
Committee Date:	16/04/2015	Application Number:	2014/09500/PA
Accepted:	19/01/2015	Application Type:	Full Planning
Target Date:	20/04/2015		
Ward:	Sutton Four Oaks		

276 Lichfield Road, Former Four Oaks Timber Yard, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, B74 2UG

Redevelopment of former timber yard into mixed use development of retail (A1), offices (B1) and 13 dwellings (C3) consisting of 4 townhouses & 9 apartments, including associated car parking and landscaping.

Applicant:	Wedge Wood Construction Linley Lodge Industrial Estate, Westgate, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 8WZ
Agent:	St. Paul's Associates Ltd. The Mews, 13a St. Paul's Square, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, B3 1RB

Recommendation

Approve Subject To Conditions

1. Proposal

- 1.1. Proposal is for the redevelopment of the site with 2, three storey buildings consisting of 2 retail (A1) units with mezzanine levels (592sq.m), 12 office (B1) units (1026sq.m), 4, three storey town houses (3 bedrooms) and 9 apartments (6, 1 bedroom and 3, 2 bedroom units). A total of 52 car parking spaces would be provided in a landscaped courtyard with vehicular access off the private service road off Lichfield Road..
- 1.2. The proposed layout would include 2, three storey "L" shaped buildings which would be located on the north-west and north-east edges of the site of the site designed around a central courtyard. The building to the north-west edge of the site would contain a linear block fronting the private service road which would contain the offices with the attached apartment block containing the 6, 1 bedroom units located on the western boundary of the site. The building to the north-east of the site would contain the retail units which would front onto an existing car park and the main public area within Mere Green District Centre. 3, 2 bedroom apartments would be located above the retail units (1 duplex adjoining the townhouses) and the 4, three storey townhouses would be located on the eastern boundary of the site. The courtyard has been designed as a shared surface with landscaping areas and landscaping on the south-eastern boundary with gardens in Mere Drive. Cycle and bin stores would be located within the courtyard.
- 1.3. In terms of elevational treatment, the different uses would have different design styles. The office block to the northern edge of the site would have a more commercial appearance with terracotta tiles as cladding and a mono-pitch standing seam roof. The northern elevation facing the service road would have smaller

window openings in a random pattern while the southern facing elevation would have larger window openings to maximise light. The adjoining apartment block adjacent the site entrance would be a mix of brickwork and zinc cladding with a “gull wing” roof. It would include the main entrances, feature corner windows and balconies on the elevation facing the courtyard.

- 1.4. The block to the north-east would also have 2 interlinked elements. The north elevation would be principally brickwork with a standing seam roof and the retail units would have double height glazed shop fronts framed with terracotta cladding. The apartments above would have a fully glazed frontage which would open up onto balconies. The townhouses would be more domestic in appearance using brickwork and a slate dual pitched roof. The elevation fronting the courtyard would contain the entrances, zinc dormers and projecting first floor bays. The rear elevation facing the adjoining bowling green would contain French doors at ground floor with balconies at first floor and “Juliet” balconies at second floor level.
- 1.5. Accommodation would comprise 12, B1 office units (1026sq.m) and 2 retail units (592sq.m). The 4 townhouses would include family room, kitchen and wc at ground floor. At first floor would be the living room, double bedroom and bathroom with a double bedroom/en-suite and a single bedroom at second floor. Each would have an external amenity area of 30sq.m. All bedroom sizes exceed minimum guidelines.
- 1.6. The 2 bedroom apartments would contain living/dining room/kitchen, 2 double bedrooms (1 with en-suite) and a bathroom. The apartments above the retail units would have balconies and the duplex apartment adjoining the townhouses would have a terrace. The 1 bedroom apartments would contain living/dining room/kitchen, double bedroom and bathroom. The 2 ground floor units would have their own external amenity areas of 35sq.m. All bedroom sizes exceed minimum guidelines.
- 1.7. Vehicular access is from a private service road which links Lichfield Road to the Mere Green District Centre car park. 52 car parking spaces would be provided, each residential unit having 1 dedicated space. 2 cycle stores and a cycle rack with 29 spaces would be provided.
- 1.8. Landscaping would be provided within the car park and the landscape buffer on the boundary with the rear gardens of properties in Mere Drive has been increased to 2 metres in width with a 1.8m close boarded fence on the boundary.
- 1.9. The applicants have submitted a Design and Access Statement, Transport Statement, Bat Survey and Ground Investigation report in support of the application.
- 1.10. [Link to Documents](#)

2. Site & Surroundings

- 2.1. The application site comprises the former Four Oaks Timber Yard located off the Lichfield Road within Mere Green District Centre. The site is rectangular in shape and measures 0.2 hectare. It is accessed from a private road off a service road to the rear of Astor House which fronts onto Lichfield Road. To the south are bungalows in Mere Drive which are part of a sheltered housing development and to the west is a private car park. To the east is the Mere Green Library and Bowling Green and to the north are service yards to retail units within Mere Green District Centre.

- 2.2. The site is currently vacant and occupied by a series of brick built single storey buildings which are largely located around the edge of the site and some covered storage areas.

[Site Location](#)

[Street View](#)

3. Planning History

- 3.1. None relevant.

4. Consultation/PP Responses

- 4.1. Transportation Development – No objections subject to conditions.
- 4.2. Regulatory Services – No objections subject to conditions.
- 4.3. Severn Trent Water – No objections subject to conditions.
- 4.4. West Midlands Police – No objections.
- 4.5. West Midlands Fire Service – No objections.
- 4.6. Councillors, Residents Associations and nearby occupiers notified. Application advertised on site and in the press. 1 letter has been received commenting that the security of residents of no's 6-23 Mere Drive needs to be considered as they face onto the rear landscaped buffer and parking area. At present the existing boundary treatment is totally inadequate and the proposed plans do not indicate what the proposed boundary treatment on this boundary will be.
- 4.7. 1 letter of support has been received.

5. Policy Context

- 5.1. UDP (Adopted 2005), Draft Birmingham Development Plan, Places for Living SPG, Places for All SPG, Car Parking Guidelines SPD, NPPF, NPPG.

6. Planning Considerations

- 6.1. **Policy** - UDP in paragraph 3.8 emphasises the need to protect and enhance what is good in the City's environment and improve what is less good with paragraph 3.10 advising that proposals which would have an adverse effect on the quality of the environment will not normally be allowed. Paragraphs 3.14 to 3.14F set out policies for the design of new development including the use of good urban design principles and sustainable development.
- 6.2. Paragraph 4.43 of the UDP states that in suburban centres, small scale office developments will be permitted provided that they are of a scale appropriate to the centre, and that there would be no adverse effect on the attractiveness of the centre or on the amenity of nearby residents.

- 6.3. UDP Housing policy confirms that the City Council is seeking to ensure that there is a variety of housing to meet the needs of the City. Paragraphs 5.25A to 5.25C require that a high proportion of housing is expected to be provided in centres or along transport corridors. The preference is for new housing to be provided on previously developed sites within the built up area.
- 6.4. UDP in paragraphs 7.13 and 7.15 requires existing centres to continue to be the main focus for new retail development and emphasis will continue to be placed on the positive promotion and enhancement of existing shopping centres. UDP in paragraph 7.23 states that proposals for new retail development in existing centres will normally be encouraged provided they are of an appropriate scale, integrate into the existing centre and have no adverse effect on the continued vitality and viability of the existing centre.
- 6.5. Shopping and Local Centres SPD identifies Mere Green as a “District Centre” and the application site lies within the centre boundary and the primary shopping area.
- 6.6. Places for All SPG encourages the use of good urban design principles in new developments including the use of active frontages, the creation of attractive, safe public spaces and building on local character. Places for Living SPG encourages the creation of places with good permeability and safety with defined private and public space. It also provides guidelines for bedroom sizes, external amenity space and separation distances between new and existing residential developments.
- 6.7. The NPPF requires all new developments to be considered with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 17 of the NPPF has as one of its core principles the requirement to seek high quality design and re-use of previously developed land is encouraged. Paragraph 23 recognises that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and urges local authorities to encourage residential development on appropriate sites. Paragraph 56 of the NPPF reiterates the requirements confirming that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 58 states that planning decisions should (amongst other things) aim to ensure that developments: add to the overall quality of the area: establish a strong sense of place: respond to local character and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials: and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.
- 6.8. **Principle of Use** – The application site is a brownfield site located within Mere Green District Centre where additional retail and office uses are acceptable. The provision of residential accommodation within the district centre is also welcomed.
- 6.9. **Design** – The scheme has been developed in conjunction with advice from officers and the layout, scale, massing and general appearance is acceptable.
- 6.10. The layout is centred around a central courtyard which would give the development an “urban” feel. The retail units have been sited where they would be visible and integrate into the wider district centre. The townhouses, to the north-eastern edge of the site would be sited to maximise views over the bowling green to the rear and the layout has been amended to include defensible space for the townhouses within the car park. The office/apartment block has been located slightly closer to the private service road to allow for an increased landscape buffer on the boundary with the rear gardens of dwellings in Mere Drive.

