

RESPONSE TO STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICE (23/00650/HYBR)

Introduction

This statement has been prepared by Redrow Homes in response to comments received from the Strategic Housing Service dated 25 October 2023, relating to hybrid planning application 23/00650/HYBR for a garden village on land at Stakehill, Middleton.

Redrow welcome the fact that Strategic Housing do not object to the application per se and are strongly supportive of the provision of new affordable homes within the Middleton Township. This statement addresses more detailed matters raised in the consultation response and the scheme's eligibility for Vacant Building Credit (VBC). Redrow would be pleased to open a dialogue with Strategic Housing regarding these matters once the contents of this statement have been digested.

Vacant Building Credit

Part of the application site includes land formerly occupied by the All in One Garden Centre, which traded from the land for many years. The floorspace of the former buildings comprised large sales areas, offices, storage/workshop areas and a restaurant. The business ceased trading entirely on 22 August 2022 due to financial difficulties and the tenant surrendered their rolling lease. Subsequently, the site was marketed by Nolan Redshaw, but this failed to attract any serious interest. During this time considerable efforts were made to keep the site secure and 24/7 alarm monitoring continued, but the premises suffered continual break-in's, vandalism and trespass from travellers. This led in turn to a barrage of complaints from local residents and requests for the police to attend the site. Due to growing concerns about the safety of the buildings and the distress being caused to close neighbours, Redrow later made a prior approval application to demolish the buildings. That application was approved in January 2023 and the buildings were demolished and cleared away in March (22/01388/DEM).

VBC is essentially a government incentive to bring vacant brownfield sites back into use by offering a financial credit to offset the affordable housing requirement. Although a policy compliant level of affordable housing (15%) has been accommodated on the detailed layout for Phase 1, paragraph 8.146 of the supporting Planning Statement explained that VBC should be applied in this case. The Planning Statement further confirmed the floorspace of the former buildings at 3,191.5 sqm (34,352 sq ft), excluding canopy and porch areas. That figure is taken from an independent survey report prepared by Quinton's Commercial Ltd dated November 2018. The proposed total residential footage within Phase 1 of the new garden village is 29,515 sqm (317,704 sq ft).

In considering how VBC is calculated, paragraph 27 of the PPG explains that the existing floorspace of a vacant building should be credited against the floorspace of the new development and provides a helpful worked example. On the same basis, the floorspace of the

former All in One buildings (3,191.5 sqm) represents 10.8% of the proposed floorspace in the new development (29,515 sqm). Therefore, the affordable housing requirement for Phase 1 should be 89.2% of what would normally be sought i.e. 31 units rather than 35. Redrow would like to agree this VBC calculation with Strategic Housing.

Housing Need

As proposed, the detailed element of the hybrid application (Phase 1) will provide a mix of 2 and 3 bed affordable houses (27 in total) and 8 no. 1 bed apartments, for which there is an identified need. Paragraph 7.9 of the Planning Statement refers to the Rochdale SHMA (2015) Update, which establishes that approximately half of all affordable housing need in Rochdale should be delivered as 2 bed units. In this instance, 14 no. 2 bed houses are proposed which equates to 40% of the affordable housing provision. Moreover, this figure is based on a provision of 35 affordable homes, so the percentage of 2 bed units within the scheme could increase if VBC is applied.

Regard should also be made to the Local Authority Housing Statistics data returns (2021/22), which confirm that the overwhelming affordable need in Rochdale is for smaller unit types, as 74% of people on the housing waiting list require 1 and 2 bed accommodation. Conversely, only a very modest percentage require +3 bed accommodation (3.6%) In addition, it must be emphasised that the current application is seeking approval for up to 1,380 dwellings and future phases could provide an opportunity for alternative affordable housing delivery mechanisms, including payment of a commuted sum to purchase larger market homes either on or off-site for affordable housing purposes. Redrow would be happy to explore alternative delivery mechanisms for future phases and these could be incorporated into a S106 agreement to provide greater flexibility.

Housing Mix

Redrow fully support a tenure blind approach to the provision of affordable housing and have adopted that approach in relation to the Stakehill Garden Village. The proposed affordable units are located in 3 small clusters at the very heart of the new community, close to existing and planned amenities, such as a local centre, play area, green space and the existing Thornham Primary School. In addition, the two northernmost clusters are also located close to the main spine road, which may serve as a bus route and the third is located close to the planned Western Greenway, which would provide a safe and convenient pedestrian link to the same.

Again, it must be remembered that the detailed element of the hybrid application represents only the first tranche of the new garden village and each subsequent phase will deliver affordable housing, meaning that affordable housing will be dispersed and fully integrated throughout the development.

Turning to the design of the affordable housing types, these are drawn from the same family of house types as the open market units, namely Redrow's renowned arts and crafts inspired

Heritage Range. No distinction is made in terms of architecture, detailing or materials between the market and affordable homes, albeit the affordable homes are smaller to reflect the identified housing need. As regards the use of external facing material in particular, reference to the submitted Materials Plan (4159-MAT-001 Rev D) clearly demonstrates that there is no distinction between market and affordable homes.

In relation to Places for Everyone and master planning, there is no masterplan or design code in existence in relation to the remainder of the Stakehill allocation, which is physically separate and distinct and lies on the opposite side of the A627(M) spur, beyond an area of Green Belt land. Nothing in the current proposals would prejudice the delivery of high quality development across the whole allocation. However, Redrow would be pleased to discuss any specific concerns Strategic Housing may have and dispel any confusion about the quality of house types within Redrow's market- leading Heritage Range.

Housing Tenure

Redrow would be pleased to discuss the most appropriate tenure mix for the affordable homes, but have a preference for a 50:50 split between rented and intermediate tenures in the interests of meeting a range of housing needs and creating a balanced community.