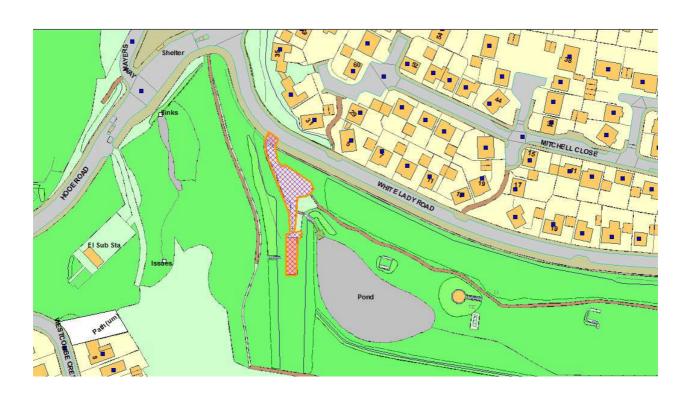
PLANNING APPLICATION OFFICERS REPORT



Application Number	17/02456/FUL	Item	03
Date Valid	14.02.2018	Ward	PLYMSTOCK RADFORD

Site Address	White Lady Road Plymouth PL9 9GA			
Proposal	Proposed change of primary use of the Bird Hide building to an "Outdoor Preschool and After School Club" (Class D1)			
Applicant	St Mary's Church Preschool			
Application Type	Full Application			
Target Date	11.04.2018	Committee Date	19.07.2018	
Extended Target Date	26.07.2018			
Decision Category	Member referral			
Case Officer	Mr Jon Fox			
Recommendation	Grant Conditionally			



This planning application has been referred to Planning Committee by Cllr Michael Leaves.

1. Description of Site

The site comprises an old, single-storey concrete building, which has been left over from the former use of the wider site as an oil fuel depot, and which is now a housing estate. The building is used as a 'bird hide' and is a meeting place for the 'Friends of Radford Wood'. The building is situated to the south of the access road into the housing estate and is served by a gravel drive and circular parking area. Other surrounding land comprises a site of local importance for nature conservation (SLINC), beyond which lies the Reddicliff housing estate.

2. Proposal Description

Proposed change of primary use of the Bird Hide building to an "Outdoor Preschool and After School Club" (Class D1).

3. Pre-application Enquiry

None.

4. Relevant Planning History

01/01225/REM - Erection of 63 two-storey and three-storey dwellings and garages and associated works.

99/01302/OUT - Outline application to develop land with residential units (approx.120), with details of means of access, and creation of areas of open space; includes partial demolition and regrading of redundant fuel tanks the provision of a spine road.

5. Consultation Responses

Local Highway Authority (LHA)

The LHA objected initially on the grounds that the vehicular and pedestrian accesses from White lady Road were considered sub-standard and that consequently staff and visitors would be forced to park on the road. Subsequently the applicant's agent submitted a travel plan, which promotes the use of a Council car park, on the opposite side of Radford Park Road, and which also demonstrates that the parking area on the site is capable of being accessed by car from White Lady Road. Crucially the number of children using the proposed pre-school is limited to 18, which is not considered to generate a level of traffic and parking that would cause significant issues on the highway, even if a number of parents were to park on White lady Road rather than parking on site or at the Council car park off Radford Park Road.

Natural Infrastructure (NI) Team

The NI team recommends conditions if the application is recommended for approval. However, they have concerns about proposed high, close-boarded fence being in conflict with the green space functioning of the site as it adversely impacts on the visual amenity of the green space and it reduces the visual relationship between the building and its natural environment, which forms the key reason for the suggested change of use.

Public Protection Service

The Public Protection Service recommends that a condition is applied to ensure that any unexpected contamination found during development is reported and that any appropriate investigation and remediation is carried out.

Early Years Team

The Early Years Welfare Team advised the applicants previously that the building wasn't ideal. The Team wouldn't endorse this application as there's already an abundance of high quality and sufficient childcare within close proximity. The Team are happy to support St Mary's Church Preschool to find alternative premises in Plympton, as they are aware that St Mary's Church may terminate their current lease, leaving the pre-school without a suitable venue.

Police Architectural Liaison Officer

The Devon and Cornwall Police support the granting of planning permission for this application.

Economic Development

ED has no objection to the proposal.

Public Rights of Way Officer

No rights of way are affected so the Rights of Way Officer has no comments to make on this application.

Ministry of Defence Safeguarding

The MOD has no safeguarding objection to this proposal.

6. Representations

209 public comments were received, 73 of which were received during and following the second publicity period for the submitted travel plan. The issues raised are as follows:

These comments can be divided into matters that are material to the application and those which are not.

