

13-042_ Rudloe. Wiltshire

Design Rationale

Scheme: Former Garage Site off Long Close Avenue
(ref. drg.no. 13-042_P001)



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is a Design Rationale Statement which supports a full planning application for the redevelopment of land at The Former Garage Site off Long Close Avenue in the Wiltshire village of Rudloe. As per Wiltshire Councils Full Planning Permission Validation Checklist, the proposals within this application do not warrant the need for a full Design and Access Statement as the number of houses proposed across the site accrue to less than 10 dwellings in total.

The village lies just off the A4 to the west of Corsham 7.5 miles east of Bath and 4.5 miles west of Chippenham. The Wiltshire Council Housing Needs Survey Report of 2013 for Rudloe makes reference to 565 households with a population of around 1333¹ and boasts a primary school, a community centre, a children's play area, playing fields, and a small convenience store. A number of small and medium sized businesses are also situated near by. Rudloe Estate is GreenSquare-run social housing, with a small number of houses and flats that are privately owned. The proposal is to add 8 new dwellings in place of 21 disused garages. The village has a loose grain structure, based on a deformed grid of lanes. However infill development sites can be identified with different grain patterns and densities.

This Statement was produced by the applicant, GreenSquare, and has evolved throughout the design and consultation process. Some readers, namely the Local Authority and Parish Councillors, may recognise some elements of this text as originating from the designer's Design Rationale during the design process. It follows a detailed consideration of the planning merits of the proposal and the 2011 North Wiltshire Local Plan.

In order to fully understand the application proposal additional supplementary information has been produced. This comprises:

- P001 Village Maps
- P002 Site Location/ Boundary Plans
- P003 Proposed Site Layout Plan
- P004-P006 Proposed Floor Plans, Elevations & Perspective Views
- P007 Proposed Shed Details
- P008 Garage Displacement Plan
- Utilities Mapping Information
- Topographic Survey

Alongside these other documents submitted with the planning application, this Statement is intended to help explain the development proposals.

¹ Household count from Wiltshire Council records. Population estimate based on the average household size in Wiltshire of 2.36 individuals (Census, 2011).

Broadly speaking, the first portion of this Statement presents information about the location, history and existing characteristics of the site and buildings, against which the second portion of the Statement confirms or explains how the proposals respond to established policies and feedback from consultations.

2.0 THE APPLICANT

GreenSquare Group is a Housing Group comprising housing associations Oxford Citizens Housing Association, Oxbode and Westlea Housing Association, a commercial subsidiary Oakus Estates, and in-house construction and plumbing firms Tidestone & GW Sparrows respectively. GreenSquare Group Limited is registered as an Industrial & Provident Society (IPS) with charitable status. GreenSquare is driven by local community boards and 50% of board members are residents. Put simply, we operate for the benefit of the broader community and we are a non-profit organisation. More information about GreenSquare can be found on our website at www.greensquaregroup.com.

Housing associations, often also known as 'Registered Social Landlords' (RSLs), are permitted to build houses for sale and to use the sales revenue to help fund the construction of new "affordable" housing as described in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The intent at Rudloe is for new "affordable" dwellings only in the development scheme. GreenSquare's activities are regulated by virtue of the fact that RSLs are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency and IPSs are regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Some overview reading about housing associations can be found, for example, on internet Wikipedia pages such as www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Housing_association and www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_and_provident_society, but readers are advised to refer to official or regulatory texts for accuracy of information.

3.0 THE EXISTING SITE

GreenSquare owns the properties highlighted in blue on drawing no. 13-042/P002. The area inside the red line boundary is also owned by GreenSquare and forms the focus of our redevelopment considerations. The Long Close Avenue Garage Site to which this application relates is located at the north-eastern edge of the series of cul-de-sac estates that together comprise the bulk of the village of Rudloe. The plot is L-shaped and linear in form, and comprises two separate banks of single garages, 21 in total, extending along alternate sides of a generous central access/turning courtyard. The land backs onto open countryside to the North, across which its North and East boundaries can be seen clearly from the A4 Bath Road. A large earth bank currently abuts the site boundary. Discussions are currently taking place with the land owner to have this relocated as the site's relationship to the adjacent open countryside is significant. A terrace of three-storey flats also abuts the site to the immediate southeast, forming a hard urbanised edge, and the relationship to these units also warrants careful consideration. The Cotswolds AONB extends to within around 300m of the northwest corner of the site and lies within the village of Rudloe Development Framework Boundary as identified in the Wiltshire Council Local Plan Map 1a. The village of Rudloe is not within or adjacent to any Conservation Area Boundary and no Listed Buildings are affected by this proposal. The garages within the site all lie disused and empty with no current tenancies. As a responsible Landlord, we are considering the future of these structures in

conjunction with the opportunity to redevelop the site to provide much needed additional housing.

