

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE – 25TH JANUARY 2010

REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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CARBROOKE: PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE/ERECTION OF 8 DWELLINGS: FORMER RAF WATTON TECHNICAL SITE

Applicant: HDD RAF WATTON

Reference: 3PL/2009/0990/D

Summary – This report concerns a reserved matters application for a neighbourhood centre as part of the redevelopment of the former RAF Watton Technical Site. It is recommended that the application is approved.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns revised proposals for a new neighbourhood centre on land at the former RAF Watton Technical Site. The proposed neighbourhood centre would include a convenience store (373m²) and 3 smaller units designed to accommodate a range of A1, A2, A3, A5 and D1 uses. The smaller retail units would range in size from 92m² to 98m². A mix of 2 and 3 bedroom houses are proposed on land adjacent to the neighbourhood centre. Access would be gained off a new road via the proposed new roundabout on Norwich Road. Parking for 46 cars would be provided, together with cycle parking/storage facilities. The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement, a Tree Survey and Landscaping Schedule.

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 0.41 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, but has made comments in relation to commercial matters, crime and disorder, and access.

The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the application subject to conditions relating to access and parking.

The Tree & Countryside Officer has raised no objection to the application subject to conditions relating to tree protection and landscaping.

Norfolk Police have welcomed the fact that issues of crime and disorder have been taken into account in the layout and design of the development. Comments have been made in respect of boundary fencing.

5. SITE HISTORY

Outline planning permission for the use of the site as a local centre was granted in September 2006 as part of the redevelopment of the former Technical Site for housing and employment. The following reserved matters applications have subsequently been considered:

- neighbourhood centre (5 retail units) and 22 flats – approved May 2008
- neighbourhood centre (5 retail units) and 4 houses – refused on design grounds September 2008
- neighbourhood centre (5 retail units) and 4 houses – approved December 2008.

6. POLICY

Relevant national planning policies include PPS1 *Delivering Sustainable Development*, PPS 3 *Housing* and PPS 4 *Planning for Sustainable Economic Development*. Relevant Core Strategy Policies include Policy DC1 (Amenity), DC12 (Trees) and DC16 (Design).

7. ASSESSMENT

The principal issues raised by the application concern: i) the likely effects of the development on the appearance of the surrounding area and amenity, ii) the mix of uses proposed, and iii) access.

Impact on local character and amenity

The proposed neighbourhood centre would occupy a prominent site next to Norwich Road (B1108) and immediately adjacent to one of the two principal entrances to the Technical Site redevelopment. The proposed development adopts a broadly traditional architectural style and palette of materials, with the aim of creating a distinctive landmark building for this gateway site. It is considered that this objective is successfully achieved in the detailed design of the development. To create visual identity and presence, large projecting roof gables with generous overhangs have been incorporated into the building design. These elements are balanced by a simple elevational treatment, including large areas of glazing to shopfronts. The proposed neighbourhood centre building is effectively a truncated down version of the proposal approved in December 2008.

The proposed dwellings would also follow the format of the previously approved scheme, with two blocks of additional units being accommodated on land made available by the reduction in the footprint of the commercial scheme. It is considered that the layout and design of the proposed houses would relate satisfactorily to adjacent open space and housing. The housing has been laid out to minimise potential amenity conflicts with the adjacent shop units, with the commercial and residential elements (including car parking) being clearly defined. Existing trees, which are a prominent and characteristic feature of the site, would be retained.

The proposed development has been designed to minimise opportunities for crime. Car parking areas would be well lit and open, pedestrian routes would be clearly defined and servicing areas would be fully enclosed. A specialist management company would undertake the upkeep of public realm areas.

Mix of uses

The mix of retail/commercial units and housing is consistent with the outline planning permission granted in 2006 for the redevelopment of the former Technical Site. The outline permission identifies the application site as part of a designated 'local centre'. Whilst the amount of retail floorspace shown is less than proposed in previous reserved matters applications (a reflection of current economic conditions), it is not considered that this change is objectionable in itself. The range and size of units has been designed to ensure competitive rent levels and a good mix of uses. As with previous applications, it is recommended that conditions be imposed relating to retail unit size to ensure that the scheme addresses local shopping needs.

Access

Access to the proposed development would be via the proposed new roundabout on Norwich Road. Completion of the roundabout has been suspended since the original developer (Cofton Limited) went into receivership in early 2009. Under the terms of the current outline permission, the proposed development could not be occupied until the roundabout and access roads are completed. The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the current application.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that reserved matters approval is granted subject to conditions relating to external materials, parking, cycle storage, tree protection, landscaping and retail unit size.