

20/01309/FUL

Applicant Mr Andrew Gatehouse

Location Land North Of 19 Marlwood Cotgrave Nottinghamshire

Proposal Erection of 3 dwellings with associated parking.

Ward Cotgrave

THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. The 633.4sqm site (including a grass area of approx. 18m x 30m) is located at the end of a turning head within a residential area. Being broadly rectangular in shape, the application site area comprises an open grassed space, free of any boundary treatment or structures. It gradually slopes from the south to the north by around 0.5m and east to west by around 1m. The application site also includes an existing area of on street parking (currently providing the equivalent of 8 parking spaces).
2. The site is located at the end of Marlwood and adjacent to Eastwold. To the north is the side elevation of 15 Marlwood, a 2 storey semi-detached property, having a first floor side window and a ground floor door/window facing the site. The property has a car parking space towards the front and then a footpath to the side with a 2m a fence to the boundary adjacent the application site. The rear corner of the garden of 27 Eastwold also adjoins the application site, this is a 2 storey end of terrace property, which has its blank side elevation garage and fencing adjoining the application site.
3. To the east of the site is Eastwold Road with the side elevation of 26 Eastwold beyond. This again is a 2 storey end of terrace property having a first floor side window and ground floor window and door facing the application side with a 2m boundary fence and Eastwold road intervening. This property also has a garage to the rear of the property. To the south are on street parking spaces with no's 17-25 Marlwood beyond. These are all 2 storey dwellings in a terrace block. To the west of the application site are further 2 storey properties 26 -32 beyond Marlwood Road.
4. The land is owned by Rushcliffe Borough Council and a decision to dispose of the land to MHVT, affordable housing provider, at a nil value was considered and approved at a meeting of the Cabinet in March 2018 to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing in the Borough. This decision was in respect of the disposal of the land and not any specific development proposals. In view of the Borough Council's interest in the land, and in the interests of transparency, it has been determined that the application should be considered by the Planning Committee.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

5. The application seeks to develop the site for 3 two storey residential properties with parking. The proposed scheme indicates 1 two bedroom house, 1 three bedroom house and 1 four bedroom house. The overall ridge height of the

central property would be 8.3m with the properties to either side being 7.8m high. All would have eaves heights of 5.077m. The overall width of the block would be 18.575m with a maximum depth of 10.77m (although the majority of the block's depth would be 7m). It is proposed that the development would be constructed in brick and tiles to be of similar appearance to surrounding properties.

6. 7 parking spaces are indicated adjacent to the dwellings (3 to the west and 4 to the east of the block), all are to be accessed from Marlwood. A further additional space is indicated in line with the existing spaces adjacent existing properties to the south of the site, in front of no. 17.
7. The proposed buildings would be 23m from the front of the facing properties to the south and over 12m at the rear from the side elevation of no 15 Marlwood to the north.
8. In support of the application information was provided in respect of a tree report, Transport Assessment, Ecological Appraisal and a Site Investigation Report. Additional supporting information was provided in response to Policy 34 of the LPP2 advising that "The Cabinet report notes that, in its current format, the site makes minimal contribution to the Council's priorities but could maximise the contribution via delivery of affordable housing units.

SITE HISTORY

9. There have been no planning applications previously submitted on the parcel of land the subject of this application since the residential estate had been granted planning permission in the mid 1970's.

REPRESENTATIONS

Ward Councillor(s)

10. One Ward Councillor (Cllr Butler) objects to the application on the following grounds:
 - a. Whilst reflecting on the need for new small scale housing projects, and taking in account local knowledge and the opinions of local residents, he objects to this application.
 - b. Whilst the proposed designs of the houses are acceptable, there will be impact on the amenity of neighbouring existing residences caused by the additional build. In particular, issues of access and movement of vehicles affecting both potential occupiers of the new houses but also neighbouring properties.
 - c. Marlwood and the surrounding area consists of mixes of terraced and semi-detached properties, densely located very close to each other. Like many properties built during the 1960s/70s, the provision for parking of vehicles both on and off road was limited. It might have been ok at the time but of course there has been a vast increase in car ownership over the years. As a result, considerable parking has to take place by residents on the road. There have been numerous reports in

recent times of conflicts of traffic and blocking of even emergency vehicles.

