

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 5TH JANUARY 2011

REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(Author: Nick Moys, Principal Planning Officer (Major Projects))

ATTLEBOROUGH: PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, LAND OFF HONEYSUCKLE WAY

Applicant: Norfolk Homes Ltd

Reference: 3PL/2010/1041/F

Summary – This report concerns a planning application for residential development on the edge of Attleborough. It is recommended that the application is approved subject to conditions and a Section 106 agreement.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns an application for full planning permission for residential development on land to the north of Honeysuckle Way, Attleborough. The development proposed would comprise the erection of 66 dwellings, the construction of a new access road and the provision of two areas of public open space. A range of house types is proposed, including 9 x 1 bed flats, 5 x 2 bed flats, 14 x 2 bed dwellings, 21 x 3 bed dwellings and 17 x 4 bed dwellings. All dwellings would be either 1½ or 2 storeys. Twenty-six dwellings would be provided as affordable housing.

The application site is located on the northern fringe of the town of Attleborough, approximately 1km to the west of the town centre. The site is a broadly rectangular shaped parcel of agricultural land, extending in total to 2 hectares. The site is laid to grass and has been used previously for grazing. There a number of trees on the site, most notably on the northern boundary with Carvers Lane. The site is adjoined on three sides by existing residential development.

The application is supported by a number of technical reports including a Design & Access Statement, Flood Risk Assessment and Contamination Assessment. A Section 106 legal agreement is being drafted which includes obligations relating to the provision of affordable housing, public open space and financial contributions towards green infrastructure, education and library facilities.

2. KEY DECISION

This is not a key decision.

3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The following Council priorities are relevant to this report:

- A safe and healthy environment
- A well planned place to live and work

4. CONSULTATIONS

Attleborough Town Council has raised concerns about the impact of the development on the town's infrastructure. A contribution towards cemetery provision is also requested.

The Highway Authority has requested a number of detailed amendments to the layout and design of the proposed access roads. Some concerns have been raised about parking proposals.

The Environment Agency has raised no objection subject to conditions relating to surface water drainage and contamination.

Anglian Water has raised no objection subject to conditions relating to phasing and build rates.

Norfolk Landscape Archaeology has asked that further information be provided to enable the archaeological potential of the site to be assessed.

Norfolk Police have raised concerns about detailed aspects of the proposed layout relating to parking courts, private space and pedestrian access routes.

The Council's Housing Enabling & Projects Officer has raised no objection to the application.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer has raised some concerns that, given the current limitations of the Attleborough Waste Water Treatment Plant, the proposed development might preclude the release of other more suitable sites.

The Tree & Countryside Officer has requested additional information to enable the impact of the scheme on existing trees and biodiversity to be assessed.

At the time of writing, 10 written objections had been received, together with a petition of objection of 73 signatories. Objections raised concern conflicts with planning policy, the scale of development, effects on local character, inadequate local infrastructure, increased traffic, lack of green space, deficiencies in parking, effects of noise from the A11, loss of residential amenity and harm to wildlife interests.

5. POLICY

At a national level, the following policy documents are relevant: PPS3 'Housing', PPS5 'Planning for the Historic Environment', PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas', PPS9 'Biodiversity & Geological Conservation', PPS25 'Development and Flood Risk', PPG13 'Transport' and PPG17 'Planning for open space, sport and recreation'.

The application site falls outside the defined Settlement Boundary for Attleborough, as set out in the Proposals Maps accompanying the adopted Core Strategy (rolled forward from the outgoing Local Plan). The following policies contained in the Core Strategy & Development Control Policies DPD are relevant: Policy CP 14 (Sustainable Rural Communities), Policy DC2 (Housing), Policy DC4 (Affordable Housing), Policy DC11 (Open Space), Policy DC12 (Trees), Policy DC14 (Energy Generation and Efficiency) and Policy DC16 (Design).

7. ASSESSMENT

The principal issues raised by the application concern: i) planning policy matters, ii) the effect of the development on local character and amenities, iii) ecology, iv) residential amenity, and v) traffic safety.

Planning policy

The application site lies outside the Settlement Boundary for Attleborough and accordingly the proposal would conflict with Core Strategy Policies DC2 and CP14, and countryside protection policies set out in PPS7.

Notwithstanding this conflict with countryside protection policy, the proposed development must also be assessed against national planning policy for housing. PPS 3 states that where a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land cannot be demonstrated (there is currently a 1.7 year supply in Breckland), favourable consideration should be given to housing proposals if they address satisfactorily PPS3 policies and development criteria. In this respect, matters such as design quality, housing mix, environmental sustainability, the suitability of the site for housing and the efficient use of land are particularly relevant.

The proposal would address satisfactorily a number of the criteria set out in PPS 3 paragraph 69. The development would be closely related physically to the existing built form of the town and would be within easy reach of the town centre and local facilities/services. The proposed development would not result in a significant visual intrusion into the rural setting of the town (see below). The proposed development would provide a good mix of house sizes, including affordable housing, in an attractive residential scheme. Satisfactory access can be provided and policy requirements relating to recreation and renewable energy would be addressed. The proposal would not conflict with the overall spatial vision for the area which envisages significant growth in Attleborough.

In terms of the short term delivery of housing, it is noted that, should permission be granted, the applicant intends to start work on the proposal following completion of a partly constructed development on adjacent land. The stipulation proposed by Anglian Water not to occupy any dwelling prior to March 2012 is not considered to be a significant obstacle to delivery given the likely lead in time and construction period for a development of this scale. Anglian Water has stated that approval of the proposed development would not preclude other schemes coming forward in advance of the major infrastructure upgrades proposed for 2016. Limited capacity at the Attleborough WwTW will continue to be a significant constraint on housing growth in the area.

Two areas of public open space are proposed as part of the development covering 0.29 hectares in total. This equates to 81% of the total open space provision required by Core Strategy Policy DC11. In order to compensate for this shortfall and in lieu of the provision of children's play equipment, a financial contribution of £28,880 is proposed. This could be directed towards improvements in recreation/play facilities in the immediate locality or towards other green infrastructure requirements.

A range of measures are proposed to reduce energy use and to incorporate renewable energy technologies. It is estimated that in combination these will produce savings of at least 15%. Compliance with the requirement of Policy DC14 to provide 10% of energy requirements from renewable sources could be secured by a suitably worded planning condition.

Local character

Careful consideration has been given to the likely impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

In terms of the likely impact on the wider rural setting of the town, it is considered that the proposal would have only a limited effect. The site is generally well screened and the development would not be noticeable beyond the immediate environs of the site. Being sandwiched between existing modern housing development and Carvers Lane, the scheme could reasonably be regarded as a 'rounding off' of the existing housing development.

Whilst the proposed development would inevitably result in a noticeable change to the character and appearance of the site's immediate surroundings, it is considered that the layout and design of the proposed development is generally well conceived. The established pattern of suburban frontage development on adjacent roads would be continued into the development site, albeit in a slightly different form and with a greater mix of house types. The overall density of the scheme (33 DPH) would be compatible with the character of the surrounding area. House types would be traditional in design with external materials reflecting local building patterns. Street scenes would have a good sense of visual continuity with visual interest and incident. Parking would not be unduly dominant visually, being located mainly to the sides of houses and in enclosed parking courts.

The areas of open space proposed would enhance the appearance of the development, providing focal points and a sense of identity. Extending an existing area of open space into the development would help to integrate the scheme with its surroundings, as well as improving the overall appearance of the open space. The area of open space proposed adjacent to Carvers Lane would help to maintain the semi-rural feel of this area and provide a transition between the built up area and open land beyond.

In response to concerns raised by Norfolk Police, a number of detailed revisions have been made to the scheme. These include the addition of windows to gables to improve surveillance of paths and open spaces and measures to enhance security in parking courts.

Ecology

Given its previous agricultural use and proximity to existing development, it is considered that the site is likely to have only limited ecological interest. Existing trees and hedging along Carvers Lane are the main feature of interest and these would be retained. A habitat survey has been requested in order to enable the ecological value of the site to be fully understood and to enable biodiversity enhancement proposals to be drawn up. A verbal update will be provided on this issue.

Residential amenity

Given the scale of development proposed and the site's location adjacent to existing housing, some impact on the amenities of surrounding residential properties is considered to be inevitable due to visual effects and additional activity levels. However, it is considered that the scheme has generally been designed so as to avoid significant impact on neighbours. New dwellings would be orientated to avoid direct overlooking of neighbouring houses and gardens and reasonable separation distances would be maintained generally. Existing boundary hedging would be retained for its screening effect. The flats over garages proposed in the two parking courts would, to some extent, detract from the visual amenities of neighbouring properties due to their close proximity to boundaries and the built up appearance created. However, these 1½ storey units have been designed to avoid overlooking and their visual impact would be softened by the retention of existing boundary hedging. Some additional disturbance and loss of amenity would result from traffic

generated by the proposal, most notably affecting properties on Bracken Drive and Honeysuckle Way closest to the site. However, it is not considered that these effects would be sufficiently harmful as to justify refusal of permission

Traffic

Concerns have been raised locally about the adequacy of existing estate roads to cater for the additional traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development. Notwithstanding these concerns, it is considered that the approach roads are of a suitable standard in terms of width and alignment to serve the proposed development. A 20mph zone would be extended off site to include Bracken Drive and Hazel Way. The Highway Authority has raised no concerns about road capacity. Detailed amendments to the layout of the development are proposed to address concerns raised by the Highway Authority about parking and road design.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the submission of satisfactory proposals for wildlife protection and enhancement, it is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to appropriate planning conditions and the completion of the Section 106 agreement. Recommended conditions would relate to: landscaping, tree protection, biodiversity enhancements, boundary treatments, site levels, archaeology, access and parking details, drainage details, contamination, phasing, build rates, construction management and renewable energy.