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Page 1(1)

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# Flats plan for former school

**by Paul Langan**

The former Clevedon House School in Ilkley could be transformed into an assisted living complex for older people.

Development company Audley Court has been speaking to planners about the possibility of using the green belt site to build flats for retired people.

Although the plan is in the very early stages, the company, a subsidiary of the Raven Group, has confirmed that it has been speaking to planners about the deal.

The site, at the end of Ben Rhydding Drive, has been up for grabs since the school closed down in Summer. Its owners, the Licensed Trade Charity, decided to pull the plug as the school was making a loss.

The news that Audley Court was hoping to acquire the site was published on the company's website but a spokesman said that no details about the plan had yet been worked out.

Asked for more information about the plan, a company spokesman said: "We are in such an early stage we can't really answer because we are still in negotiations with the planners."

"We do need planning permission. At the moment the time scale depends on the recommendations from the planners we are waiting for at the moment."

Because the site is in the green belt, any scheme would be limited to the size of the already existing buildings which include a main building, two other large buildings, sports hall and subsidiary accommodation.

A spokesman for Ilkley planners said that the company would need to submit detailed plans of what was proposed and negotiate with planning officers.

The spokesman said: "There is a bit of negotiating to be done in terms of their proposals. If buildings already exist, green belt regulations allow them to be re-used for another purpose."

"We have had discussions with a number of interested developers. We have already got some large buildings up there - we are just talking about principles at this stage."

"We know these proposals are around but we have not seen what it means in bricks and mortar. The next stage is to see what design they come up with in terms of the number of new buildings or replacement buildings."

Ilkley parish and district councillor Anne Hawkesworth said she would not object in principle to the site being used for assisted living apartments.

Coun Hawkesworth said: "I would need to know more details about what their intentions are. We could be talking about some quite nice buildings and faci-

ties. I think it would lend itself to that. In principle it seems ok."

As well as satisfying the planners, any new owner of the site would have to get the backing and co-operation of the residents of Ben Rhydding Drive. The private road is the only access to the site and it is looked after by a committee composed of local residents.

Resident Bob Tilley said that the school was formerly the chairman of the committee and used to pay towards the maintenance of Ben Rhydding Drive. He said residents were not opposed to the site's transformation to assisted living accommodation by Audley Court.

Mr Tilley said: "The next step is that we will meet them as a drive committee and discuss safety and maintenance. We haven't had any formal discussions. I don't know whether they will get planning permission."

"As far as the residents are concerned it is the best outcome in a very uncertain situation. I am sure we can come to a good arrangement including the gritting. Residents generally are happy but there is a lot of work to be done."

Audley Court is responsible for the 71-unit assisted living development of apartments, cottages and bungalows at Hollins Hall in Harrogate and another development in Tunbridge Wells.