- d. The proposed location of the new houses is at the far end of Marlwood and therefore by default, there will be considerable challenges and obstacles which will affect existing and also occupiers of the new houses, and foreseeable increased conflict.
 - e. In recent years Marlwood and adjacent roads have already had increased numbers of houses built on sites which were previously garages/parking areas, so available space has already been reduced. The effect of losing off road parking and adding to the challenge of on road parking by having new houses and increasing population there, has had a significant effect, and any more would cause considerable pressure on the area.
 - f. The other amenity aspect is the loss of a green space. Whilst this is not an official playground as such, it is an area where children play and is also a pleasant area just for people to see from their homes and get some fresh air and exercise - most of the gardens in the existing houses are small, and in an effort to try to alleviate the parking problems, some properties have converted their small front gardens into driveways. The benefits to people of all ages to see and be able to use an open space are well documented and accepted.
 - g. So with these concerns, Cllr Butler also agrees with the opinions of the Town Council and object on this occasion.
 - h. Whilst it is noted in the application that there are formal/official playparks at Ringleas and Grassmere, the reality is that these are a considerable distance away for children and their parents to feel confident about going to them.
11. One Ward Councillor (Cllr L Healy) objects to the application. His view is based on the collective discussion/decision made by Cotgrave Town Council.

Town Council

12. Cotgrave Town Council have objected to the application:
- a. This area already has issues with street parking and additional houses would increase the number of vehicles using the area. Refuse and emergency vehicles already have issues with gaining access.
 - b. Loss of green space
 - c. Cotgrave already has the potential for further housing development, which could take up these 3 additional properties.
 - d. Marlwood has already had 3 infill developments which have exacerbated the parking issues.

Statutory and Other Consultees

13. The Rushcliffe Borough Environmental Health Officer notes that the applicant has submitted a Ground Engineering Site Investigation report C14859 dated

October 2019. They advise that the report does review most of the potential contamination sources on site, however, a full set of gas monitoring records have not been provided. As a result, the officer recommends a condition is attached to any approval. In respect of Construction Noise and Dust they advise a condition be imposed due to the close proximity of existing residential premises and therefore the need for the applicant to ensure measures are in place to minimise noise and dust emissions during demolition and construction.

14. Rushcliffe Borough Council Recycling Officer has no comments to make.
15. Nottinghamshire County Council as Highways Authority notes that the proposal includes two parking spaces per property proposed, plus an additional two visitor spaces. A new dropped kerb vehicle crossing would be required to serve the parking for plot 1, together with the relocation of a street lighting column. They advise that all associated costs must be met by the developer. They note that on-street parking is in demand in the area, the proposal accommodates sufficient parking for the development, and is not considered to impact the current situation. They consider that the development would be unlikely to result in a severe impact on the public highway. The officer recommends a number of conditions.

Local Residents and the General Public

16. 8 representations were received objecting to the scheme. The comments can be summarised as follows:
 - a. At least 6 residents have paid to have dropped kerbs put in.
 - b. Obstructions for bin lorries and emergency services.
 - c. Good play area for local children who use it regularly.
 - d. How many open spaces are left in Cotgrave?
 - e. Valuable green space in a very built up area – important for mental health and wellbeing. Social benefits to families, children, elderly and dogwalkers. Please refer to the Government paper on public parks and green spaces.
 - f. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has highlighted that physical activity in a natural environment can help alleviate mild depression and reduce physiological stress indicators.
 - g. A fully enclosed field, currently padlocked due to Coronavirus, more than 10 mins walk away is not a suitable substitute. Designated play on Ringleas has hardly been used in the past 12 years and is too far for unsupervised children. Grassmere is used more but it is quite far for young children to use without supervision. The MUGA at the Futures has previously been set on fire and attracted antisocial groups.
 - h. Not designed as a play area but this is what it has become over the last 40 years, children play safely close to where they live.