4.0 CONSULTATION BACKGROUND TO DATE

Various one to one meetings with GreenSquare and private residents at Rudloe have been undertaken - Our discussions with residents confirm that the garages are underused and are an area of concern for the community. Earlier layout proposal were lodged as part of a pre-application submission in March 2014 (ref: 14/03140/PREAPP). This scheme has subsequently been amended to address the comments raised and now forms the basis of this planning submission. Mapping enquiries have been carried out with all local service providers and are submitted together with this application.

5.0 NUMBER OF DWELLINGS.

- The general aim is to increase housing capacity whilst respecting the existing village character. Local Planning Policy H3 state a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare should be sought. Our proposed site area extends to 0.153 hectares and affords 8 new dwellings.
- Our internal housing manager has identified a need for 2 bedroom properties in this area which is in direct correlation with the The Wiltshire Council Housing Needs Survey Report of 2013 for Rudloe
- Given the above two points, and the desire to retain an informal footpath access to the north of the site, we consider that eight new 2-bed 4-person (2B4P) houses would be suitable for this site.
- Given the Right to buy scheme a significant number of social dwellings have left GreenSquare's ownership in Rudloe. This has generated a real need for affordable/ low cost housing in such villages to satisfy demand and prevent social stagnation.

6.0 ACCESS AND PARKING SPACES.

- Established pedestrian accessways enter the site at the north west corner of the site between the agricultural land to the north and the rear of the properties on Northcroft Road. Whilst this is not listed as an Historic route or path and has no identified Rights of Way or license agreements to cross, access from the site is to be retained in its present form under this proposal.
- Similarly, a number of pedestrian and vehicular accessways which serve the rear gardens of Prestly Wood Road and Northcroft Road are to be maintained under this proposal.
- Of the 98 garages Greensquare own within the Rudloe Estate, 54 are currently disused and vacant. There is very little demand for such garages and the evidence suggests the spaces are used for secured storage as opposed to parking. Drawing P008 shows the location of these garage blocks and demonstrates that there will be no displacement of vehicles to the surrounding streets as a result of this proposal.
- Our proposal satisfy Wiltshire Council's "car parking strategy" text of 2011 which stipulates 2 parking spaces for 2 to 3 bed dwellings. In addition, a space is provided on site for visitors. All parking is to be allocated to their respective plots with a visitors space to benefit traffic flow in the adjacent highways.
- The area along Long Close Avenue, Especially at the junction with Kings Lea Avenue is currently misused for parking. This is understandable given the growth in automobile ownership since the construction of the surrounding dwellings in the mid 1960s. Comments received during the local public consultation highlighted the importance of visitors parking hence the provision of a new off street space within our proposal.

- The existing access from Long Close Avenue is proposed to remain largely unchanged. A new shared surface area and bay parking arrangement will be provided, sufficient enough to serve the new units and will be installed around a courtyard arrangement. Adequate turning space for residents is afforded to maintain the integrity of the road.

7.0 SITING OF BUILDINGS.

- The site is to be redeveloped entirely to provide 8 new residential dwellings, together with associated access, parking and landscaping.
- The buildings are laid out along the sites northern and eastern boundaries, the new dwellings are to be laid out as two series of three units, and a further pair of semi-detached units arranged perpendicular in the central part of the site.
- We propose to situate the buildings facing into the site to help maintain the continuity of the existing street frontage. Whilst build lines and vistas are altered, our proposal is designed to be sympathetic and to provide architectural enhancement to this arguably tired vernacular.
- The village of Rudloe has a loose grain structure, based on a deformed grid of lanes. However infill development sites can be identified with different grain patterns and densities.
- The loose clustering of buildings together with different façade outlooks results in opportunities for the creation of informal and visually semi-public courtyard parking spaces.
- The current proposal generates good opportunities for tree planting without resulting in excessive over-shadowing of southerly elevations during the daytime.
- The current scheme would not appear to result in any detrimental overlooking of existing neighbouring properties. The 2-bed terrace of plots 6-8 would be a minimum distance of approximately 15m from the nearest first floor window of No. 8 Northcroft Road, increasing to approximately 28m at No. 12. The use of trees have been incorporated along the boundaries to these properties to help obscure any possible direct overlooking scenarios. Drawing 13-042/P003 demonstrates these back to back distances.
- The potential for overlooking across adjoining property is further averted by ensuring that first floor windows are positioned respectfully and fixed with obscure glass in sensitive elevations, typically off landings or bathrooms.

