“We focus on delivering high quality homes and creating community and physical environments that help promote people’s sense of wellbeing”

Redrow Homes
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THE OPPORTUNITY

Land to the South of Hardwicke, in Stroud District immediately adjoins the urban edge of Gloucester and represents a key opportunity to assist Stroud District, Gloucester City Council and the other JCS Authorities in the delivery of future housing.

The site lies outside of the statutory Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Landscape Area and is located close to local centres, employment opportunities, schools, healthcare and the range of facilities and services offered by Gloucester City centre.

The site area equates to approximately 65ha (160.5 acres) and has an estimated minimum capacity of 1200 dwellings together with a primary school, local centre and associated ancillary uses including open space, infrastructure and drainage attenuation.

The site is readily available to make an early contribution to the housing need for Stroud District, Gloucester City and the other JCS Authorities as a whole.

The site had the following positive commentaries from the JCS (Core Strategy) Inspector:

- In support of the site’s suitability for residential development and to meet local housing needs, the JCS Inspector outlined at paragraph 79 of the May 2016 Inspectors Interim Report (Exam 232) that: “on the evidence before me there appear to be no other appropriate sites to form additional, sustainable, urban extensions to Gloucester, which fall entirely within the JCS area. Nonetheless there seem to be two reasonable omission sites on the southern edge of Gloucester”, one of which comprises the development site at Hardwicke.

- The Inspector went on to state...“In my judgement [Hardwicke] appears to be in sustainable location, being close to local centres, employment opportunities and school, and within reasonable distance of the City centre” (paragraph 80 refers).

- In conclusion, the JCS Inspectors findings at paragraph 99 outlined that “overall, in my judgement, there are no insurmountable constraints to developing the Hardwicke site and it would make an appropriate allocation to help meet the housing requirements of Gloucester and the JCS area.”
OWNERSHIP AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Redrow Homes Ltd, with the support of the Hardwicke Court Estate and Gloucestershire County Council, are promoting the Land to the South of Hardwicke for residential development. Redrow Homes is leading the promotion of the site and also owns the freehold of part of the site.

The site is located adjacent to the suburb of Quedgeley at the southern edge of the Gloucester conurbation, adjacent to the ‘A38’ Bristol Road. The candidate site divides into three separate areas, the majority of which is currently agricultural. Access to the site is currently achieved via Green Lane, Sticky Lane, Pound Lane and Church Lane.

The site’s western boundary is formed by the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, which provides both a physical and visual barrier to the west. The eastern boundary is formed by the B4008, A38 and the large buildings of the Quedgeley Trading Estate West. To the south lies the open countryside.

Development at Hardwicke would provide further opportunity to consolidate and enhance the development in the area including the ongoing development at Hunts Grove on the eastern side of the A38. The site itself would deliver a range of services and facilities to deliver a sustainable community.

Outline planning permission for the development of 175 dwellings on the north-eastern corner of the site, known as ‘Land to the West of Bristol Road’ was submitted in January 2017. The application (ref: S.16/2793/OUT) is under consideration with Stroud District Council’s Planning Department. At the current time we consider that all technical matters have been satisfactorily addressed.
SITE SUITABILITY

ACCESSIBILITY

Land to the South of Hardwicke is located where a sustainable pattern of development can be achieved by way of access to local facilities including education, leisure, health, retail and employment on foot, by bicycle or by bus. The internal site layout and site access arrangements would be designed in a manner which facilitates walking and cycling, and a bus strategy to serve the site would be devised in consultation with Gloucestershire County Council and local bus operator. Existing public rights of way may need to be diverted but desire lines would be accommodated as part of the proposals and these public rights of way together with new pedestrian and cycle links to both existing and proposed routes would provide good access for these sustainable modes of transport.

LOCAL FACILITIES AND AMENITIES PLAN
In respect of the ‘Phase 1’ development proposals, a detailed Transport Assessment has been undertaken to establish the Transport infrastructure needs and suitable access arrangements to serve a development of 175 dwellings; the subject of planning application S16/2793/OUT. The proposed site access arrangements to serve ‘Phase 1’ comprise a roundabout on the B4008 Bristol Road positioned at the ‘top’ of the A38 Northbound Off-Slip. This slip road is part of a form of grade separated junction that provides connections between the B4008 and the A38. The proposed roundabout would act as an effective speed control feature and would be compatible with the consented signalised junction onto the A38/B4008 to serve the Hunts Grove development (the Hunts Grove access), which includes the conversion of the existing overbridge to two-way traffic.

It is proposed that the primary access to development on Land to the South of Hardwicke would be from the A38 by way of a new signal controlled junction that would operate in conjunction with the Hunts Grove access and would be compatible with the County Council’s Cross Keys roundabout improvement scheme.

