strategic locations for new housing developments;
- the region's brownfield target;

- the region's density target and/or the region's density range/s;
 - the region's approach to meeting affordable housing needs including the affordable housing target for the region and each sub regional housing market area;
 - the approach to achieving an appropriate mix of household types to meet need and demand; and
 - the approach to meeting rural housing and rural affordable housing needs.
- 3.16 In order to achieve the above, Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) should take account of a number of indicators including; sub regional housing market assessments and sub regional housing land availability assessments, the environmental, social and economic implications of development and the impact of development on existing or planned infrastructure.
- 3.17 The 6th July 2010 guidance, whilst it sought to remove all reference to Regional Planning and RSS in PPS3, reaffirmed the 5 year housing land supply requirement; informed that LPA's should continue to identify sufficient sites and broad areas for development to deliver their housing ambitions for at least 15 years; and confirmed that SHMAs and SHLAAs remain relevant in assisting in the identification of housing growth.
- 3.18 In relation to delivering a flexible supply of land for housing, paragraph 52 refers to the Government's objective to ensure that the planning system delivers a flexible, responsive supply of land. It states that "Local Planning Authorities and Regional Planning Bodies should develop policies and implementation strategies to ensure that sufficient, suitable land is available to achieve their housing and previously-developed land delivery objectives."
- 3.19 Of particular relevance to this application in terms of managing the delivery of housing, paragraph 69 advises that in general, in deciding planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should have regard to:
- Achieving high quality housing.
 - Ensuring developments achieve a good mix of housing reflecting the accommodation requirements of specific groups, in particular, families and older people.
 - The suitability of a site for housing, including its environmental sustainability.
 - Using land effectively and efficiently.
 - Ensuring the proposed development is in line with planning for housing objectives, reflecting the need and demand for housing in, and the spatial vision for, the area and

does not undermine wider policy objectives e.g. addressing housing market renewal issues."

PPG13: Transport – 2001

- 3.20 This guidance aims to promote more sustainable transport choices, accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling and to reduce the need to travel, especially by the private car (Paragraph 4).
- 3.21 In order to achieve these aims and objectives, local authorities must, through the preparation of development plans, manage urban growth; locate facilities in local centres accessible by walking and cycling and offer a realistic choice of access, (Paragraph 6).
- 3.22 Paragraphs 64-80 provide specific guidance on traffic management, walking, cycling and public transport and Paragraphs 87-91 stress the importance of Travel Plans.
- 3.23 The Design & Access Statement and Transport Assessment provide detailed information on the transport related issues associated with the proposed residential development.

REGIONAL

Regional Spatial Strategy – May 2008

- 3.24 In July 2010 the Secretary of State for Communities announced the revocation of the RSS. However, the recent Cala Homes High Court decision (November 2010) has determined that the revocation was unlawful. Consequently the RSS for Yorkshire and the Humber is again part of the Development Plan and a material consideration in the determination of this planning application. This position will endure until the Localism Bill is enacted. It is envisaged that this will take at least 12 months. Policy H1 of the RSS states that the net annual housing requirement for Barnsley MBC is 1,015 post 2008.

LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (December 2000)

Policy H6

- 3.25 This policy seeks to address the provision of open space within new developments comprising 20 or more new dwelling units. It advises that a minimum of 15% of the gross site area should be open space which is of a type appropriate to the character of the site, its location and the layout and nature of the new housing and the adjoining land uses.
- 3.26 The provision of open space is to be designed and laid out primarily for the enjoyment of those residents living within this development, which this open space will form an important part and not for the public at large. The policy also requires developers to layout the areas of open space and thereafter contribute towards the future maintenance costs of these facilities through an agreement with the Council.
- 3.27 Where the provision of open space on land either within or immediately adjacent to the site is not possible, suitable off site open space facilities that are remote from the development land, may be acceptable either as new facilities or as an extension to those existing.

Policy BE6 – Design Standards

- 3.28 This policy relates to the achievement of good design standards for all types of development and proposals for development will be assessed against the following design criteria:-
- "A). The quality of layout, and suitability of scale of the development.
- B) The use, quality, design and landscape treatment of open land within the site and the area around buildings.
- C) The standard of detailed design and facing materials of proposed buildings.
- D) The suitability of the whole development for its proposed context and its relationship with adjoining land uses.

Designs which the Council considers unsatisfactory in terms of any of the criteria will be rejected".