- i. Policy 32 Recreational Open Space suggests that there should be 'no net loss' of recreational space which there would be.
- j. Overcrowding on a very busy street.
- k. 3 two bedroom houses were completed last year and a further 2 bungalows and 2 houses were built previously.
- l. Flooding of some of the existing properties. If all the green spaces go how will anything soak away. Does it not require a Flood Risk Assessment?
- m. The phased approach seems a deliberate ploy. Marlwood has had an additional 11-14 dwellings built with a loss of a designated play area, 2 grassed areas and 41 parking spaces.
- n. Whilst agreeing there is a need for affordable housing, filling every green space is not the way.
- o. Parking - The only unallocated parking space will be less than a full space and it also results in the loss of 2 unofficial but used spaces along the southern boundary of the site.
- p. The transport assessment shows a significant overlap of the parking spaces during manoeuvring indicating spaces are too narrow, evidenced by the fact that 7 rather than 8 use the area now. It has not taken a holistic approach to reviewing the parking situation.
- q. All the identified spaces are not adopted highway. It should be brought to standard and adopted if the development must proceed.
- r. Local Engagement – no notification from the developer and no site notice.
- s. It has probably already been decided to approve the application.
- t. Realise it's cheaper to build on amenity land and why would residents be heartless to object to helping the homeless?
- u. Strong local objection demonstrated by the petitions.
- v. In 1975 an architect was hired by RBC to look at additional parking spaces. His plans were apparently never adopted, 44 years later we still have a green.
- w. Originally the plans were for 3 dwellings and 5 parking spaces. Subsequently the density has been increased.
- x. The erection of the last 3 properties brought more than 3 cars to the road and it displaced 15 cars. People had not been aware that the parking/garaging was being replaced with housing. Since, at least 8 new dropped kerbs and driveways have been built to reduce on street parking. The Council has earned this extra money of provision. The

residents have to hope that the access is not compromised by the parking of a vehicle opposite on the arrow road.

- y. There is space to build on Hollygate Lane and away from this end of Ringleas.
 - z. People need more than houses, they need homes and homely environments. The plans remove that ideal from those who have nowhere else to go.
17. In addition to the above comments two petitions seeking to protect the open space were received, one referring to it as a green with 128 hand written signatures from local residents and the other electronic petition with 526 names requesting signatories to “save our last community green for the children, our wellbeing and our lives”. This latter included addresses not limited to the locality of Cotgrave or the country.
18. Three undated photographs were also provided showing children camping/ cycling and playing on the area and also a fire engine between two parked vehicles.

PLANNING POLICY

19. The development plan for Rushcliffe consists of the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy and the Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies. Other material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and the Rushcliffe Residential Design Guide (RRDG). Any decision should be taken in accordance with the adopted development plan documents.

Relevant National Planning Policies and Guidance

20. The relevant national policy considerations for this proposal are those contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the proposal should be considered within the context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development as a core principle of the NPPF.
21. Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. In assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
22. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth,

innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
23. Paragraph 15 of the NPPF states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.
24. As such, the following national policies in the NPPF with regard to achieving sustainable development are considered most relevant to this planning application:
- Section 5: Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
 - Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
 - Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities
 - Section 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport
 - Section 12: Achieving well designed places
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
25. Section 5 – 'Delivering a sufficient supply of homes' states that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.
26. Section 6 – 'Building a Strong and Competitive Economy' states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.
27. Section 8 'Promoting healthy and safe communities' sets out at para 91 that planning policy and decision should aim to achieve health inclusive and safe places. Para 91 b) and c) states inter alia, which are safe and accessible e.g. through high quality public open space and enable and support healthy lifestyles e.g through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure. Paragraph 92 "*To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should, inter*

alia, b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community” and paragraph 96. States inter alia “Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.” Paragraph 97 states that “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”*

28. Section 9 – ‘Promoting Sustainable Transport’ states that it should be ensured that safe and suitable access to the site can be secured for all users, going on to identify in paragraph 109 that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

29. Section 12 – ‘Achieving Well Designed Spaces’ states that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments, inter alia:

- a) Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).

30. In line with paragraph 130 of the NPPF, permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

31. Section 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment states that planning decisions should, inter alia, seek to contribute to and enhance the natural and local landscape by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).

32. National Design Guide – Planning Practice Guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places. “*The National Design Guide addresses the question of*

how we recognise well-designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics: Context – enhances the surroundings; Identity – attractive and distinctive; Built form – a coherent pattern of development; Movement – accessible and easy to move around; Nature – enhanced and optimised; Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive; Uses – mixed and integrated; Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable; Resources – efficient and resilient; Lifespan – made to last.”