In addition to the proposed accesses from the B4008 Bristol Road and the A38, it is possible other accesses to roads surrounding the site could be formed, which, in combination with a network of new roads crossing the site would relieve sections of Green Lane, Church Lane and Pound Lane by way of improved connectivity providing alternative routes for local traffic to gain access to the wider highway network. The key junctions and highway links together with a potential network of roads to serve development on the site are shown on the accompanying plan.

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL**

Hardwicke is visually well contained located adjacent to the developments of Hunts Grove and Sellars Farm, both of which have been found to constitute appropriate urban extensions to Gloucester. There is no reason to believe that the same should not be true for Hardwicke. Furthermore, Hardwicke does not extend any further south than Quedgeley Business Park and therefore does not represent urban sprawl in this regard.

A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been undertaken and it has been established that from a landscape perspective, it will be possible to introduce development onto the site without any adverse character effects taking place within the wider area. This is predominantly due to existing vegetation and the fact that the development character will mimic that of the surrounding area.
With regard to the visual appraisal, due to the topography of the site, existing built form and vegetation, views of the site are contained to the site itself and the immediate vicinity. The development, from a distanced perspective, will integrate into the wider built panorama and constitute a small extension to the current urban form.

The principles contained within the illustrative masterplan are considered to be appropriate in terms of its setting and the landscape character of the site. The masterplan has green corridors and large area of green space at the interface with the land to the South and West.

**HERITAGE**

The work undertaken to date confirms that the site contains no designated or non-designated built heritage assets. The site is however abutted to the west by a Grade II listed former farmhouse which is situated on Hardwicke Green. To the north of the site there is also a Grade II listed milestone and the road that abuts the eastern end of the site is recorded on the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record. To the west of Hardwicke Green there is an 18th century farmhouse that is also noted on the Historic Environment Record. The location of listed buildings is shown on the Constraints and Opportunities Plan.

The designated and non-designated heritage assets will be unaffected by the development. Listed buildings that lie further afield would also be unaffected due to distance from the proposed site and screening.

**ARCHAEOLOGY**

A desk-based archaeological assessment has been undertaken, there are no designated or non-designated archaeological assets recorded on the site. Additionally, geophysical investigations and trial trenching has also taken place within the north-eastern area of the site for the land the subject of the outline planning application for Phase 1. Based on the findings of the investigative surveys, the LPA advisor confirmed that no further fieldwork was required in this specific area.

While it is not possible to extrapolate this potential across the whole of the wider site, the results in the Phase 1 area indicate that there may be a limited archaeological potential across the rest of the wider site. It is therefore concluded that there is no indication of any absolute constraint to development arising from the presence of archaeological remains within the wider site.

**ECOLOGY**

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the candidate site was undertaken in August 2018. In spring/summer 2018 protected species surveys were undertaken for bats, water vole (along Shorn Brook), great crested newts and breeding birds.

The reports confirm that the site largely comprises intensively farmed arable fields which are of low ecological value. Ecological features of interest in the context of the site, such as boundary hedgerows, grassy field margins and Shorn Brook, are almost entirely retained within the illustrative masterplan. The small number of mature and semi-mature trees will also be retained. The existing vegetation is not species-rich, but the retention of tree/hedgerow corridors is necessary in order to allow for bats to travel freely and unhindered by the development. There are limited opportunities on the site for badgers, hedgehogs and other small mammals to be accommodated.
The species surveys have confirmed that water voles are resident in Shorn Brook, great crested newts (GCN) breed in one of the on-site ponds and in a second pond within 250m of the boundary, as such the development of the site will be covered by a GCN European Protected Species Mitigation Licence.

Taking into account the overall low ecological value of the site and with the incorporation of appropriate species protection measures and the proposed habitat creation and enhancement, it is considered that the principles included within the illustrative masterplan will successfully deliver no biodiversity net loss and will result in no significant, adverse effects on existing, ecological features of the site.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

A Desk Top Assessment of the flood risk in the area based on Environment Agency and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment data has been undertaken. The majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1. Areas of the site associated with Shorn Brook, which runs through the middle of the site from Church Lane, and an un-named water course at Pound Lane are located within Flood Zones 2, 3a and 3b. The submitted constraints and opportunities plan illustrates the extent of the flood zones.

The flood risk from all sources to the site and the surrounding area has been investigated and it has been demonstrated that areas within and adjacent to the site that are within flood zone 2, 3a and 3b are not at risk of flooding. The illustrative masterplan directs built development away from these areas. The plan also assumes that attenuation basins will be located at the lowest points of the site. The exact size and location of the basins will be subject to detailed analysis later however, it is considered that surface water flooding risk as a result of the proposed development can be adequately managed on site within attenuation ponds.