Policy BE6A – Design to Avoid Crime

- 3.29 "In assessing any proposed development layout, the Council will seek to avoid opportunities for crime. The following criteria may be applied where appropriate:-
- A) Parking areas and garage courts should be well lit and in a location visible from the highway, not screened by walls or planting.
 - B) Public open spaces should be visible from highways, and be overlooked by neighbouring dwellings. The creation of dark corners must be avoided.
 - C) High levels of lighting must be installed and maintained to all public areas.
 - D) Walls and planting along public routes should be designed to avoid blind corners and hiding places.
 - E) Developments should be separated into public and private areas. Security of private areas must not be reduced by such things as footpaths between rear gardens.
 - F) Housing should be designed into secure groups, probably off cul-de-sacs, with no through traffic vehicular or pedestrian, and where strangers are easily identified".

Policy BE6B – Design and Access for the Public

- 3.30 This policy has regard to assessing any proposed development where the public will have access including roads and footpaths in residential areas. The Council will seek, where appropriate, to ensure the creation of a fully accessible environment and the following design criteria have been selected as appropriate to this application:-
- "A) Wherever possible, new development should be sited and designed to make it easily accessible to public transport users.
 - D) In the design of external areas the Council will take into account the needs of all special groups e.g. wheelchair users, the blind and partially sighted, people with pushchairs and/or small children, and the elderly and infirm, in order to create a safe and accessible environment".

Policy BE6C – Pedestrians and Cyclists

- 3.31 The relevance of this policy relates to the assessment of the design and layout of new housing developments. The Council will seek to ensure access to local facilities for pedestrians and cyclists which minimise distance and the use of roads of more than local importance.

Policy T14 – Public Transport Access to Development

- 3.32 "Development proposals will be required to include measures to facilitate access to, and where appropriate, by public transport services".

Policy T27 – Walking

- 3.33 "The Council will seek to encourage and support walking as a mode of transport and the design and layout of all development will be required to take account of the needs of pedestrians".

Policy CF2 – Existing Community Facilities

- 3.34 The relevance of this particular policy to this application site is based on its designation within the adopted Barnsley UDP as an existing community facility. The site previously operated as part of the Ward Green Primary School with the building providing the infant block. However, school provision has now been relocated on to the site of the Junior School and this site has been declared surplus to the Council's requirements.
- 3.35 The policy identifies that the Council will not permit any development which would lead to the loss of existing community facilities. "Where an existing community use ceases, and no alternative community use can be found, other uses will be considered with regard to:
- A) The amount of open space in the area measured against the standard set out in Policy GS36
 - B) Compatibility with adjoining land uses and the likely impact on residential amenity
 - C) Access to the site, car parking and the likely impact on highway safety".

Supplementary Planning Guidance – The Design and Layout of new housing (May 2003)

- 3.36 The Design and Layout of New Housing SPG details how the Council intend to implement the aspects of guidance contained within PPG3 (now PPS3) which was published after the

preparation of the Barnsley UDP. The Council aims to secure good quality housing development as well as ensuring new housing makes a positive contribution to the community where they are located. To achieve this, the SPG explains those areas which the Council require applicants to consider which include ensuring new housing proposals fit in with existing surrounding properties in terms of materials and style of building. Access to properties needs to be given consideration including road layouts that meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. Other requirements include car parking arrangements and guideline separation distances between existing and proposed new housing have been provided.

Barnsley emerging Core Strategy

- 3.37 The Core Strategy for Barnsley has now been submitted to the Secretary of State (September 2010) and identifies Worsborough as being contained within the Barnsley urban area where most development should take place in order to enhance Barnsley's role as a sub-regional town within the Sheffield and Leeds City Regions.

4.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 4.1 The development proposals now comprise a total of 19 new dwellings generally arranged along a cul-de-sac format. The cul-de-sac access incorporates a turning head which is capable of accommodating the refuse and emergency vehicles. Following a pre-application meeting with planning and design officers the original 21 dwelling scheme has been amended by removing the original dual private drive design at the northern head of the cul-de-sac access. This results in an 19 dwelling scheme with associated design and access improvements.
- 4.2 The elevation/orientation of the new dwellings takes full account of the residential amenity of neighbouring households and the separation distances meet the usual guidelines.
- 4.3 Some boundary trees are retained along with the existing hedgerows to the eastern and western boundaries. The landscape proposals for the northern boundary will comprise appropriate shrubs and climbing plants to screen the unsightly retaining/building walls of the furniture store. New tree planting is proposed along the line of the access road and the southern boundary.
- 4.4 At the western end of the proposed cul-de-sac a new footpath connection is proposed which links to the existing north-south footpath just outside the western site boundary. This will provide an easy link into the adjoining recreation ground and out into the wider countryside.
- 4.5 The proposed development consequently integrates well with its immediate surroundings and helps to improve the environment of the neighbourhood.