Material Planning Considerations:

- 1. Traffic, parking, highway safety on White Lady Road and Radford Park Road, unsustainable location (including impact on children having to travel from Plympton and it not being sustainable to travel from Plympton). The main theme being that vehicles parked on the nearby section of White Lady Road results in a narrow carriageway width that forces drivers into a 'give-and-take' situation, i.e. drivers entering the estate would have to wait for drivers leaving the estate and vice versa. This situation is exacerbated by the bend in the road, which means that opposing drivers cannot see each other before committing themselves to driving along the narrow section of road. Highway improvements would be required
- 2. Rough & unmade access tracks that bend and fall away quite steeply over uneven ground.
- 3. Emergency vehicles would be blocked.
- 4. The submitted travel plan will not have the effect of making parents use the Council car park, nor for them to use alternative means of transport; it is not enforceable.
- 5. Impact on nature reserve, wildlife and rare/protected species including 'Deptford Pinks'.
- 6. Proposals would deny/restrict access for local people to the building, the nature reserve, right of way and community orchard. Loss of valuable community facility.
- 7. Water hazard to children.
- 8. Contaminated site that is also prone to flooding.
- 9. Noise, light, air and litter pollution.
- 10. No demand for pre-school locally.
- 11. Visual impact of proposed fence and cars.
- 12. Lack of waste disposal arrangements. Where would bins be stored?
- 13. Contrary to original planning permission and Section 106 agreement.
- 14. Contrary to local deeds and will lead to other changes of use (setting a precedent)
- 15. Safeguarding issues for children.
- 16. The double gates would have to be open all the time, making it unsafe for children and dogs.
- 17. Loss of greenspace/value of greenspace.
- 18. The proposals provide no economic benefit.
- 19. Building is unsuitable for the proposed use.
- 20. Public Rights of Way affected.

Non material considerations

- 1. Negative impact on local pre-schools.
- 2. PCC want the £2000 per year revenue from the lease.
- 3. Loss of property value.
- 4. Loss of view.

7. Relevant Policy Framework

Section 70 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act requires that regard be had to the development plan, any local finance and any other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compensation Act requires that applications are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan comprises of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (Adopted April 2007).

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (the JLP) will replace the Core Strategy and other Plymouth Development Plan Documents as the statutory development plan for Plymouth once it is formally adopted.

Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) provides guidance on determining the weight in relation to existing and emerging development plan policies.

- For Plymouth's current development plan documents, due weight should be given to relevant policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).
- For the JLP which is an emerging development plan, the weight is to be determined by the stage of its preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections, and its degree of consistency with the Framework.

The JLP is at an advanced stage of preparation having now been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination, pursuant to Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations. It is considered to be a sound plan, consistent with the policies of the Framework, and is based on up to date evidence. It is therefore considered that the JLP's policies have the potential to carry significant weight within the planning decision, particularly if there are no substantive unresolved objections. The precise weight will need to be determined on a case by case basis, having regard to all of the

material considerations as well as the nature and extent of any unresolved objections on the relevant plan policies.

Other material considerations include the policies of the Framework itself, guidance in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and the Development Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document.

8. Analysis

This application has been considered in the context of the development plan, the submitted Joint Local Plan, the Framework and other material policy documents as set out in Section 7.

8.1. The principle of development

The old 'bird hide' building was identified in the Section 106 agreement attached to planning application 99/1302/OUT, which was registered on 18th October 1999, and which gave approval for the construction of the White Lady Road housing estate. The Section 106 agreement says that the bird-hide (referred to as the TEL building) should be refurbished 'to enable its proposed use as an educational resource.' There is also specific reference to the requirement for refurbishment works, including providing benches and trestle tables for up to 40 children and their teacher. It therefore appears that the intention was to use the bird-hide relatively intensively in accordance with those aspirations. The agreement also states that the existing hardstanding shall be cleared and extended to provide parking spaces for two cars and three minibuses. The Section 106 agreement does not appear to be prescriptive about who should benefit from the 'educational resource'.

