

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 26th NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER

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

SWAFFHAM: PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, BRANDON ROAD

Applicant: Gladedale (Anglia) Ltd

Reference: 3PL/2007/1436/H

Summary – This report concerns proposals for a residential development of approximately 400 dwellings on 10.7 hectares of land at Brandon Road, Swaffham. It is recommended that permission be granted, subject to conditions and a section 106 agreement.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns a planning application to develop land at Brandon Road, Swaffham, for housing. This hybrid application seeks full planning permission for 135 dwellings on 4.38 hectares, and outline permission for approximately 265 houses on the remaining 6.32 hectares of the site. A new roundabout is proposed on Brandon Road (A1065) to provide access to the development, together with a new footway/cycleway. Affordable housing, public open space, sustainable construction standards, and contributions towards education, library, transport services and public art, are proposed as part of the development, and would be secured through a section 106 agreement.

The application is supported by a number of technical reports, including a Design & Access Statement, a Transport Assessment/Travel Plan, a Flood Risk Assessment, an Open Space & Recreation Strategy, an Arboricultural Implications Assessment, a Landscape Strategy Report, an Archaeological Evaluation Brief, a Wildlife Habitat Survey and an Acoustic Report. A draft section 106 agreement has also been submitted.

The application site occupies a prominent position on the southern edge of Swaffham. The site comprises a rectangular parcel of land extending to 10.7 hectares, the majority of which has previously been used for industrial purposes. Vacant buildings and large areas of hardstandings are being cleared. The site is adjoined by agricultural land.

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. SITE HISTORY

An application for outline planning permission to develop the site for part residential and part commercial (roughly 60:40 split) was submitted in September 2000. Committee approval of the application was given in October 2004, subject to the

completion of a section 106 agreement. This application is currently being held in abeyance, pending the outcome of the latest proposals.

5. CONSULTATIONS

Swaffham Town Council has raised concerns about the traffic implications of the proposed development and about elements of the detailed design.

The Highway Authority has asked for further time to assess the traffic implications of the proposal. Changes to the location of the proposed roundabout have also been requested. Further comments are awaited.

Norfolk County Council has raised no objection to the proposal in terms of strategic planning policy. In order to address local infrastructure issues, financial contributions are requested towards local education (£420,224) and library services (£20,000).

The Environment Agency has raised no objection, subject to conditions.

Norfolk Landscape Archaeology has raised no objection subject to a programme of archaeological monitoring and investigation work being secured by condition.

Norfolk Police has made a number of comments about the detailed layout of the proposed development, particularly in relation to car parking and public open space provision.

The Council's Tree & Countryside Officer has raised no objection to the proposals.

The Council's Senior Leisure Manager has made comments on the detailed layout and design of the areas of open space proposed.

The Council's Housing Enabling & Projects Officer has asked that 30 per cent of built units should be provided as affordable housing in conjunction with a Registered Social Landlord.

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has asked for further site investigations to be undertaken.

Comments on the application have been received from two local residents relating to proposed contributions to local services. Concerns have been raised by a third party in relation to the potential loss of employment land prior to the LDF being finalised.

6. POLICY

Relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies include Policies HOU.2 and TRA.5, which deal respectively with housing in towns and traffic issues. At a national level, policies set out in PPS 1 *Delivery Sustainable Development*, PPS 3 *Housing*, PPG 17 *Planning Open Space Sport and Recreation* and PPG 13 *Transport* are particularly relevant.

7. 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) design quality and impact on local character, iii) open space provision, and iv) highway safety/transport issues.

Policy

It is considered that the development of the site for housing accords in general terms with relevant local and national planning policy. The site falls within the Settlement

Boundary for Swaffham, as defined on the Local Plan Inset Map, and the proposal would provide for the re-use of sustainable brownfield land, as encouraged by national policy. The principle of developing the site for housing, at least in part, has been accepted by the resolution to grant permission under the previous application.

The fact that the current proposal makes no provision for any continuation of previous commercial use is not considered to be objectionable, given current figures for housing and employment land supply across the District. The Council's Employment Land Study (October 2006) identified an over supply of employment land, and found that, even if the Brandon Road land were discounted, Swaffham had adequate employment land elsewhere in the town, much of better quality and more appropriately located to meet future economic needs. In contrast, recent housing land supply figures show that the District does not currently have a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, as required by PPS 3. In this situation, PPS 3 requires councils to give favourable consideration to housing proposals on employment land in sustainable locations, where there is little prospect of employment opportunities being delivered. It is considered that the current proposals would provide a sustainable housing development, which would go some way towards addressing the present shortage of housing land, without prejudicing economic development. It should also be noted the PPS3 gives considerable emphasis to the importance of delivering affordable housing. The proposed development would provide 130 affordable dwellings.