5.0 THE PLANNING CASE

- 5.1 The Council have already taken and implemented the decision to close the former infants school and have made provision for pupils in this age group at the larger Ward Green Junior School which is only some 100 metres distance from the existing school site and is well positioned to serve the surrounding community. These school buildings are more extensive and modern and incorporate a nursery facility and outdoor recreation areas. The applicants, Harron Homes Ltd are the successful tenderers for this redevelopment opportunity and have contracted with the Council to purchase the site subject to the achievement of a satisfactory full planning permission.
- 5.2 The tender documentation at section 1.6 summarises the planning and highways advice given to all bidders at the tender stage. Policy CF2 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan is identified here as the policy which deals with the loss of community facilities. While the UDP proposals map designates this site as an existing community facility clearly the use has ceased and the Council have taken the decision to relocate the pupils at the nearby school and this decision has been successfully implemented. The school property has as a result been declared surplus to the Council's requirements and therefore in these circumstances there is no loss of a community facility which is related to these redevelopment proposals.
- 5.3 Policy CF2 goes on to outline three criteria which should be applied where a community facility is being replaced by a different form of development. The first of these relates to the amount of open space in the area measured against the standards set in policy GS36. The grounds of the infants school were not useable community open space and the loss of this community facility does not relate to a loss of open space. In any event there is a substantial area of public open space/playing fields available in the adjoining Ward Green Community Park. The proposed residential use is compatible with surrounding land uses and there is no adverse impact on residential amenity. In fact the redevelopment of the site will produce a positive outcome which replaces an unsightly boarded up set of buildings with an attractive residential development. The access and parking provision for this limited residential development are adequate for the proposed development and the traffic generated by the 19 dwellings will not give rise to any highway safety problems.
- 5.4 These residential development proposals represent a suitable and deliverable development opportunity which will contribute to the Council's annual housing requirement in accordance with current national and regional planning guidance. The RSS for Yorkshire and the Humber has been reinstated as a result of the Cala Homes High Court decision in November. The site is

brownfield and lies within one of the main residential areas of the Barnsley main urban area. The first preference for meeting housing need and demand continues to be the utilisation of brownfield land within the main urban areas.

- 5.5 The residential development site is within a sustainable travel location which meets national and local guidance. The site is very close to a small range of local shops, the Junior School and a nursery, a local church, bus stops and the local hospital. The travel distances to Barnsley town centre and concentrations of local employment are relatively short when compared with national average travel distances in metropolitan areas outside London.
- 5.6 The residential development proposed will not lead to any material loss of habitat or to a landscape or visual impact which is in any way detrimental to the local environment. While the amount of the replacement residential development is more extensive in curtilage terms the introduction of gardens and associated tree and hedge planting will improve the site's biodiversity. The school buildings, hard standings and grass sward of the grounds comprised a fairly poor habitat.
- 5.7 Policy H6 of the UDP seeks on site provision of open space for developments in excess of 20 dwellings. This policy does however allow for such provision to be on adjacent sites or sites in the wider locality and where appropriate for commuted sums to be sought from the applicant for the improvement or expansion of such provision. The scheme has been revised for design improvement reasons following the pre-application meeting with officers. As a result the scheme now falls below the policy H6 threshold.
- 5.8 National and local policies on housing design both require a high standard of development and various national and local guidance is available to the scheme architect. National guidance including PPS1 and PPS3 and CABI design guidance have been considered when preparing these proposals. The Design and Access Statement details this approach. The Council' Supplementary Planning Guidance-The Design and Layout of New Housing seeks good quality housing development which positively contributes to the community in which it is located. The requirement to fit in with local styles and materials is a generalised one and in this instance it should be recognised that there is a very varied range of house types and materials in use. However the application proposals are a unified set of design proposals which will enhance the site and its locality.

- 5.9 There are no technical, environmental or other material planning reasons which should preclude this residential redevelopment scheme.

Appendix 1



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