

BRECKLAND COUNCIL - PLANNING COMMITTEE - 11-04-2012

ITEM	1	RECOMMENDATION : APPROVAL
REF NO:	3PL/2011/0528/H	CASE OFFICER: Nick Moys
LOCATION:	ATTLEBOROUGH Land at London Road	APPN TYPE: Hybrid
APPLICANT:	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd c/o agent	POLICY: Part In Set Bndry
AGENT:	DLP Planning Ltd 4 Abbey Court Fraser Road	ALLOCATION: No Allocation Saved Employment All
PROPOSAL:	Erection of 375 dwellings with assoc. parking, garages & landscaping (Full) & Outline for Employment Development	CONS AREA: N TPO: N
		LB GRADE: N

KEY ISSUES

Principle of development
Planning policy
Development viability
Local character
Residential amenity
Transport
Drainage

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

* A mixed residential and employment development is proposed on land at London Road, Attleborough. This hybrid application includes a detailed scheme for 375 dwellings, together with associated access roads and public open space/allotments and an outline scheme for the development of 3.9 hectares of land for employment purposes, with all matters are reserved except means of access.

* The proposed residential development would occupy a net area of 10.6 hectares, and would comprise 25 x 1 bed dwellings, 43 x 2 bed dwellings, 238 x 3 bed dwellings, 41 x 4 bed dwellings and 28 x 5 bed dwellings. A total of 94 units (25%) would be provided as affordable housing, including 8 wheelchair bungalows. A number of areas of open space are proposed (2.4 hectares) providing children's play areas, amenity green spaces, allotments and areas for sport, including a tennis court and kick about areas. In addition 1 hectare of allotment space would be provided. Two new accesses are proposed on London Road to serve the housing development.

* The proposed employment development would provide for up to 12,000 square metres of floorspace for uses falling within Use Class B1 (light industrial/offices) and B8 (warehousing/distribution). Indicative plans show a range of units accessed off a central road, with screening to the adjacent residential areas. A new access onto London Road is proposed to serve the employment development.

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* The application is supported by various technical reports and evidence, including a Planning Statement, Design & Access Statement, Statement of Community Engagement, Archaeological Assessment, Arboricultural Assessment, Ecological Assessment, Landscape Strategy, Flood Risk Assessment, Foul Drainage Strategy, Contamination Report, Noise Impact Assessment, Interim Travel Plan and Renewable Energy Report.

* Amendments to the detailed layout and design of the proposed development have been made during the course of consideration of the application.

* A draft section 106 agreement is under preparation. Obligations contained therein would relate to affordable housing, public open space, and financial contributions towards schools and libraries.

SITE AND LOCATION

The application site is located on the western edge of Attleborough between the London Road and the A11 Attleborough bypass. The site is irregular in shape and extends to some 18.6 hectares in total. The site is currently in agricultural use. The site is adjoined to the north-east and south-east by existing housing development. Existing development to the south-west is more sporadic and includes residential and commercial uses. The surrounding area is predominantly, but not exclusively, residential in character.

EIA REQUIRED

No

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

No relevant site history

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The following National Planning Guidance, the adopted Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies, and the adopted Site Specific Policies and Proposals Document including the Proposals Map have been taken into consideration in the determination of this application.

PPG13	Transport
PPG17	Planning for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation
PPG24	Planning and Noise
PPS01	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS03	Housing
PPS04	Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS05	Planning for the Historic Environment
PPS09	Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPS25	Development and Flood Risk

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CP.01	Housing
CP.03	Employment
CP.04	Infrastructure
CP.06	Green Infrastructure
CP.11	Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape
DC.01	Protection of Amenity
DC.02	Principles of New Housing
DC.04	Affordable Housing Principles
DC.06	General Employment Areas
DC.11	Open Space
DC.12	Trees and Landscape
DC.14	Energy Efficiency
DC.16	Design

Any implications arising from the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) will be reported verbally to Committee.

CONSULTATIONS

ATTLEBOROUGH TC -

No Objections. Comments: Whilst noting that the developers are including allotment and amenity land as part of the development, the Council feel that there needs to be specific allocations through S106 contributions in relation to schools, health and other infrastructure provision in the town. This site should be included in the Attleborough Masterplan.

Further comments have been received from the Town Council re-stating the importance of concerns raised previously about the cumulative effects of proposed developments on local infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

No objection subject to conditions relating to surface water drainage, foul drainage and land contamination.

NORFOLK LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY

The results of an archaeological desk-based assessment and geophysical survey have been submitted with the planning application. The geophysical survey has revealed several phases of field systems and enclosures at the proposed development site. Although shown on the 19th century tithe map, the date of the earliest phase of field systems and the associated farmstead in the northwest corner of the site are not known and it is possible that they could be of medieval origin. There is also potential that other heritage assets with archaeological interest (buried archaeological remains) of a type not conducive to detection through magnetometry may be present at the site. In view of this it is necessary that the results of the geophysical survey are supported by a programme of trial trenching. We therefore ask that the applicant be asked to withdraw this application and re-submit with the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching.