33. Public Health England - Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020 *“is intended to provide Local Authorities, particularly public health teams, with the tools to make the case for maintaining or even increasing provision of and equitable access to greenspace and growing the wider network of green infrastructure, especially through the planning system. Good quality greenspace has the potential to deliver substantial benefits for public health and for wider local priorities at a relatively low cost. Greener neighbourhoods benefit everyone, but appear to disproportionately benefit disadvantaged groups, and socioeconomic-related inequalities in health are lower in areas with greater access to greenspace.”*
34. PPG Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space 2014 *“Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space. Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure.”*

Relevant Local Planning Policies and Guidance

35. The Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy sets out the overarching spatial vision for the development of the Borough to 2028. The following policies in the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy are relevant:
 - Policy 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Policy 3: Spatial Strategy
 - Policy 8: Housing size, mix and choice
 - Policy 10: Design and Enhancing Local Identity
 - Policy 16 Green Infrastructure, Landscape, Parks and Open Spaces
36. Policy 1 highlights that when considering development proposals the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
37. Policy 3 outlines the distribution of development in the Borough during the plan period. It ensures the sustainable development of Rushcliffe will be achieved through a strategy that promotes urban concentrations by directing the majority of development towards the built-up area of Nottingham and the Key Settlements. Cotgrave is identified as a 'key settlement'.
38. Policy 8 (Housing size, Mix and Choice) advises that the general approach to residential development should be to maintain, provide and contribute to a mix

of tenures, types and sizes in order to create mixed balanced communities which should be informed by evidence within the Strategic Housing Market Assessments, Sustainable Community Strategy and Housing Strategy; evidence of housing need and demand; area character, site specific issues and design considerations. 10% of new residential developments in Cotgrave is to be affordable housing.

39. Policy 10 (Design and Enhancing Local Identity) states that all new development should be designed to make; a positive contribution to the public realm and sense of place; create an attractive, safe, inclusive and healthy environment; and reinforce valued local characteristics; reflect the need to reduce the dominance of motor vehicles.
40. Policy 16 (Green Infrastructure, Landscape, Parks and Open Spaces) takes a strategic approach to the delivery, protection and enhancement of Green Infrastructure. Where new development has an adverse impact on Green Infrastructure assets, the need for and benefit of the development will be weighed against the harm caused. Open Space should be protected from development. Exceptions may be made if the development is a small part of the Green Infrastructure network and will not be detrimental to its function, or the development is a use associated with parks and open spaces or if none of the above apply the park or open space is shown to be underused or undervalued. Where open spaces are under used or undervalued, the reasons for this should be explored and where possible addressed prior to alternative uses being permitted.
41. The Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies was adopted in October 2019 and sets out non-strategic allocations and detailed policies for managing development. The following policies in the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2 are relevant:
 - Policy 1: Development Requirements
 - Policy 11: Housing Developments on Unallocated Sites within Settlements;
 - Policy 12: Housing Standards;
 - Policy 34 Green Infrastructure and Open Space Assets
 - Policy 38: Non-Designated Biodiversity Assets and the Wider Ecological Network.
42. Policy 1 sets out that planning permission for new development will be supported provided that, where relevant, a list of criteria are met. This list includes aspects such as residential amenity of adjoining properties, suitable access being provided, sufficient amenity spaces for end users, the relationship with nearby uses in terms of the amenity of future occupants and aspects such as ensuring no significant impact on wildlife, landscape character.
43. Policy 11 states that permission will be granted where inter alia, the proposal does not conflict with the spatial strategy, has a high standard of design that does not adversely affect the character or pattern of development in the area, the existing site does not make a significant contribution to the amenity of the surrounding area by virtue of its character or open nature and would not have a significant adverse impact on the amenities of surrounding residents.

44. Policy 12 – ‘Housing Standards’ identifies that all new dwellings will be required to meet the higher optional technical standard for water consumption of no more than 110 litres per day.
45. Policy 34 – ‘Green Infrastructure and Open Space Assets’ sets out that Green Infrastructure (GI) assets will be protected from development which adversely affects their function unless the need is proven to no longer exist and the benefits of development, in that location, outweigh the adverse effects on the asset. GI includes amenity space and semi natural green space. Planning permission will not be granted for development which would adversely affect access to open spaces.
46. Policy 38 – ‘Non-Designated Biodiversity Assets and the Wider Ecological Network’, where appropriate, seeks to achieve net gains in biodiversity and improvements to the ecological network through the creation, protection and enhancement of habitats, and the incorporation of features that benefit biodiversity.
47. The Rushcliffe Residential Design Guide (RRDG) states that building designs should contribute to an active and attractive street environment. A positive design approach to the local context does not mean a repetition of what went before. Fenestration, the proportions of the building and use of related materials are all design matters that should take their lead from the neighbouring properties. Contemporary and innovative solutions which successfully address all of these issues are to be encouraged.
48. Guidance on garden sizes and separation distances are included. The RRDG states that new developments should seek to provide garden depths of 10m, and garden sizes for semi-detached and terraced properties of 90 square metres, with smaller 2 bedroom or less properties to have a minimum of 55 square metres. It does however accept a variety of sizes will be required to meet a variety of needs, and notes that access to public open spaces, privacy of space and orientation of spaces can all contribute to the appropriateness of a gardens size to provide adequate amenity for future occupants.