The drainage review undertaken to date demonstrates that the development accords with National and Regional Policy requirements and satisfies Environment Agency criteria. The site can therefore be safely developed without flood risk and without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

CONTAMINATION/POLLUTION/LAND STABILITY

The site is greenfield and has only been used for agricultural purposes. The site is therefore considered to be of little or no risk of contamination to future land uses. There are no known land stability issues.

PIPES, SEWERS AND OVERHEAD LINES

The routes of all known pipes, sewers and overhead lines, as identified on the constraints and opportunities plan, are respected in the masterplan design for the site.

“overall, in my judgement, there are no insurmountable constraints to developing the Hardwicke site and it would make an appropriate allocation to help meet the housing requirements of Gloucester and the JCS area.”

JCS Inspectors findings (paragraph 99)
DESIGN AND AMENITY

The submitted constraints and opportunities plan for the site (ref: COP_01 Rev E) has been submitted to demonstrate the consultant teams clear understanding of the site. The constraints plan also accommodates Severn Trent Water’s recent sewerage upgrade which has utilised the land at Hardwicke in collaboration with the development proposals.

The illustrative masterplan (ref: ILP01 Rev B) then demonstrates the arrangements of land uses and demonstrates how the land at Hardwicke Court Estate could be developed in a sustainable manner and as a positive response to the site constraints and opportunities.

The illustrative masterplan has been submitted to the JCS Joint Core Strategy Review for information only. This masterplan is a working draft and as such is open for discussion.

Notwithstanding its early stage, the illustrative Masterplan has been informed by a detailed level of assessment information in relation to a number of factors regarding the constraints, opportunities and characteristics of the site.

Having regard to this information, the illustrative masterplan demonstrates how the site could provide for approximately 1200 dwellings at an average density of between 35 to 40 dwellings per hectare. This density range is considered appropriate and in keeping with the rural feel of neighbouring developments. The illustrative masterplan also incorporates the proposed development of Phase 1: ‘Land West of Bristol Road’ (planning ref: S.16/2793/OUT) which remains under consideration with Stroud District Council’s Planning Department.

The main principles that have informed the development relate to the retention of existing landscape features, flood zones, the establishment of green links, movement desire lines and built heritage assets. In particular, development has been directed away from the flood zones and the existing hedgerows and trees are retained where possible. In turn, this has formed the basis of the structure of the scheme and open space provision. A green corridor has also been formed by the location of the high-powered gas main as well as the stream corridor and the location of great crested newts and bat corridors. Transportation routes have also been designed to try and relieve pressure on the existing lanes within the site and aid permeability.

The illustrative masterplan demonstrates how the site could be sustainably developed to promote an inclusive community which would support a critical mass capable of providing significant community and infrastructure benefits including for example a primary school, local centre, public open space, sports pitches and transport links. Such facilities would benefit both existing and future residents of Hardwicke.
DELIVERABILITY AND VIABILITY

Redrow hold a freehold interest in part of the site and confirm that it is immediately available should a site allocation/planning permission be forthcoming.

From a start of 50 homes being completed in the first year the whole site could be completed in 10 years on the basis of delivering circa 100 homes each year.

Redrow has a full specialist team appointed in the respect of the site. This team, the majority of which has been in place for over 3 years, is actively working up the proposals for the land with a full package of technical works and surveys. These include:

- Phase 1 Ecology Report
- Protected Species Surveys and Reports including in respect of Great Crested Newts and Bats
- Drainage Strategy
- Services and Utilities
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Arboriculture Assessment
- Heritage Assessment
- Archaeological Assessments
- Highways and Transportation

The above suite of detailed technical investigations and assessments can be quickly converted into a planning application to support future development of the site.
CONCLUSION

- The promotion of the site is being led by Redrow Homes with the support of both Hardwicke Court Estate and Gloucestershire County Council. The site can also be accessed without third party land/complex land assembly;
- The site is free from planning and physical constraints and is economically viable.
- The land is not within the statutory Green Belt, not within the designated Special Landscape Area and does not associate with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Close to key employment, service, facilities with good vehicular and public transport connectivity to Gloucester City Centre. A primary school is immediately adjacent to the site;
- Other local service centres are within reach (including Qedgeley and Hunts Grove)
- Good road links to Gloucester City Centre and southwards (A38, B4008 and M5);
- Good ‘containment’: A38/Hardwicke village (Pound Lane/Church Lane/Green Lane)/the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal and the existing Hardwicke development do all provide quite clear limits, beyond which growth and expansion would be illogical.
- Site has the potential to enrich and supplement services and facilities, to serve what would be a larger and potentially more self-sustaining community at Hardwicke Estate.
- More visually remote from AONB and other sensitive landscape features (than sites in alternative areas (e.g Brookthorpe/Whaddon and Upton St Leonards).

This candidate site represents a key opportunity to assist Stroud District, Gloucester City Council and the other JCS Authorities in the delivery of future housing.