

Summary Proof of Evidence
Mr Stephen Tucker | January 2025

Hither Green Lane Redditch

Appeal Reference: APP/Q1825/W/24/3350905



DAVID WILSON HOMES
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URBAN DESIGN Summary PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Stephen John Tucker BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI SITE:

Hither Green Lane, Redditch

on behalf of

BARRATT DAVID WILSON HOMES (MERCIA) REMUS 2

2 CRANBROOK WAY SOLIHULL

BUSINESS PARK SOLIHULL

WEST MIDLANDS B90

4GT

Date: January

2025

Local Planning Authority Ref: 21/01830/FUL

ARP Ref:

APP/Q1825/W/24/3350905

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

SECTION 78 AND TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE)
(ENGLAND) RULES 2000 APPLICATION BY BARRATT DAVID WILSON HOMES
(MERCIA)

SITE ADDRESS: LAND WEST OF, HITHER GREEN LANE, REDDITCH, WORCESTERSHIRE

REF: 21/01830/FUL

PROOF OF EVIDENCE AUTHOR: Stephen John Tucker Urban Design
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Date: January 2025

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1. Summary of Evidence

- 1.1. In May last year I was asked to support our Birmingham based team with this project when the application was refused by Redditch Borough Council. The client / design team recognised the value in critically reviewing the scheme with fresh eyes.
- 1.2. The evidence I have prepared, and which I provide for this Appeal, is true and has been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution, the RTPI. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions. This evidence is submitted on behalf of Barratt David Wilson Homes (Mercia) (hereinafter referred to as ‘the appellant’) in respect of the Refusal of Planning Permission of Planning Application 21/01830/FUL for Land West Of, Hither Green Lane, Redditch, Worcestershire.

Scope of Evidence

- 1.3. Three reasons for the Refusal of Planning Permission were given by Redditch Borough Council in the Decision Notice dated 22nd March 2024. Reason for Refusal 2 is the focus of my evidence: “The proposed density of the development, at 36 dwellings per hectare, combined with its layout and design, results in an urban development that is unacceptable in terms of visual impact and its affect upon the character and appearance of the area. The proposal does not create a high-quality development in terms of layout or design (including for affordable dwellings) and is out of character with the setting of the site on the edge of Redditch, and particularly the adjacent residential development on Hither Green Lane. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 4 Housing Provision, Policy 5 Effective and Efficient Use of Land, Policy 6 Affordable Housing, Policy 39 Built Environment and Policy 40 High Quality Design and Safer Communities of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 (Adopted 30 January 2017), the Borough of Redditch High Quality Design SPD (June 2019) and to the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
- 1.4. My evidence will demonstrate how the DAS and design package submitted in December 2021 and amended post-submission in July 2023 and August 2024 is consistent with the NPPF dated December 2023, the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 adopted January 2017 and the Borough of Redditch High Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in June 2019, both of which form part of the development plan. It will also demonstrate that the scheme with minor refinements prepared for this Appeal, are consistent with the Redditch Local Plan No.4 (CD E1), the updated NPPF dated December 2024 (CD F1) and the Redditch Design SPD (CD E9). These minor Appeal refinements are summarised in table 2.21 of my proof of evidence.

Character

- 1.5. An assessment of existing character in the area and nearby, is a fundamental building block in the preparation of a good design. Even if the designer departs from that character, they should be able to show that they understand the existing place fully and have departed for important reasons. A proper and fully developed character section in the appeal DAS does just this.
- 1.6. A character analysis approach was followed in the preparation of the original layout and design but it was not recorded nor explained to my satisfaction, in the submission DAS. There was therefore a lack of clarity in the original submission, not a failure in process.
- 1.7. In my evidence, I will demonstrate that the design process that has been followed is the correct one. That the design team considered a range of local and national policy and guidance throughout the application process; that the Planning and Roads authority had the opportunity to review those designs and mostly took that opportunity, to evolve the design through engagement with the developer and design team. I also summarise the commentary from and the design response to views that came from, Redditch Borough Council / Hither Green community, and other statutory consultees and finally, that this development is consistent with the principles and objectives set out in Local Plan, NPPF, Design SPD and the NDG/ NMDC.

Density

- 1.8. In line with Policy 5 of the Redditch Local Plan, NPPF paragraph 130 urges to “avoid homes being built at low densities” and encourages a “significant uplift in the average density of residential development” to ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.
- 1.9. The net density of proposals is 36 dwellings per hectare (gross density: 21.7 dph) at the lower end of the 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare range required by Policy 5. The gross density of the development sits in the middle of the density range (12-31dph) identified in the character assessment which encompasses the adjacent Hither Green Lane

neighbourhood as well as more recent developments such as Odell Street and Hawling Street 'The View' (recent residential developments further west of the site, see Character Study in the Appeal DAS p.42-45, extracts shown below and opposite).

- 1.10. Whilst the overall proposed net density may be higher than the adjacent Hither Green Lane neighbourhood, that density is a product of a mix that includes affordable homes. The density also varies across the proposed masterplan relative to character areas. Where homes adjoin and are visible from the neighbouring scheme, the layout does provide an in keeping scale, massing and built form pattern with its neighbours.

Conclusion

- 1.11. In my view, the applicants design process on Hither Green was entirely appropriate. The design evolved in response to pre application and local concerns. The character of development along the northern edge of Redditch has been carefully assessed in the design process and recorded in the appeal DAS.
- 1.12. Reason for Refusal 2 seems heavily focused upon the apparent impact on the existing Hither Green Lane development. That is also the focus of the community objection. In truth, however the existing Hither Green development is a very low density golf related scheme of which there were a number delivered across the UK in the 1980's / 90's. It has significant architectural variety and also some good streetscaping and now matured planting. It is not however (particularly in the context of a housing shortfall) a scheme whose density would be in keeping with modern policy (specifically chapter 11 of NPPF, para 130) at either local or national level.
- 1.13. As can be seen from the committee report the scheme was deemed appropriate. Planning Committee Report, Section 11.12 Design and Layout p.41 "Overall, it is considered that the proposal is broadly in accordance with good placemaking and design principles and would meet with the policy requirements in the development plan to form a comprehensive and integrated development with the neighbouring estate. The design and appearance of the dwellings are of good quality in accordance with Policies 39 and 40 of LP4, Redditch High Quality Design SPD and the NPPF."
- 1.14. Density has a fundamental relationship with character. That relationship is explained in the character assessment section in the appeal DAS. The existing Hither Green Lane was considered in some detail, as were a number of schemes on the northern edge of Redditch. Clearly, several of the more recently completed developments have been built at densities comparable or above the density of this proposal. It is also fair to say that residential densities have crept upwards since the construction of Hither Green Lane in line with a greater awareness of and importance given to achieving more sustainable development.
- 1.15. Character and density go hand in hand. This is why the gateways and edges of the development are treated with one eye on proximity to and visibility from neighbouring existing development. The final layout and the appeal DAS identified areas where there was clear visual connection with Hither Green Lane and Dagnell End Road. The resultant character analysis influenced choice of house type, plot size, streetscape, architecture, materiality and roofscape. All were considered to reflect and blend with the existing character. This process and detail are fully explained in the appeal DAS.
- 1.16. I would conclude with my view that the proposal aligns with sound placemaking and design principles in its context, meets the policy requirements of the development plan, and creates a coherent and integrated development with the adjacent Hither Green neighbourhood.



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