

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 19th MAY 2008

REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER

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

SWAFFHAM: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, CASTLE ACRE ROAD

Applicant: ABEL HOMES LIMITED

Reference: 3PL/2008/0345/F

Summary – This report concerns a planning application for the residential development on a land off Castle Acre Road in Swaffham. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions and a section 106 agreement.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns an application for full planning permission for residential development on land off Castle Acre Road, Swaffham. The development proposed comprises the construction of 51 dwellings, together with associated roads and public open space. House types would range from 1 bedroom apartments to 5 bedroom houses, with 15 of the units provided as affordable housing. New vehicular accesses are proposed onto Castle Acre Road. The application is supported by a number of technical reports, including a Design & Access Statement, a Flood Risk Assessment, a Tree Survey, a Protected Species Survey and Contamination Report. Minor amendments have been made to the proposals following negotiations and in the light of responses from consultees.

The application site is located to the north of Swaffham town centre, within an area of mixed residential and commercial uses. The site is rectangular in shape, extends to 1.48 hectares and is bounded on three sides by established housing. The site was partially developed in the 1960s as a factory, but has most recently been used as a turkey hatchery. The site also includes a bungalow.

A draft section 106 agreement has been prepared to support the application which provides for the provision of affordable housing (15 dwellings), the provision of public open space and for the payment of financial contributions to recreational provision (£11,900), schools (£128,084) and library services (£3,060).

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

Swaffham Town Council has objected to the application, raising concerns about the number of access points proposed onto Castle Acre Road and about drainage problems in the locality.

The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the application, but has asked that a number of detailed amendments are made to the layout of access roads and parking areas.

Norfolk County Council has requested that financial contributions be made to local schools (£128,084) and library services (£3,060).

Comments from the Environment Agency are awaited.

Natural England has raised no objection to the application

The Council's Tree & Countryside Officer has raised no objection to the application, subject to the retention of the existing pond and its management for wildlife value.

The Council's Housing Enabling & Projects Officer has raised no objection provided that 30% of the dwellings are provided as affordable housing.

Letters of objection have been received from a number of local residents, raising concerns about extra traffic, loss of amenity and existing drainage problems in the area. At the time of writing, 3 letters of objection and 1 letter of support had been received.

5. POLICY

The application site falls within the Settlement Boundary for Swaffham. Relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies include Policies HOU.2, REC.2 and TRA.5. The guidance set out in *Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance for Norfolk* is also relevant.

At a national level, policies set out in PPS 3 *Housing* are particularly relevant. Policies contained in PPS 9 *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*, PPG 13 *Transport*, PPG 17 *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*, PPS 23 *Planning and Pollution Control* and PPS 25 *Development and Flood Risk* have also been taken into account.

6. ASSESSMENT

The principal issues raised by the application concern: i) the extent to which the proposals would accord with local and national planning policy relating to housing development, ii) the likely impact of the development on the character of the area and local amenity, iii) open space provision, iv) the effects of the scheme on local ecology, v) highway safety, and vi) drainage.

Policy

It is considered that the redevelopment of the site for housing would accord in general terms with national and local planning policy, as set out in PPS 3 and saved Local Plan Policy HOU.2. The proposal would provide for the redevelopment of presently relatively under-used brownfield land, located in an existing built up area and situated within easy reach of local facilities and with good transport links. The density of development proposed would fall within national guidelines.

Local character

It is considered that the proposed development would generally relate well to the character and appearance of the area. Whilst the overall development density proposed would, at around 34 DPH, be higher than immediately adjacent housing, the development would not be out of keeping with the general character of the area. It is considered the proposals would create an attractive residential development. Particular attention has been focussed by the developer on the design of the development. Distinctive character areas would be created within the development, with dwellings grouped around a formal square and a green open space and pond to create focal points. The development would include a range of house types of traditional design, incorporating elements of local vernacular architecture. The layout and design of the scheme has also taken full account of adjacent properties, and as a result the impact of the development on the amenities of neighbours has been minimised.

Recreation provision

Saved Local Plan Policy REC.2 requires housing developments of this sort to include public open space to meet the recreational needs of future residents. The proposed layout would provide approximately 80% of the required open space within the application site. To compensate for this under provision, a financial contribution of £11,900 has been offered towards improved local facilities. Given the size of the proposed development, the physical characteristics of the site and the desirability of making good use of this well-located site for housing, this approach is considered to be acceptable.

Local ecology

Whilst the submitted ecological assessment concludes that the application site presently provides low quality habitats for wildlife, it is considered that the existing pond offers an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value of the site. In this respect, the proposal to retain and re-landscape the pond as part of the public open space are welcomed.

Highway safety

The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of highway safety. A new estate road access would be created to serve the development, with appropriate visibility splays and a new footway along the site frontage. Three shared private accesses would also be formed onto Castle Acre Road to serve six of the new properties fronting onto to the road. Given the character of the road, and the fact that on-site turning space would be provided, it is not considered that this arrangement would give rise to highway dangers. Within the development, detailed changes have been to the arrangement of roads and parking areas in response to comments from the Highway Authority.

Drainage

Concerns have been raised locally about existing surface water and foul drainage problems. It is acknowledged that existing drainage arrangements are inadequate to cater for the proposed development. Existing soakaways serving the factory building have become silted up, and as a result surface water run-off has been directed towards neighbouring gardens during times of heavy rain. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment proposes a new drainage system using soakaways spread across the site. In line with current guidance, this system has been designed to accommodate surface water flows from a 1 in 100 year storm event.

In respect of foul drainage, it is understood that some properties in the locality suffer from problems caused by overflowing sewers. On the basis of information currently available it is not considered that the proposed development would result in any worsening of existing problems. Anglian Water has advised it is aware of existing problems and that these have resulted from operational issues, such as blockages, rather than problems of inadequate capacity. Anglian Water has also confirmed that the developer would be responsible for the costs of any improvements to existing sewers needed as a consequence of the development.

7. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions and a section 106 agreement.