APPRAISAL

49. The main considerations when determining this application relate to the principle of development, housing mix, loss of the open space, affordable housing need, assessing any design and amenity impacts of the proposal, assessing appropriate access and highway safety and other matters.

Principle of Development

50. Given the site is within an established residential area and given the site’s location within the sustainable ‘key-settlement’ of Cotgrave it is considered that the basic principle of residential development could be acceptable as a ‘windfall’ site subject to the consideration of all other material planning considerations considered below.

Housing Mix

51. The proposal is for 3 dwellings in a mix of 2, 3, and 4 bedroom dwellings which would represent a good housing mix. The scheme would be considered to

provide an appropriate mix of housing, compliant with the aims of policy 8 of the core strategy in its vision to create mixed and balanced communities in a key settlement identified for growth.

Loss of open space (GI)

52. The area is not designated as Local Green Space within the Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan, is not an equipped play area but more of an incidental/informal open space resulting from a historic residential development from the 1970's. However, this does not mean that it is any less important for the users in the immediate locality.
53. Part 1 of Policy 11 states the criteria under which development for housing on unallocated sites within settlements will be granted, parts c) and f) require that the site to be developed does not make a significant contribution to the amenity of the surrounding area by virtue of its character or open nature nor would its development cause a significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents and occupiers.
54. Part 1 of Policy 34 identifies amenity space as a GI asset and states that it will be protected from development that adversely affects their function, unless the need for the asset no longer exists and the benefit of development, in that location, outweigh the adverse effects on the asset.
55. MTVH consider that *“the proposed transfer of the land from the Council strongly indicates that the need for the asset no longer exists and the benefits associated with the development of the land at Marlwood outweigh the loss of the amenity space. The redevelopment of the site will provide affordable housing, contributing towards meeting local and borough-wide housing need.”*
56. A balanced judgement therefore has to be made as to whether the benefit of the development, in this location, outweighs the adverse effects of losing the open space.
57. The National Design Guide suggests that areas of higher density development benefit from a variety of open spaces to break up the form. Whilst the site may not be high quality open space in terms of habitat, landscape or biodiversity the lack of this enables the space to be used for activities such as informal play and physical activity and promote health, well-being and social inclusion and help combat loneliness.
58. It is therefore considered that the space could be considered an important area for local use and health and wellbeing as well as providing a pleasant aspect in what is quite a dense built up area. Garden areas in the vicinity do vary significantly in size therefore the use of the area has the potential to be greater.
59. In considering the impact of the loss of the space, consideration therefore should be given to alternative spaces within the vicinity. The distance to other space (similar green areas in the heart of residential areas) includes 2 within 200m on Hickling Way to the west of the site. In addition, there is access to woodland from the rear of the residential development to the south. The nearest formal play area is on a playing field off East Moor which is around 500m away. All of these areas are considered to be at distances that require supervision of younger children.

60. In addition, the health and wellbeing of our communities post-Covid is an important factor. It is important to balance building a greener, safer and economically resilient future where the health of communities is improved by increasing access to exercise to reduce obesity. The functionality of open space is important and generally more important in denser areas including those areas of affordable housing. It should be suitable for all age ranges and social value. In this regard it is considered that the value of the open space to the occupiers in the vicinity has the potential to be greater than in other less dense residential areas and the lack of onsite play equipment or barriers enables it to be used by a greater number of people of varying ages and for different activities.