Design quality/local character

Given the location of the site on the edge of the built up area, considerable attention has been focussed on the need to ensure that the proposed development respects its rural surroundings and maintains the setting of the town. Accordingly, established boundary hedging and trees would be maintained and enhanced in order to mitigate the visual impact of development on the surrounding countryside. Acknowledging the rural setting of the site, new development on the Brandon Road frontage would be set behind a landscaped open space, and would have an informal and spacious character. Denser elements of the development would be located within the main body of the site.

In order to give the development a sense of identity, a Design Code has been drawn up which divides the development into distinct character zones. Within these zones, the design of street spaces, building types and external materials would be varied to create visual interest and a sense of place. Strategic landscaping would extend through the site to link the various areas of open space proposed and reinforce the structure of the development. The adoption of the proposed Design Code should also help to provide a consistent approach to design matters across the development. Whilst negotiations are on-going in respect of detailed design matters, the proposed development is considered to be broadly acceptable in design terms.

Recreation provision

The recreational provisions proposed as part of the development are considered to be acceptable. 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 based on NPFA standards. In this instance, NPFA standards would require the provision of 0.8 hectares of play space and 1.6 hectares of sports pitches. It is proposed to meet the play space requirements by providing a range of open spaces for play and for quiet and informal recreation within the development. The sports pitches requirement would be met, not by on-site provision, but by a financial contribution of £507,500 towards improved facilities at a nearby sports centre. It is anticipated that this contribution would be used to create a new all-weather multi-use

sports area. An Open Space & Recreation Strategy has been drawn up to show how the on-site open spaces would be designed to provide a range of recreational opportunities, whilst minimising the potential for amenity conflicts and anti-social behaviour. A contribution has been offered towards the provision of public art within these open spaces to further enhance their attractiveness.

Transport implications

It is understood that, following the requested realignment of the new roundabout access, the Highway Authority are broadly content with the proposals. However, some concerns have been raised locally about the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding road network. On this issue, the submitted Transport Assessment analyses the impact of additional traffic flows associated with the development on the capacity of the local road network, including key junctions within the town centre. Based on traffic projections up to 2016, it is concluded that the proposal would not have a significant impact on surrounding roads. It is suggested that compared to previous commercial uses, the proposed residential use would reduce traffic levels, particularly of HGVs. The proposed new roundabout access would also operate well within capacity, and would have the additional benefit of reducing traffic speeds and providing a turning facility for local traffic. Further comment from the Highway Authority on this matter will be reported verbally.

As far as accessibility issues are concerned, the application includes a number of proposals to promote more sustainable modes of transport bearing in mind the rather peripheral location of the site. A financial contribution of £60,000 has been offered to fund a demand response bus service to the town centre, whilst a further £40,000 would be used to fund the extension of an existing footway/cycleway on Brandon Road up to the site. This footway/cycleway would be continued into the site. Links would also be created from the development to an existing public footpath which runs along the northern site boundary.

Other matters

It is not considered that the development would have an adverse impact on local amenity. The site does not adjoin existing residential areas, and accordingly the development's impact on amenity would be confined to the effects of noise from additional traffic. However, given that the development would not have a significant impact on traffic levels on the A1065, it is not considered that the effects of extra traffic noise would be noticeable. Based on the findings of the submitted Acoustic Report, the use of acoustic glazing is proposed for the houses proposed closest to the A1065 in order to avoid problems of disturbance.

Planning obligations

A draft section 106 agreement has been submitted with the application, and negotiations in respect to various planning obligations are presently on-going. It is anticipated that the agreement will cover the following broad areas: affordable housing, public open space, sustainable construction standards, and financial contributions towards: i) off-site sports facilities, ii) a local bus service, iii) a footway/cycleway link, iv) the provision of public art, and v) local education and library services. Full details of the obligations proposed will be reported verbally.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is considered that residential development of the site as currently proposed is broadly acceptable. Subject to the satisfactory resolution of outstanding issues relating to detailed design matters, and confirmation from the Highway Authority that transport issues have been addressed adequately, it is recommended that permission be granted subject to conditions and a legal agreement.