- 6.11. The scale at 3 storeys is acceptable in this location and reflects the height of other buildings within the district centre. The massing of the buildings is also acceptable and the design which includes different styles for each of the uses is high quality and appropriate for the area.
- 6.12. The proposed residential accommodation would be of a good standard and all bedroom sizes would exceed minimum guidelines contained within Places for Living SPG. The townhouses would each have private amenity areas of 30sq.m and a balcony at first floor overlooking the bowling green. Although this is below the guideline of 70sq.m for 3 bedroom dwellings, I consider it is acceptable as the site is within an existing centre and the amenity space would be of good quality.
- 6.13. The 2 bedroom apartments would have either an external balcony or terrace and 2 of the 6, 1 bedroom apartments would have an external amenity area. The 4 apartments without external amenity space would have "Juliet" balconies at first floor overlooking the courtyard. Again, I have no objection to this given the site is within an existing centre in an urban area.
- 6.14. **Residential Amenity** – The nearest residential properties to the site are properties to the south-east of the site on Mere Drive, these properties have rear gardens of only approximately 5 metres in length. I do not consider the proposals would have any adverse impact on the amenities of the occupiers of these dwellings. The siting of the proposed buildings would not result in any loss of light, overshadowing or overlooking as they are located on the periphery of the site and to the north of the existing dwellings with adequate separation. The layout has been amended to increase the landscape buffer on the boundary with the properties in Mere Green and the boundary treatment would be improved. I consider the general environment and security to these properties would be improved as a result of the proposed development.
- 6.15. **Transport** – Transportation Development note that the proposal might increase traffic to/from the site in comparison to the approved use but do not consider the increase in traffic would have an adverse impact on surrounding highways. They also note, that the parking provision proposed of 52 spaces is below the maximum parking guidelines of 84 spaces for the uses proposed. However, the site is within a district centre that is well served by public transport including a number of bus routes and Four Oaks railway station is a 10 minute walk away. There is also ample public car parking in the locality and the site has good pedestrian/cyclist accessibility to the wider district centre. Transportation Development raise no objections subject to conditions including the submission of a car park management plan and delivery management plan. I concur with this view and would raise no objections on highway grounds.
- 6.16. **Environmental** – Regulatory Services have recommended a condition that a further site investigation is undertaken due to potential contamination of the site as a result of the previous use. They also recommend conditions to restrict the opening hours of the retail units and deliveries to protect the amenities of nearby residents and future residents within the scheme. Suitable conditions are attached.
- 6.17. **Ecology** - The applicants have submitted a Bat Survey with the application which concludes that no evidence of roosting bats was found during the inspection and the existing buildings on the site were assessed as having low potential for bat roosting. The Planning Ecologist has commented that there is a low likelihood of the proposed development having an adverse impact on bats, however, she advises that a

precautionary approach to demolition should be adopted and recommends a condition requiring a demolition method statement is attached.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. I consider the proposal for the mixed use development of a brownfield site within Mere Green District Centre is consistent with local and national planning policies and is acceptable subject to conditions.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. Approve Subject To Conditions.

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- 1 Requires the prior submission of a contamination remediation scheme
 - 2 Requires the prior submission of a contaminated land verification report
 - 3 Limits the hours of A1 units to 0700-2200 daily
 - 4 Limits delivery time of goods to or from the A1 and B1 uses to 0700-2200 daily
 - 5 Limits the noise levels for Plant and Machinery
 - 6 Requires the prior submission of noise insulation (variable)
 - 7 Requires the prior submission of hard and/or soft landscape details
 - 8 Requires the prior submission of hard surfacing materials
 - 9 Requires the prior submission of boundary treatment details
 - 10 Requires the prior submission of a landscape management plan
 - 11 Requires the prior submission of a construction method statement/management plan
 - 12 Requires the prior submission of sample materials
 - 13 Requires the prior submission of level details
 - 14 Requires the prior submission of a demolition method statement
 - 15 Requires the prior submission of drainage details
 - 16 Removes PD rights for extensions to the townhouses
 - 17 Requires the prior submission of a parking management strategy
 - 18 Requires vehicular visibility splays to be provided
 - 19 Requires the prior submission of details of a delivery vehicle management scheme
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20 Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans

21 Limits the approval to 3 years (Full)

Case Officer: John Davies

Photo(s)



Figure 1 – Access and view of site from the west

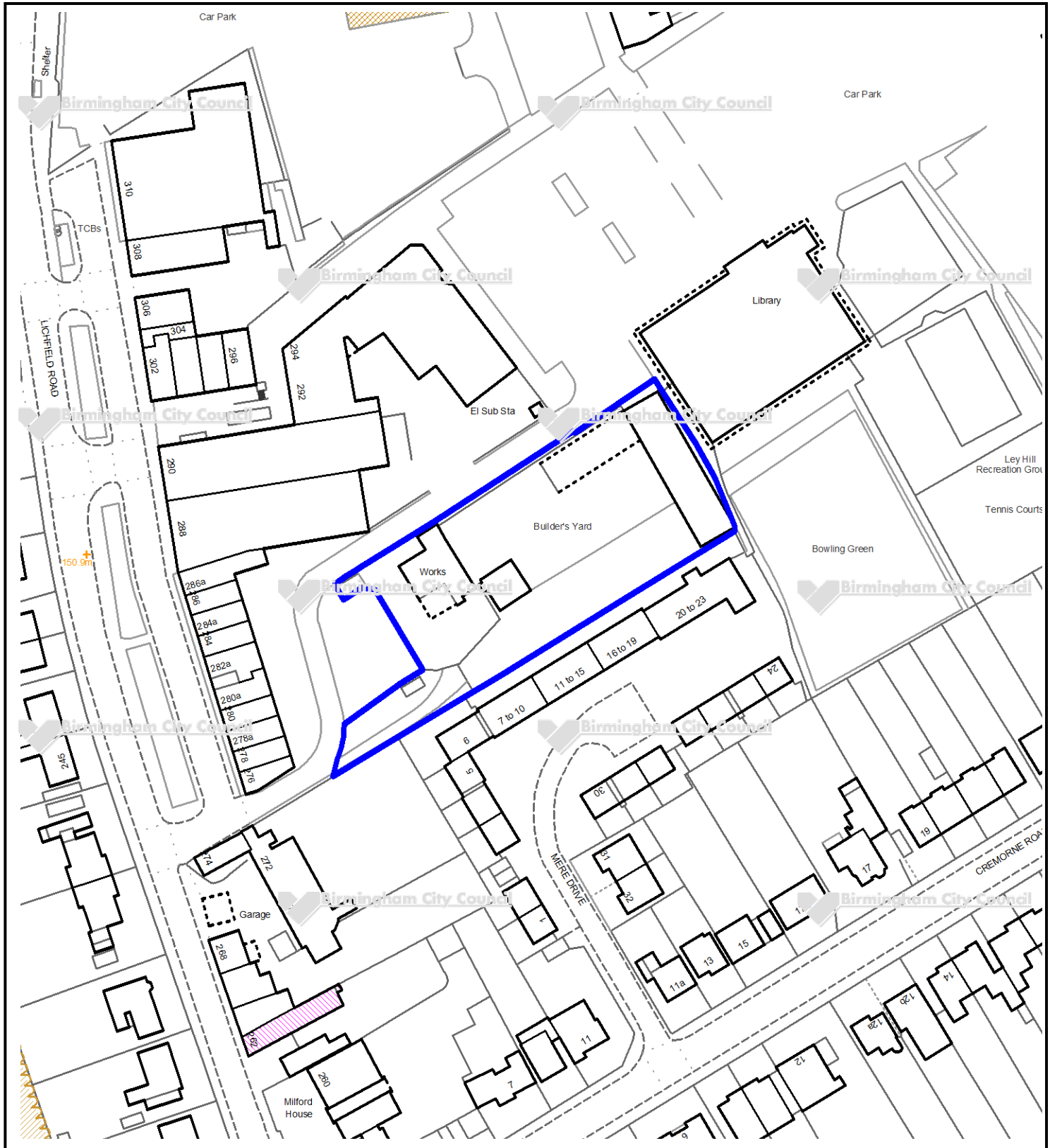


Figure 2 – View from within site looking west



Figure 3 – Rear of properties in Mere Drive

Location Plan



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