

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 19th MAY 2008

REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER

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

CARBROOKE: PROPOSED NURSING CARE HOME, FORMER RAF WATTON TECHNICAL SITE

Applicant: Zest Partnership

Reference: 3PL/2008/0304/D

Summary – This report concerns a planning application for a nursing home on land at the former RAF Watton Technical Site. In its current form the proposal is considered to be unacceptable.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns an application for approval of reserved matters for a nursing home on land at the former RAF Watton Technical Site. Plans submitted with the original application proposed a 70 bedroom nursing home within a 3-storey block. Amended plans have been submitted subsequently showing a scaled down proposal for 50 bed nursing home and a separate 12 bedroom specialist care unit.

The application site forms part of the former RAF Watton Technical Site. The site is located approximately 2km to the east of Watton town centre and falls within the Parish of Carbrooke. The surrounding area has a mixed character, with both commercial and residential uses. The site is irregular in shape and extends to approximately 0.6 hectare. The site has a frontage onto Norwich Road.

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

Carbrooke Parish Council has raised no objection to the application, noting that the proposal would contribute to local employment opportunities. Concerns are raised, however, to drainage issues and the proximity of the development to the road.

The Highway Authority has requested that further information be provided about staffing levels in order that parking provision may be assessed.

The Council's Assistant Tree & Countryside Officer has requested that a tree survey be provided, together with an arboricultural assessment.

Norfolk Police have made comments about boundary treatments and defensible space, and the security of access arrangements.

The Council's Planning Policy Officer has raised no objection.

Natural England has raised no objection to the application.

A letter of objection has been received from a local medical practice raising concerns about increased pressure on medical services in the area.

5. SITE HISTORY

Outline planning permission for a local centre, employment land and housing was granted in June 2006.

6. ASSESSMENT

The proposed development of the site as a nursing home is considered to be acceptable in principle. The site, together with an adjacent parcel of land, has outline permission for a local centre. The terms of the outline permission include residential care homes within the range of acceptable local centre uses, together with shops, services and housing. Detailed consent was granted recently on the remainder of the local centre land for a mixed development of shops and flats.

The main issues raised by the application concern matters of detail, including: i) the scale and design of the proposed development, ii) its impact on existing trees, and iii) the likely effects on adjacent residential properties.

Scale/design

The application site occupies a prominent position adjacent to the one of the two principal entrances to the former RAF Watton Technical Site. In this context, it is important that new development respects the established qualities of this part of Norwich Road and contributes positively to the appearance of the area.

The scale of original proposal for 70 bed nursing home was considered to be out of keeping with other buildings in the locality and likely to result in an overdevelopment of the site. Revised proposals for a scaled down development have been tabled. Whilst the amended scheme represents an improvement over the original proposal, particularly in the way that the massing of the building is handled, some significant concerns remain about the overall scale of the development and the relationship of the nursing home building to its surroundings. The current proposal is considered to be unacceptable in this respect. Discussions with the applicant are on-going in relation to this matter.

Trees

The application site includes a number of trees, some of which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Based on the information submitted to date, it has not been demonstrated satisfactorily that the development proposed would not result in the loss of important trees. The current proposal is considered to be unacceptable in this respect. Discussions with the applicant are on-going in relation to this matter.

Residential amenity

The application is adjoined on its eastern side by a number of residential properties. As currently proposed, the proposed nursing home could give rise to overlooking of private garden areas and appear rather overbearing visually. It is not clear at present whether these effects could be mitigated adequately by the retention of existing trees. Discussions with the applicant are on-going in relation to this matter.

7. RECOMMENDATION

In its present form the proposed development is recommended for refusal on grounds of scale, design, harm to existing trees and loss of amenity to neighbouring residents. However, revised proposals are being sought with a view to overcoming these objections. The results of on-going negotiations will be reported verbally.