

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 22nd SEPTEMBER 2008

REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER

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

WATTON: PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT/NEW CRECHE: LAND OFF NORWICH ROAD

Applicant: ABEL HOMES LTD

Reference: 3PL/2008/1042/F& 3PL/2008/1019/F

Summary – This report concerns proposals for residential development and a new crèche facility on a land off Norwich Road, Watton. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions and a section 106 agreement.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns an application for planning permission for residential development on land off Norwich Road, Watton. The proposed development would comprise the erection of 67 dwellings, together with associated public open space and roads. The development would include a range of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses, all of which would be of 2 storeys. A new crèche/nursery building is also proposed to replace an existing facility that would be demolished to make way for the housing development.

The application is supported by a number of technical reports, including a Design & Access Statement, a Flood Risk Assessment, an Arboricultural Assessment, an Ecology Report and a Contamination Desk Study Report. Indicative details with the development suggest a development of around 131 dwellings, together with new access roads and associated open space.

The application site is located within a predominantly residential area, approximately 1.2km to the east of the town centre. The site extends to 2.45 hectares and comprises several parcels of land, including a car showroom/workshop, a children's day nursery, former commercial stables and an area of open paddock. The site is adjoined to the east and west by housing and to the north by open land.

A draft section 106 agreement has been prepared to support the application which provides for the provision of public open space. Discussions are on-going in respect of contributions towards affordable housing and contributions towards schools, library services and highway infrastructure.

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

Watton Town Council has objected to the proposed housing development on the grounds that the proposed development would exacerbate existing local flooding problems and place additional burdens on local social infrastructure.

The Highway Authority has raised no objection in principle to the proposals subject to revisions to the layout of the new access and roads. A financial contribution has been requested towards walking/cycling projects (£17,755).

Norfolk County Council has requested that financial contributions be made to local schools (£355,862) and library services (£4,020).

The Environment Agency has objected to the application on the grounds that the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Contamination Reports do not provide sufficient information to enable the risks of flooding and pollution to ground water to be properly assessed.

The Council's Housing Enabling & Projects Officer has raised no objection subject to the provision of affordable housing.

The Council's Principal Planning Officer has raised no objection to the application

Norfolk Police have made comments on the lighting of footpaths and surveillance of parking areas.

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has requested further information relating to potential ground contamination.

Letters of objection have been received from local residents, raising concerns about flooding, impact on local services, harm to the character of the area, loss of amenity and loss of wildlife habitat. A copy of petition opposing the development has also been received.

5. PLANNING HISTORY

Planning permission for the development of 6 dwellings on part of the site was granted in 2005.

6. POLICY

Part of the application site falls within the Settlement Boundary for Watton and part outside. Relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies include Policies HOU.2, HOU.6, REC.2 and TRA.5.

At a national level, policies set out in PPS 3 *Housing*, 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* are 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) the likely impact of the development on the character of the area and local amenity, and iii) drainage and flooding.

Policy

The majority of the proposed development would lie outside the Settlement Boundary for Watton. The proposal would therefore conflict with saved Local Plan HOU.6, which generally seeks to resist new housing developments outside towns and villages.

Notwithstanding this conflict with local policy, the proposed development must also be assessed against national planning policy for housing. PPS 3 states that where a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land cannot be demonstrated (there is currently a 2.8 year supply in Breckland), favourable consideration should be given to housing proposals if they address satisfactorily the criteria set out in PPS 3. These criteria relate to matters such as design quality, housing mix, environmental sustainability, the suitability of the site for housing and the effective use of land.

The proposed development generally performs well when assessed against PPS 3 criteria, particularly taking into account its location in a market town with good access to services and facilities, the mix of housing proposed and the design quality of the scheme. The density of development proposed would fall within national guidelines. The proposal would provide for the redevelopment of presently relatively under-used brownfield land, located within the existing built up limits of the town. Where housing is proposed on greenfield land, the impact of development would be mitigated by existing and proposed landscaping and the location of

proposed open space. Community benefits would be provided by the relocation of the existing 'Tree Tots' nursery to a new building within the development. The applicant has confirmed that it is intended to built out the development should permission be granted. Bearing in mind the current housing land supply shortfall and the scheme's compliance with PPS 3 policy, it is considered that exception to Local Plan policy is justified in this instance.

RSS Policy ENG.1 requires that for housing schemes of 10+ dwellings, 10% of energy requirements should be met by renewable or low carbon sources. Further information from the applicant on this matter is awaited.

Local character

The layout and design of the development is considered to be acceptable. Development along the Norwich Road frontage would be relatively spacious to reflect the existing pattern of development in this part of the town. Existing trees on the Norwich Road frontage would be retained and supplemented with extensive new planting. Within the main body of the site, houses would be arranged to create varied street scenes including a formal avenue and smaller enclosed courtyards. The proposed houses would be traditional in design. The proposed dwellings have been designed to minimise their impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents.

Flooding

The application site falls within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). However, concerns have been raised locally and by the Environment Agency about the implications of the proposed development for flooding elsewhere in the locality. Local residents have drawn attention to existing problems of flooding in the Watton Green area to the north of the site. In response to these concerns additional information has been provided by the applicant's engineer to supplement the original Flood Risk Assessment. In order to avoid any worsening of existing problems in the locality it is proposed to restrict surface flows from the development to the existing green field run off rate. This would be achieved by the construction of an attenuation pond, together with a flow control chamber and appropriately sized pipes. Further comments from the Environment Agency are awaited.

Other matters

Following concerns raised by the Police, amendments have been made to the proposed development to ensure adequate casual surveillance of parking areas and public paths.

In response to concerns raised about ground contamination further information has been requested from the applicant.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the satisfactory resolution of outstanding matters relating to drainage and ground contamination and discussions in relation to section 106 contributions, it is recommended that planning permission is granted for the proposed residential development and new crèche.