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ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON/CRIME REDUCTION OFFICER

Objection on the grounds that insufficient consideration has been given to designing out crime. The proposed layout is considered to be excessively permeable and to rely too heavily on parking courts that are vulnerable to crime.

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS

No objection subject to planning conditions relating to access construction and off-site highway improvements. Travel Plan contributions are also sought through the section 106 agreement.

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

No objection subject to contributions being secured through a section 106 agreement towards education (£1,731,138) and libraries (£116,250), and conditions requiring the provision of fire hydrants.

TREE & COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER

No objection subject to conditions relating to landscaping, tree protection and biodiversity measures.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Comments in respect of land supply, Action Plan, infrastructure, employment provision

STRATEGIC HOUSING

No objections were raised to the original proposal to provide 40% affordable housing, subject to further discussions on housing mix, tenure and phasing. Further comments following receipt of the District Valuer's will be reported verbally.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS

No objection subject to conditions relating to noise mitigation measures, drainage proposals and construction management.

CONTAMINATED LAND OFFICER

No objection subject to conditions.

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HIGHWAYS AGENCY

No objection.

ANGLIAN WATER SERVICE

No objection subject to conditions

EAST HARLING INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

The IDB OBJECTS to the application on the grounds that no surface water drainage details are provided. The site is partly within the IDB District, and will drain to the IDB watercourse. The surface water drainage discharge from the site will require IDB consent.

Following further correspondence with the applicant's agents, the IDB has confirmed that it wishes to maintain its objection.

STREETSCENE - No Comments Received

ASSET MANAGEMENT - No Comments Received

REPRESENTATIONS

* Objections have been received from a number of local residents. At the time of writing, 19 objections had been received. Many of the objections raised relate to concerns about the impact of the development on local infrastructure, including local road, sewerage systems, schools and medical facilities. It is argued that further housing growth should be delayed pending the adoption of the Attleborough and Snetterton Heath Area Action Plan, so that a comprehensive view may be taken and to ensure that all development contributes to improvements to local infrastructure. Other objections raised relate to increased traffic and congestion, loss of trees/hedging and harm to residential amenity. Particular amenity concerns include potential disturbance from employment uses and sports areas, and disturbance from traffic due to the location of the proposed new accesses.

* Objections have been received from the Attleborough Community Team (ACT) on grounds of policy and scale. It is contended that piecemeal development approved in advance of the Area Action Plan will not contribute fully to addressing local infrastructure problems, and will, by reducing the scale of future development, call into question the ability of subsequent growth to deliver required infrastructure.

ASSESSMENT NOTES

* This application is referred to Planning Committee as a major application.

Principle of development

* The site is considered to be suitable in principle for development for housing and employment. Whilst the proposed housing falls outside the defined Settlement Boundary for Attleborough, when account is taken of the overall strategy for growth in the town and the current housing land supply shortfall in the District, it is considered that the balance of arguments favours the proposal.

The proposed employment development site is allocated for employment use in the Core Strategy Proposals Map.

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Planning policy

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

* Notwithstanding this conflict with local settlement policy, the proposed development must also be assessed against national planning policy for housing. PPS3 states that where a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land cannot be demonstrated, favourable consideration should be given to housing proposals provided that they address satisfactorily other PPS3 policy requirements and criteria. Relevant policy criteria include the suitability of the site for housing, design quality, housing mix, environmental sustainability and compatibility with the overall spatial vision for the area. Breckland currently has a 3.7 year supply of housing land.

* It is considered that the proposed development would generally comply with PPS3 policies and requirements. The site is considered to be suitable for housing, being well related to existing development and within easy reach of local services and facilities. The development would not compromise unduly the rural setting of the town, but would be consistent with the generally residential character of the area. The proposed development would provide a good mix of housing, including affordable housing, albeit a lower level than targeted in Policy DC4. Local infrastructure can accommodate the development, with developer-funded improvements where necessary.

* Importantly, the proposed development would be in broad conformity with the spatial vision for the area, which provides for significant growth in the town up to 2026, including 4,000 new dwellings and 1,500-2,000 new jobs. Whilst this spatial strategy remains to be developed further through the preparation of the Attleborough and Snetterton Heath Area Action Plan (ASHAAP), it is not considered that the current proposals would be premature. The ASHAAP is still at a relatively early stage of preparation, with an Issues and Options document having been published for consultation in late 2010. Given that a preferred direction for growth has not yet been identified and that a significant amount of development would remain to be allocated even if the current proposal was approved, it is not considered that an objection on prematurity grounds in relation to the ASHAAP could be sustained.

* Given that the case for development relies to an extent on the need to address current housing land shortfalls, it is necessary to consider when the development is likely to be delivered. The applicant has indicated that should permission be granted, the intention would be to commence construction work as soon as possible. The fact that the applicant is a national house builder with a proven track record and the capacity to carry out such projects allows some weight to be given to these assurances. In addition, there are no known site specific constraints that would prevent a start on development in the short term, whilst potential solutions to wider infrastructure issues have been identified.

* The proposed development incorporates a number of areas of public open space, including amenity green spaces, children's play areas, landscaped buffers and areas for sport (tennis court/kick about areas). These proposals would meet fully the requirements of Policy DC11. It is also proposed to provide land for allotments, which would be transferred to the Town Council. This provision exceeds the requirements of Policy DC11, but would meet an identified need in the area.

* A renewable energy report submitted with the application indicates how 10% of the energy requirements could be met from renewable sources in line with Core Strategy Policy DC14. It is recommended that fully detailed proposals are required by condition.

* The proposed employment development would comply with Core Strategy Policy which allocates the site for this purpose. This is a longstanding commitment and former Local Plan E3 has been saved by the Core Strategy.

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Development viability

* It is proposed to provide 25% of the development as affordable housing. The applicant contends that, due to current market conditions, the provision of 40% affordable housing, in line with Core Strategy Policy DC4, would not produce a viable development. A full viability appraisal has been submitted to substantiate this contention. Independent advice on this matter has been sought from the District Valuer, who has confirmed that a policy compliant scheme would be unviable. The District Valuer goes on to suggest that the applicant's offer of a 25% contribution be accepted. On this basis, it is recommended that, subject to agreement on mix and tenure, an exception to normal policy be made in this instance. This would be subject to a review mechanism being included in the Section 106 agreement to enable viability to be re-assessed during later phases of the scheme.

Local character

* Careful consideration has been given to the likely impact of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Whilst the development would extend the built up area of the town onto open agricultural land, it would not result in a significant visual intrusion. The site is bounded to the south and east by existing residential development. Sporadic development continues along London Road to the west. To the north the A11 provides a significant physical break between the site and open countryside beyond. The Council's Landscape Character Assessment identifies the western edge of Attleborough as having relatively low sensitivity to changes. Views of the development would generally be limited to the immediate environs of the site. In this context, the development can reasonably be viewed as a natural extension to this part of the town.

* In terms of more localised impacts, the development would result in a noticeable change to the appearance of the immediately surrounding area. From London Road the views of hedging and across open farmland would be replaced by built development. However, the form of development proposed would reflect established patterns of building on London Road, with detached housing set back from the road, with new landscaping to replace previous hedging lost to make way for access works. From the end of West Carr Road and the A11 bridge, views would again change significantly, but the inclusion of landscaped open spaces around the edge of the development would help to integrate it with the surroundings. Views from this direction are already dominated to a large extent by the A11. The proposed allotments and sports pitches would provide a buffer between the development and Hillsend Lane, which has a more rural character. An open space on London Road would protect the open setting of an adjacent Listed house. The overall density of housing proposed at 35 DPH is considered to be compatible with the general character of the area.

Design quality

* The layout and design of the proposed housing development follows widely accepted urban design principles, and would create an attractive residential environment. The scheme is laid out using perimeter blocks to create well-defined streets and spaces, with a clear distinction between public and private areas. Street widths and hard/soft landscaping treatments are varied to create visual interest and areas of different characters. Areas of open space, small squares and mews areas would punctuate the street pattern, providing visual focal points and helping to create a sense of place. Local identity would be reinforced by the use of distinctive buildings at key locations. Proposed house designs would be broadly traditional in form with external materials reflecting the local palette. Car parking is generally well designed, with most parking provided in curtilage and away from street frontages. Where parking courts are proposed, they are small, private and overlooked. Parking to the front of properties is minimised and well integrated with the street design.

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Residential amenity

* Given the scale of development proposed and the site's location adjacent to existing housing areas, some impact on the amenities of neighbours is inevitable. However, it is considered that the scheme has been generally designed to avoid any significant adverse effects. Where the new development adjoins existing properties on West Carr Road, dwellings have been orientated to avoid direct overlooking or limited to single storey bungalows. Housing on the London Road frontage would be set well back from the road minimising its impact on properties opposite.

* Concerns have been raised locally about the location of the proposed new accesses and the potential effects of traffic noise and lights on existing properties. Whilst these concerns are acknowledged it is not considered that the effects of the development are such that permission should be withheld. The properties most affected potentially are either set back from the road or have the benefit of some screening from fencing or landscaping. Traffic movements from the proposed housing would be split between the two proposed accesses and must be considered in the context of existing traffic levels along London Road. The scope to relocate the proposed accesses is limited by highway safety requirements.

* The potential effects of noise on future residents, both from traffic on the A11/London Road and from the proposed employment area, have been assessed. Based on noise surveys undertaken, buffer zones are proposed to both the London Road and the A11 to ensure that housing would be located outside the areas of highest noise exposure. Further noise mitigation measures are proposed to the design and screening of houses in the most sensitive locations, the details of which would be secured by planning condition. Screening would also be provided around the proposed employment area and uses would be limited to Use Classes B1 (offices/light industry) and B8 (storage). The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection to the planning application subject to appropriate conditions.

Transport

* It is considered that the surrounding road network is adequate to cater for the increased traffic likely to be generated by the development, provided that proposed highway improvements are completed. A scheme of off-site highway improvements has been drawn up in consultation with the Highway Authority, including works to reduce the impact of traffic on this section of London Road by extending the 30mph speed limit, narrowing the carriageway width, and providing a new gateway feature, pedestrian crossing facilities and a new footway/cycleway. The impact of the proposed development on traffic conditions over a wider area, including the town centre gyratory system, has also been considered. In order to mitigate the likely impact of additional traffic on the town centre, alterations are proposed to the junction of London Road with Exchange Street/Connaught Road. These would initially consist of changes to traffic priority, but signalisation would also be required in order to address increased traffic from the employment area. The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the application, subject to these works being carried out.

* The proposed new accesses onto London Road and internal road networks have been designed to meet NCC Highways standards. Parking provision would accord with current standards, with an average of 2.3 spaces per dwelling.

Drainage

* The existing foul water sewerage network has limited capacity to accept additional flows from the proposed development. In addition, improvements to the Attleborough STW are required to address capacity issues and to meet water quality standards. The applicant has commissioned Anglian Water to carry out appraisals of the existing system and to identify a satisfactory wastewater strategy for the development. On the basis of the work undertaken it is considered that the proposed development can be accommodated subject to upgrading works being

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undertaken. Anglian Water and the Environment Agency have raised no objection to the planning application, subject to detailed proposals for upgrading works being agreed and implemented.

* The submitted Flood Risk Assessment proposes to dispose of surface water from the development to nearby drainage ditches. Surface water flows would be attenuated to equivalent greenfield rates by on-site storage, attenuation ponds and swales. Following the receipt of additional information, the Environment Agency withdrew its initial objection and confirmed that it was satisfied with the overall drainage strategy. Conditions are recommended requiring detailed proposals for disposal of both surface water and foul water to be agreed before development proceeds. The East Harling Internal Drainage Board has, however, maintained its objection to the development. Whilst the IDB acknowledges that the Environment Agency's position should take precedence, it does not consider that the proposals represent the best solution for the area. Whilst the concerns of the IDB are acknowledged, it is not considered that an objection on drainage grounds could be sustained.

Other matters

Norfolk Landscape Archaeology has recommended that the application is withdrawn to enable further archaeological investigations to be undertaken. In response, the applicant's archaeologist contends that the desk based assessment and geophysical surveys undertaken provide sufficient information to enable permission to be granted with conditions requiring further archaeological evaluation. The submitted archaeological report suggests that the site has limited potential for archaeological interest. In the circumstances it is not considered that a refusal of permission would be justified and these matters can properly be addressed through planning conditions.

Conclusion

* The application site is considered to be suitable for residential/employment development. Although the site is outside the Settlement Boundary, it would relate well to the existing development and would make a positive contribution to the delivery of housing and employment land in the town. Given the current shortfall of housing land in the District, it is considered that the balance of arguments favours the proposals. It is not considered that a refusal on grounds of prematurity in relation to the ASHAAP could be sustained, given the Plan is at a relatively early stage of preparation. Local concerns about infrastructure capacity are acknowledged, but these concerns must be set against the fact that the proposed development would provide significant financial contributions towards education and library services, as well as a programme of off-site highway improvements and improvements to the sewerage system. In this instance a lower level of affordable housing would be justified due to viability constraints. The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of its design and relationship with neighbouring properties.

* It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions and a Section 106 agreement. Recommended conditions would include external materials, hard/soft landscaping, tree protection, biodiversity enhancements, employment area master plan, archaeology, contamination, surface water drainage, foul drainage, construction management, noise mitigation, access road construction, off-site highway improvements, parking and implementation of the Travel Plan. The proposed Section 106 agreement would include obligations relating to affordable housing (including a review mechanism for later phases), public open space provision, contributions towards library services and public transport and the marketing of the employment land.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Permission

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CONDITIONS

3920 Conditions to be confirmed