Affordable Housing need

61. When considering affordable housing provision as part of the strategic housing developments allocated within LPP2, of which there are two allocated sites at Cotgrave, the local plan sets a lower level of provision at Cotgrave, 10% rather than 20% or 30% sought elsewhere in the Borough, as a result of the greater level of affordable housing that exists in Cotgrave.
62. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (2012) informed the affordable housing 'targets' within the Local Plan Part 1. It identified a need for 463 new affordable homes each year over the next 7 years (up to 2019 - it has not been updated). This would require 8,797 affordable homes and comprise 66% of the 13,150 homes required in the plan and was deemed unviable. Instead the plan requires only 3,100 affordable homes during the plan period. Their delivery was spread within tranches that mirror the overall housing trajectory that ramps up as the strategic sites started to deliver. Between 2011 and 2017, 190 units should be delivered. Between 2012 and 2023 the plan envisages 1,850. Whilst the plan has allocated sufficient sites to meet this target and the target set for 2011 and 2017 has been exceeded (281 delivered), the actual housing need identified in the SHMA is greater and additional sites that help to exceed the targets in the Local Plan should be encouraged.
63. Whilst figures are not available for Cotgrave specifically, currently on the waiting list are 566 applicants registered for housing, of these:
- a. 49 are 2 person households
 - b. 47 are older couples (registered for sheltered)
 - c. 112 older singles (registered for sheltered)
 - d. 36 families with 1 child or pregnant (2 bed need)
 - e. 36 families with 2 children (2 or 3 bed need)
 - f. 14 families with 3 children (3 bed need)
 - g. 14 families with 4 or more children (large 3 or 4 bed need)
 - h. 237 singles (largest need is for 1 bed flats)

64. With regard to meeting local housing need, The Localism Act 2011 and statutory guidance on social housing allocations only allows Local Authorities to allocate accommodation to people who are 'qualifying persons'. The Act also gives Local Authorities the power to decide the classes of people who are qualifying or not, as long as 'reasonable preference' is given to certain groups of people as set out in the Council's Allocations' Policy. Any allocation of social housing will need to be made in accordance with the Allocation's policy to meet borough wide need unless the site is designated as an exception site which would allow the properties to be restricted to people who have a local connection to the Town/ Parish.
65. It is therefore considered that, in respect of affordable housing, whilst there is a Borough wide need, provision specifically in Cotgrave has not been demonstrated. In considering this and the fact that a smaller percentage of affordable housing is sought in the settlement, and the fact that there are two allocations for residential development that would secure 10% of affordable housing on each site as they come forward, it is not considered that affordable housing need, in this particular case, outweighs the loss of the open space. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal fails to comply with Policy 34 of the LPP2. Notwithstanding this it is still considered relevant to consider all other material planning considerations.

Design

66. The properties would be two storey in scale with gable roof incorporating a ridge line not dissimilar to the adjacent properties. The plots would retain a path and landscaping at the frontage of the properties and also on the corner. These are considered to limit the massing of the properties when viewed front and side on and would not be considered to appear overly cramped or out of character on the site. The proposal would retain adequate circulation space, and overall the stepped plots would not be considered unduly prominent, or harmful to the character and appearance of the street scene.
67. It is considered that the design of the properties would be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the locality and the local architectural styles. The scheme proposes the use of brick and tile finishes which, if controlled by condition, would ensure a sympathetic external appearance to the character and appearance of the area, and therefore overall the design proposed is considered appropriate in the area.

Amenity

68. It is considered that the layout and design of the proposal would not result in significant adverse impacts on the residential amenity of the adjacent occupiers. Whilst there are land level changes across the site, unacceptable overlooking would not arise between facing properties (distance of 23m) or at the rear where the first floor bedroom windows of plots 1 and 2 would face the gable end of 15 Marlwood.
69. Plot 3 would have a bathroom and 2 bedroom windows at the upper level facing the rear garden areas of 15 Marlwood and 27 Eastwood, however this 12m distance to the boundary is not considered to result in significant unacceptable overlooking when compared to the existing relationships in the vicinity.

70. Plot 1 also proposes a first floor bedroom window and a living room window on the gable end facing towards nos. 22-26 Marlwood. Again, due to the distances involved (20m) it is not considered that this would result in unacceptable overlooking.
71. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not have significant adverse impacts on the residential amenities of existing adjacent occupiers or for the future occupiers of the development.

Garden Sizes

72. The proposed development would achieve garden areas of approximately 45sqm for the 2 bed unit, 60sqm for the 3 bed and 120sqm for the 4 bed unit. It is considered that whilst this is not totally compliant with the Councils Residential Design Guide it does reflect the character and available gardens of the existing surrounding development and would not appear cramped.