- 8.1.1. The location of the building, close to the site of local importance for nature conservation (SLINC) lends itself to a use where children can experience nature. The building is also used by other interest groups, such as the Friends of Radford Woods.
- 8.1.2. Various issues have been raised as to the suitability of the building as a pre-school; including its internal condition, the hazard presented to children by the existing pond, and the constantly open gates being unsafe for children and dogs that use the area on and around the site. However, these issues may be causes for concern to other relevant bodies/authorities but are not considered material to the planning considerations. Objections were raised also regarding access being denied for other users.
- 8.1.3. Other relevant considerations include the impact of the proposed use, i.e. the activity of children and noise, on the surrounding nature conservation area, and protected species such as 'Deptford Pinks'. In these respects the NI Team has not raised objections regarding the impact of the use on the nature reserve. They do raise concerns about the visual impact of the proposed fence, at the forefront of the site; however, the fence has been altered to a 'hit-

and-miss' design (made with vertical boards mounted alternately to the front and back of the panel for a 'hit and miss' effect - instead of the close-boarded kind proposed originally) and, although still in the order of 1800mm high, is not considered to be a strong enough reason to refuse the planning application.

8.2. Amenity

The impact of the use, on the amenities of neighbours, is a concern for residents. However, the Public Protection Service has not raised an objection and the relatively low number of children attending the pre-school (a maximum of 18 children) is not considered to generate a level of noise and disturbance that would be harmful to amenity or be of a nature that is out of place in a residential area.

8.2.1. Light pollution from the proposed use would be evident in the winter months, although the hours of use of the building, which are 0800 to 1800 hours, would not be a cause for concern in this respect.

8.2.2. With regard to internal and external space standards, the Department for Education's 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' states that:

'Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation (including fire safety and hygiene requirements)'. And also that providers must meet the following indoor space requirements:

- Children under two years: 3.5 m2 per child
- Two year olds: 2.5 m2 per child
- Children aged three to five years: 2.3 m2 per child

On this basis, even if the 18 children all required the maximum 3.5m² of space this would require 63m² overall, whereas the floor area of the building is approximately 100m².

8.2.3. The Dept. for Education document also states that:

'Providers must provide access to an outdoor play area or, if that is not possible, ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions). Providers must follow their legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (for example, the provisions on reasonable adjustments)'. In this case there is outside space at the front of the building and the proposals include access to the surrounding nature conservation area.

8.2.4. Overall, the intensification of use of the site, which would undoubtedly result, is not considered to be harmful to amenity or the existing character of the area, which includes its natural and built surroundings. The traffic impacts of the proposals are considered separately, below.

8.3. Highway Issues

Arguably the most controversial aspect of the proposals is the generation of vehicular traffic, and the associated parking demand, and how this impacts on highway safety and the free movement of vehicles into and out of the estate served by White Lady Road.

- 8.3.1. These objections appear to centre round the perceived congestion on the initial section of White Lady Road, as it leads into the estate from Radford Park Road. The road layout at this point includes a bend in the road that limits forward visibility in both directions. While the road is wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic, this is cut down to single width where cars are parked on the left side of the road entering the estate. This leads to a situation where drivers have to proceed on a 'give-and-take' basis, i.e. stopping to allow oncoming drivers to pass on the single width sections of the road. Residents state that this situation is exacerbated by the bend in the road, which results in drivers proceeding 'blind' onto the single width section only to be confronted by a vehicle coming the other way.
- 8.3.2. The key consideration for officers is whether the proposed use of the 'bird hide' building as a pre-school would worsen this situation, in terms of the free flow of traffic and highway safety. Officers have serious concerns about the ability of staff and visitors to park on the site, thereby avoiding additional parking on the particular section of White Lady Road referred to above. These concerns centred on the existing condition of the accessway and pedestrian path, both of which are unsurfaced and steep. However, the applicant cannot afford to improve the accesses. As an alternative the applicant's agent submitted a travel plan, which promotes the use of an existing Council car park on the opposite of Radford Park Road. The agent was also able to demonstrate that the vehicular accessway is useable, which means that staff and visitors could park on the site. In reality it is likely that, while staff would consider using the on-site car park, some parents are likely to use more convenient methods. Residents claim that parents will inevitably park on the affected part of White Lady Road rather than use the more distant Council car park. To an extent this is likely to be the case. However, the LHA recommend conditions, including a condition on the operation of the travel plan, which should seek to encourage staff and all site users to use modes of transport other than the private car to get to and from the premises. The condition also relates to measures to control the use of the permitted car parking areas; arrangements for monitoring the use of provisions available through the operation of the Travel Plan; and the name, position and contact telephone number of the person responsible for its implementation. Due to the strong concerns expressed by local residents officers consider that this travel plan is monitored by local residents through their local councilors and the travel plan condition has been worded to reflect this.

8.3.3. Notwithstanding the travel plan, the perceived tendency for parents to park on White Lady Road needs to be assessed in terms how it might exacerbate the give-and-take use of that part of the road. In this respect it is the LHA's view that the number of children attending the site is below the point where traffic and parking demand would significantly worsen the existing situation. The worst case scenario would be where 18 children turn up to the site just as 18 children are leaving. However, this is unlikely, given the staggered nature of sessions, set out in the revised Operational Plan, which are as follows:

Morning Session: 0915 - 1130

Lunch Club: 1145 - 1230

Afternoon Session: 1245 – 1500

Early Birds Breakfast Club: 0800 – 0900

After School Club: 1515 - 1800

8.3.4. Officers consider that the proposals are not introducing a significant parking problem and overall it is not considered that the level of use would lead to conditions that would prejudice highway safety or significantly increase interruptions to the free flow of traffic on either White Lady Road or Radford Park Road. Subject to conditions it is therefore considered that the use does not conflict with policy CS28 of the Core Strategy of Plymouth's Local Development Framework 2007 or policy DEV31 of the JLP.

8.4. Other Impacts

Objections have been raised on the grounds that the proposed facility is not needed in the area and that it would prejudice the viability of child care providers locally. The use is also considered to be unsustainable on the grounds that parents in Plympton would need to travel from that area of the city to the site.

8.4.1. With regard to the need for a new facility, the applicants state that they are seeking to provide a 'forest' type school, which promotes interaction with nature, and that there is a need for this kind of facility in the area. The applicants also state that they are expanding and not relocating, which means that the proposed facility seeks to target the local population rather than forcing existing parents and children to travel out from Plympton. In any event the issue of competition is not a planning consideration. Need could be a planning consideration. In this case it has also been argued that there is no need for the proposed facility in this area. However, there are no other significant policy objections to the

proposed use, which is when the issue of need usually comes into play. The sustainability of the site is material to the case, but even if parents did travel from Plympton the numbers involved are not considered significant in terms of car use.

8.4.2. Residents have expressed concerns about the provision of waste disposal facilities. In the circumstances it is considered that an appropriate condition would be sufficient to ensure that adequate facilities are provided on site.

9. Human Rights

Human Rights Act - The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, and in particular Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8 of the Act itself. This Act gives further effect to the rights included in the European Convention on Human Rights. In arriving at this recommendation, due regard has been given to the applicant's reasonable development rights and expectations which have been balanced and weighed against the wider community interests, as expressed through third party interests / the Development Plan and Central Government Guidance.

10. Local Finance Considerations

None.

11. Planning Obligations

The purpose of planning obligations is to mitigate or compensate for adverse impacts of a development, or to prescribe or secure something that is needed to make the development acceptable in planning terms. Planning obligations can only lawfully constitute a reason for granting planning permission where the three statutory tests of Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 are met.

Planning obligations not required due to the nature and size of the proposal.

12. Equalities and Diversities

The proposals promote access to nature for children, which is positive from an equalities point of view. The applicant's statement also says that they will provide children with innovative experiences by adopting principles from the 'Forest School Approach.' This will support all children, including children with special educational needs and disabilities; children with life limiting conditions; children whom English is not the dominant language in their home; children who have been abused or maltreated.

13. Conclusions

In this case it is recognized that there are significant concerns and objections based on the issue of congestion and highway safety on White lady Road. There are also many other issues raised by residents including the impact on the nature conservation area. However, these issues are considered to be adequately addressed in the application, including the restriction on numbers and the submitted travel plan. On balance therefore it is recommended that conditional approval be granted for the proposals.

In coming to this conclusion officers have taken account of the NPPF and S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and concluded that the proposal accords with policies CS01 (sustainable linked communities), CS14 (new education facilities), CS19 (nature conservation), CS22 (pollution), CS28 (transport considerations) and CS34 (planning application considerations) of the Core Strategy of Plymouth's Local Development Framework 2007, policies SPT2 (sustainable linked communities), DEV1 (Protecting health and amenity); DEV2 (Air, water, soil, noise and land), DEV28 (Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation) and DEV31 (Specific provisions relating to transport) of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan and national guidance.

14. Recommendation

In respect of the application dated 14.02.2018 it is recommended to Grant Conditionally

15. Conditions / Reasons

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

1 **CONDITION: APPROVED PLANS**

Site Plan RAD BPC XX XX DR A 000 001 - received 12/01/18

Existing and Proposed Floor Plans RAD BPC XX XX DR A 021 0001 - received 12/01/18

Block Plan RAD BPC XX XX DR A 061 001 - received 12/01/18

Proposed Fence - Visualisations 24052018 - received 24/05/18

Reason:

For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of good planning, in accordance with policy CS34 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007, and paragraphs 61-66 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

2 **CONDITION: COMMENCE WITHIN 3 YEARS**

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years beginning from the date of this permission.

Reason:

To comply with Section 51 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

3 **CONDITION: PARKING PROVISION**

PRE-OCCUPATION

The parking and turning area shown on the approved plans shall be made available before the consented use is implemented, and thereafter that space shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking and turning of vehicles.

Reason:

To enable vehicles used by staff or visitors to be parked off the public highway so as to avoid damage to amenity and interference with the free flow of traffic on the highway in accordance with Policies CS28 and CS34 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007, policy DEV31 of the emerging Plymouth & Southwest Devon Joint Local Plan 2014 - 2034 and paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012

4 **CONDITION: TRAVEL PLAN**

PRE-OCCUPATION

The use hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Travel Plan, which seeks to encourage staff and all site users to use modes of transport other than the private car to get to and from the premises and includes measures to control the use of the permitted car parking areas; arrangements for monitoring the use of provisions available through the operation of the Travel Plan; and the name, position and contact telephone number of the person responsible for its implementation. In addition, and prior to the approved use being implemented, the developer shall provide for approval the information pack referred to in the Travel Plan. From the date of the commencement of the use the occupier shall operate the approved Travel Plan.

Reason:

The Local Planning Authority considers that such measures need to be taken in order to reduce reliance on the use of private cars (particularly single occupancy journeys) and to assist in the promotion of more sustainable travel choices in accordance with Policy CS28 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007, policy DEV31 of the emerging Plymouth & Southwest Devon Joint Local Plan 2014 - 2034 and paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

5 **CONDITION: TRAVEL PLAN MONITORING**

PRE-OCCUPATION

The use hereby permitted shall not commence until mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the travel plan have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These measures shall specifically refer to and include the involvement of elected ward members in the monitoring process. From the date of commencement of the use the occupier shall operate the approved monitoring of the travel plan.

Reason:

The Local Planning Authority considers that such measures need to be taken in order to reduce reliance on the use of private cars (particularly single occupancy journeys) and to assist in the promotion of more sustainable travel choices in accordance with Policy CS28 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007, POLICY dev31 of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan and paragraphs 32 and 34 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

6 **CONDITION: PROVISION OF SIGNS**

PRE-OCCUPATION

Prior to the first use of the pre-school and after school club signs shall be erected on the site that direct visitors and parents to park on site or within the Council Car Park off Radford Park Road and not to park on White Lady Road. The content, number and location of the signs shall be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority and the said signs shall thereafter be retained.

Reason:

To enable vehicles used by staff or visitors to be parked off the public highway so as to avoid damage to amenity and interference with the free flow of traffic on the highway in

accordance with Policies CS28 and CS34 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007, policy DEV31 of the emerging Plymouth & Southwest Devon Joint Local Plan 2014 - 2034 and paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

7 **CONDITION: REFUSE STORAGE**

PRE-OCCUPATION

Prior to the use commencing details shall be submitted of the refuse storage facilities on site, which shall thereafter be retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

In order to protect the amenity of the area, in accordance with policies CS22 and CS34 of the Core Strategy of Plymouth's Local Development Framework, policy DEV2 of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan and paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

8 CONDITION: USE RESTRICTION

The premises shall be used for a pre-school and after school club for no more than 18 child spaces operated in accordance with and only during the hours and conditions as set out in the application details, including the session times set out in the Operational Plan, and for no other purposes (including any other purpose in Class D1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

Reason:

The Local Planning Authority considers that, in the particular circumstances of the case, the use of the premises for the purpose specified is appropriate but that a proposal to use the building for any other purposes would need to be made the subject of a separate application to be considered on its merits in accordance with Policy CS34 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007, policy DEV31 of the emerging Plymouth & Southwest Devon Joint Local Plan 2014 - 2034 and paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

9 **CONDITION: SCREEN FENCE**

The height and design of the proposed screen fence shall be in accordance with details previously submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

To protect the visual qualities of the area in accordance with policy CS34 of the Core Strategy of Plymouth's Local Development Framework, policy DEV20 of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan and paragraphs 17 and 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Informatives

1 INFORMATIVE: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL NEGOTIATION

In accordance with the requirements of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 and paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way with the Applicant and has negotiated amendments to the application to enable the grant of planning permission.

2 INFORMATIVE: (£0 CIL LIABILITY) DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT ATTRACT A COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY CONTRIBUTION

The Local Planning Authority has assessed that this development, although not exempt from liability under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended), will not attract a levy payment, due to its size or nature, under our current charging schedule. The Levy is subject to change and you should check the current rates at the time planning permission first permits development (if applicable) see www.plymouth.gov.uk/cil for quidance.