

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 14th MAY 2012

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMISSIONING

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

ATTLEBOROUGH: PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL/EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT, LONDON ROAD

Applicant: Taylor Wimpey Ltd

References: 3PL/2011/0528/H

DERERRED ITEM REPORT

1. This report concerns a planning application relating to a mixed use residential and employment development on land off London Road, Attleborough. This hybrid application seeks full permission for 375 dwellings and associated roads and open spaces, and outline permission for the development of 3.9 hectares of land for employment purposes.
2. These proposals were considered by Planning Committee on 11th April 2012, when it was resolved to defer the application to enable further consideration to be given to transport matters, in consultation with the applicant and the Highway Authority. Concerns about the potential amenity impact of 2½ storey houses on London Road were also raised.

Transport matters

3. The access strategy which underpins the proposed development has a number of key components, namely:
 - § the creation of three new accesses onto London Road, two of which would serve the proposed housing;
 - § improvement works to London Road to reduce traffic speed and improve pedestrian facilities along the site frontage;
 - § off-site junction improvements to mitigate effects of increased traffic on the town centre gyratory system; and
 - § the implementation of travel planning measures to encourage sustainable transport options.
4. This strategy has been drawn up by the applicant in consultation with the Highway Authority, and a number of changes have been made during the course of the application at the request of the County Council. The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the planning application as amended.
Number and location of accesses
5. The new accesses, as currently proposed, comply with relevant design standards, and have been located to provide appropriate visibility splays and adequate spacing between junctions. Nevertheless, these proposals have been re-examined in the light of the objections raised by local residents on traffic safety and amenity grounds.
6. Consideration has been given, firstly, to whether the proposed accesses could be repositioned to reduce impacts on neighbours. However, no other more suitable locations have been identified. Pairing the proposed accesses with existing road junctions at Dodds Road and Keeling Way (with four-arm mini-roundabouts) could reduce direct amenity impacts on existing residents, but this option has been ruled out on traffic safety grounds on the advice of the Highway Authority. As noted previously, whilst the proposed development

would inevitably have some adverse effects on the amenities of nearby residents, it is not considered that these effects are so significant that planning permission should be withheld.

7. It has also been suggested locally that the whole development should be served by a single point of access. This would involve the construction of a new roundabout junction on London Road, with an access road running through the employment land to the housing. An emergency access further along London Road would also be required. This arrangement would obviously represent a significant change to the application, and would require the development masterplan to be re-considered in order to ensure that housing and employment elements could be developed in a complementary way. Whilst it is not inconceivable that an acceptable design solution could be found, it is not considered that this access arrangement would represent a cost effective solution to anticipated traffic impacts (as required by the NPPF). This is because the applicant's current access proposals would accommodate fully anticipated traffic impacts without the additional expense of a new roundabout. It is understood that a new roundabout would cost approximately £1,000,000 to construct, compared to around £155,000 for three simple priority junctions. This access solution would also increase up-front infrastructure costs, putting additional pressure on the overall viability of the development and potentially threatening other developer contributions.

Off-site highway improvements

8. In response to concerns raised by the Highway Authority, a scheme of measures is proposed to give the London Road site frontage a more overtly residential character. This is intended to help secure compliance with a proposed 30mph speed limit and to reflect national guidance on road design, as set in 'Manual for Streets'. London Road previously formed part of the A11 trunk road, and so is rather 'over-engineered' for its current usage. Proposed measures include the creation of a 'gateway feature', reduced widths, pedestrian crossings, wide footways/cycle paths and street tree planting. It is considered that these changes would bring safety and amenity benefits to the area generally, as well as helping to provide safe access to the proposed development. As altered, the road would retain ample capacity to cater for traffic flows.
9. Measures are also proposed to mitigate the impact of increased traffic from the development on the town centre. Projected traffic flows suggest up to a 7% increase in movements by 2021 from the proposed housing, and up to an 18% increase for the development as a whole. The applicant proposes to change the traffic priority at the junction of High Street and Connaught Road to favour traffic approaching on High Street. Traffic flows from this direction are already higher than from Connaught Road, resulting in queuing traffic. The proposed change in priority would help to address these existing problems, as well as helping to accommodate increased traffic from the development approaching from High Street/London Road. However, additional delays would be caused to traffic approaching on Connaught Road, which is a higher status road (B1077), and so this option is not supported by the Highway Authority. The County Council has instead recommended that the junction should be signalised in order to mitigate the impact of additional traffic. This work would be required before the development of the employment land or the occupation of the 150th dwelling. As an alternative to the proposed junction improvements, the applicant has indicated a willingness to provide a commuted sum payment in lieu of the proposed junction improvements, if it was considered that a contribution to a wider scheme of

traffic measures would be more appropriate. This option is not favoured by the Highway Authority, however.

10. In relation to traffic impact, the NPPF indicates that permission for new development should only be refused on transport grounds where any residual impacts would be severe. No such residual impacts are anticipated here. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a significantly adverse effect on traffic movements in the town centre, subject to the completion of the improvements outlined above, including the signalisation of the High Street/Connaught Road junction.

Residential amenity

11. Concerns have been raised about potential overlooking from the 2½ storey houses proposed on London Road. In total, seven such properties are proposed on this frontage, the remaining ten units being 2 storey houses. In response to Members' concerns, additional information has been provided in the form of cross-sections to enable the likely effects of the development to be assessed. Separation distances between the proposed houses on London Road and existing dwellings would generally be around 40-50 metres. The shortest distance between a 2½ storey house and an existing dwelling would be 39 metres, albeit with a rather oblique view. Separation distances between principal elevations of between 21 and 24 metres are generally considered to be sufficient to maintain reasonable privacy levels depending on the context. Given that considerably greater separation would be achieved here, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in any significant adverse effects on residential amenity due to overlooking.

Conclusion

12. As set out in the original committee report, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable, and is recommended for approval.
13. **RECOMMENDATION:** It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions and a section 106 agreement. Conditions recommended would include approval of reserved matters, landscaping, design, tree protection, railway noise mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, construction management, access, off-site highway improvements, surface water drainage, groundwater protection and contamination investigation. A section 106 agreement is being drafted which includes obligations relating to affordable housing and on-site open space, and financial contributions towards education and library services.