Highway safety

73. Comments have been received regarding on street parking capacity issues and issues for waste and emergency vehicles due to inconsiderate parking. In addition, comments were raised regarding the changes to on-street parking.
74. The application proposes 2 allocated spaces per dwelling (including 2 sets of tandem spaces) and 2 additional visitor spaces. This is considered an appropriate level of provision for the size of units. The creation of new dropped kerbs into the site would remove some existing on street parking opportunities for other existing residents and/or visitors, however the loss of this provision is not something that would raise any undue concerns in itself. In addition, it is proposed that an additional parking space be created outside of number 17 Marlwood, opposite the proposed dwellings.
75. Given there are no objections from the Highway Authority, that appropriate onsite parking provision is proposed to serve the units, and that the Recycling Officer has not raised any objections, it is not considered that the scheme would raise any significant highway safety, parking or access concerns to justify the refusal of the application on highway safety grounds.

Other

76. The LPP2 sets out in policy 12 that all new dwellings should meet the higher 'Optional Technical Housing Standard' for water consumption as Rushcliffe is an area that has been identified as having moderate 'water stress' (i.e. scarcity). This could be addressed by way of a condition to ensure that the dwellings meet this standard, which will require any developers to notify building control who will in turn ensure the building meets the higher standards as part of their consent process.
77. The Council has a duty to consider impact of a development on European protected species. The submitted ecology assessment identified that the site has negligible value to support notable and protected species and habitats. It recommends at paragraph 5.4 the following enhancement features:

- Wildlife friendly landscaping across the site by incorporation of native trees and shrubs. In addition, any communal lawn/amenity grassland provided should incorporate wildlife turf, or products which provide higher provision of wildflowers and nectar sources for pollinators.
 - In addition, the small hedgerows/flower beds proposed as part of the development proposals should include a mix of native species or those valuable to wildlife.
 - Provision of artificial bird nest boxes and bat boxes. Bats are a LBAP priority species and house sparrow are a UK BAP priority species. Therefore, provision of nest boxes/bat boxes integrated into the fabric of new buildings would align with national conservation objectives.
 - Invertebrate habitat features. Within landscaped areas, invertebrate habitat features should be incorporated to provide features of interest as well as ecological function. Loggeries, solitary beehives and/or habitat panels could be placed in suitable locations. Loggeries providing shelter for saproxylic invertebrates in larval stage should be placed in shaded areas, whereas beehives and habitat panels should be located in sunny areas.
 - Connectivity for species such as hedgehog should be provided through provision of 13cm x 13cm gaps in any fencing and walls throughout the development. Hedgehogs are a UK BAP species. There are records of hedgehogs in the area and the proposed residential gardens have the potential to increase the value of the site as a foraging resource. Therefore, suitable ground floor landscaping should provide corridors for movement and locations for foraging hedgehogs
78. Biodiversity Net Gain is also encouraged in policy 38 of LPP2, it would be reasonable to condition the inclusion of bat and bird box features into the build of the development together with wildlife enhancing landscaping features in a landscape condition.
79. Flooding has been raised in respect of an incident that occurred earlier in the year. The site is not in an identified floodzone therefore a risk assessment is not required.
80. The Environmental Health Officer raised no objections in relation to the submitted Ground Site Investigation Report, however, they have advised that it did not provide a full set of gas monitoring records and therefore the officer recommended a condition to address this additional element.
81. Concern has been expressed regarding the number of other developments that have taken place in the vicinity. Each application has to be considered on their own merits subject to specific site constraints and planning policy that applies. Therefore, it is not possible to take that issue into account in the consideration of this planning application.

Conclusions

82. Given all the matters as considered above, and having assessed the development proposal against the policies set out in the development plan for Rushcliffe, the scheme is considered, on balance, to be contrary to policy 34 of the LPP2. Therefore, in weighing up all planning matters it is considered that the principle of the loss of the open space is not outweighed by the provision of affordable housing and the application is recommended for refusal.

83. The application was subject to pre-application discussions however, it has not been demonstrated that the loss of the open space is outweighed by the provision of affordable housing in this case.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that planning permission be refused for the following reason(s)

1. It has not been adequately demonstrated that the provision of three affordable dwellings would outweigh the harm caused by the loss of open space that contributes to the character of the area, amenities of existing occupiers and wellbeing of local residents by virtue of its contribution to opportunities for informal communal recreation. The proposal would, therefore be contrary to Policies 11 (Housing Development on Unallocated Sites Within Settlements) and 34 (Green Infrastructure and Open Space Assets) of the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies.