

## **BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

### **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 1st SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### **REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER**

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

#### **HARLING: PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, LOPHAM ROAD**

**Applicant: Mr A Taylor/Mr D Taylor**

**Reference: 3PL/2008/0579/F**

**Summary** – This report concerns a planning application for residential development on the edge of Harling. It is recommended that the application is refused.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report concerns an application for full planning permission for residential development on land at Lopham Road, Harling. The development proposed would comprise the erection of 11 new dwellings, including 3 affordable dwellings, the demolition of existing commercial buildings, and the construction of a new access and estate road. The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement, Noise Assessment, Tree Report and Contamination Risk Assessment.

The application site is located on the south-eastern fringe of the village of Harling. The site was formerly used for commercial purposes and includes 2 vacant buildings. The land is irregular in shape and extends to 0.55 hectare. The site is adjoined on one side by residential development and on the other by a small industrial estate.

#### **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**

Harling Parish Council has objected to the application on the grounds that the site lies outside the defined Settlement Boundary and that further land should not be released for development in advance of the LDF. Concerns have also been raised about the proximity of the site to the adjacent industrial estate.

The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the application subject to minor alterations to the design of the access road, the provision of visibility splays and the construction of new footway along Lopham Road. A financial contribution of £2,500 towards improved pedestrian facilities in the village has also been requested.

The Environment Agency has raised no objection to the application, subject to conditions relating to site investigation, surface water drainage and foundation design.

Natural England has raised no objection to the application.

The Council's Assistant Tree & Countryside Officer has raised concerns about the proposed removal of a preserved tree.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised concerns about the relationship of the proposed housing development with the adjacent industrial estate. Conditions requiring acoustic fencing and glazing are recommended if permission is to be granted.

The Council's Environmental Protection Assistant has raised no objection to the application subject to a condition requiring a site investigation.

A number of letters of objection have been received raising concerns about the development of land outside the Settlement Boundary, loss of residential amenity, harm to the character of the area and potential conflicts with the adjacent commercial units. Letters of support for the development have also been received, suggesting that the scheme would enhance the surrounding area and provide additional family housing for the village.

## **5. POLICY**

The application site falls outside the Settlement Boundary for Harling, as defined in the Breckland District Local Plan. Relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies include Policies HOU.4, HOU.6 and TRA.5.

At a national level, policies set out in PPS 3 *Housing*, PPS 7 *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*, and PPG 13 *Transport* are particularly relevant.

At the regional level, Policy ENG.1 of the Regional Spatial Strategy relating to on-site renewable energy is relevant.

## **6. ASSESSMENT**

The principal issues raised by the application concern: i) the extent to which the development would accord with relevant planning policy, ii) the relationship of the development with the adjacent industrial estate and neighbouring dwellings, and iii) the impact of the development on the character of the area.

### **Policy**

The application site lies outside the Settlement Boundary for Harling, as defined in the Local Plan, and accordingly the proposal would 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 on the edge of a village identified as a potential service centre, the mix of housing proposed and the design quality of the scheme. The proposal would not result in an intrusion of development into open countryside, but would allow for the re-use of a semi-derelict brownfield site. However, it is not clear from the information submitted to date whether the scheme is deliverable within a 5 year period. Further clarification is being sought on this point.

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.

### **Relationship with neighbouring development**

The application site is sandwiched between existing residential development to the west and a small industrial estate to the east. Concerns have been expressed locally and by the Council's Environmental Health Officer about noise and disturbance affecting future residents. The Noise Assessment submitted in support of the applicant concludes that, having regard to the nature of existing commercial activity and the layout of the proposed development, significant levels of noise are not likely to be generated by uses accommodated in the industrial units or by associated traffic.

A degree of protection for future residents would be provided by conditions on the 1986 planning permission for the industrial estate, which limit the commercial units to B1 and B8 use only (light industrial/offices/storage). The layout of the industrial estate, with rows of units facing each other rather than directly towards the proposed housing, would also help, to an extent, to limit noise problems. However, given the close proximity of some of the proposed houses, and the absence of an hours of operation restriction, it is considered that there is some potential for disturbance from general activity and traffic, although given the mitigating factors referred to it is unlikely that a refusal of permission would be warranted on this ground alone.

As currently proposed, it is considered that the proposed housing would result in some loss of amenity to the immediately adjacent bungalow due to overlooking and visual impact. It is considered that these problems could be overcome by changes to the layout/design of the proposed housing scheme.

### **Local character**

The application site occupies a relatively prominent position on the edge of the village of Harling. The proposed houses would be traditional in architectural style and arranged to create varied and attractive street scenes. However, the proposed new site access would result in the loss of mature Corsican pine tree on the Lopham Road. Whilst this tree is one of a number along the frontage, its removal would nevertheless detract from the appearance of the immediate area. It is also considered that the development would have a rather uneasy relationship with the adjacent industrial estate. The proposed high brick wall separating the housing and industrial units would be a rather dominant feature and somewhat at odds with the rural character of the area. Further landscaping proposals from the applicant are awaited.

### **Conclusion**

Due to the current housing land supply situation and its implications for the consideration of housing developments, the issues relating to the development of this site are rather more finely balanced than otherwise would have been the case. The proposed development would satisfy a number of the policy criteria set out in PPS 3, notwithstanding its location outside the Settlement Boundary for Harling. However, at this stage, it is not considered that an exception to saved Local Plan policy would be justified due to the present uncertainties about the deliverability of the development, and the shortcomings of the current proposals in respect of relationships with neighbours, loss of trees and landscaping.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

That planning permission is refused on the grounds of conflict with Local Plan Policy HOU.6, loss of amenity to the adjacent residential property, potential conflict with adjacent industrial uses and loss of a preserved tree.