8.0 MASSING OF BUILDINGS.

- Each of the units is to be of modest two-bedroom proportions, with a suitably-sized garden to the rear.
- Generally the buildings are intended to be two-storey houses with double pitched roofs in keeping with neighbouring properties.
- Roof pitches are designed to afford consistent, if not lower ridge heights with neighbouring properties. Where the proposed two bed terrace (plots 6 to 8) nears the northern end of the site, dormer windows have been introduced to reduce massing and lower ridge heights.
- Whilst chimneys are present on some properties in Rudloe, they are not prevalent in the immediate area and are not included within our proposals.
- The most efficient use of the land is achieved compatible with the site's location, its accessibility and its surroundings.

9.0 TENURE and DQS.

- The tenure mix is likely to be 100% affordable rent properties The exact mix is a result of meeting an establish demand, resident consultations and financial modelling. It is intended at this stage that all 'affordable' dwellings will be

designed to HQI (Housing Quality Indicators) as well as to Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

10.0 TOPOGRAPHY.

- A topographical survey has been commissioned for this site which confirms no significant variation in ground levels across the site.
- Level access thresholds should be achievable on all the proposed dwellings, together with ramped access routes between parking bays and the rain-sheltering porch canopies.

11.0 MATERIALS.

- We are aware of the sensitive nature of developing within an established vernacular of a village environment and acknowledge comments from the Council and local villagers that the appearance of the redevelopment should be sympathetic to the village character and should not have the 'anonymous' 'developer' housing estate feel that pervades so much of the country.
- Generally, the eventual palette of proposed finishes may comprise a quality reconstituted stone, concrete roof tiling and PVCu windows.
- The current design intention is to have a shared surface accessway distinguished by use of a different material, colour and texture. For example, concrete setts and tarmacadam for the roadway and parking bays respectively.

12.0 LANDSCAPING.

- No trees identified for removal are highlighted as significant foliage in the local plans. To mitigate however, and improve the ecology of the site, new trees and foliage are proposed in alternate locations within the development site.
- A mix of boundary treatments is proposed. Generally, closed boarded fencing is to provide privacy between dwelling rear gardens whilst a more agricultural, post and rail, stock fence is proposed where our site borders the adjoining fields.
- Soft landscaping is indicated around the front elevations of the units in particular, reinforcing the pedestrian emphasis in the immediate vicinity of the accommodation.
- Plot sizes will facilitate the provision of much needed new housing yet still provide private amenity spaces for dwellings.
- The proposed site layout is intended to give the development a pleasing and relaxed sense of village atmosphere.

As Existing: Site photographs



Image 01:
The view along the access road into the garage site, facing back towards King Lea Avenue and Long Close Avenue.



Image 02:
Pivoting to the left, we see here the boundary wall between the first garage block on the left, and the GreenSquare block of flats to the right behind the wall.



Image 03:
Then, pivoting 180 degrees, we see some rear access points to the properties of Prestly Wood Road and Northcroft Road.



Image 04:
The rear of Nos 2 to 6 Northcroft Road.



Image 05:
Turning to the right, the larger garage block stretches north toward the open field beyond.



Image 06:
A wide angle shot of the larger garage block adjacent to an access path and trees to the north of Northcroft Road properties.



Image 07:
The northern site boundary.



Image 08:
Turning to the southwest, we see the hard surfacing turning area of the site. The trees and boundary vegetation have been cleared since this photograph was taken.



Image 09:
Finally, hopping to the other side of the field boundary. Again, trees and vegetation have since been cleared. This has helped to define a clear site boundary.