

PLANNING COMMITTEE



3 SEPTEMBER 2013 - 1.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor A Miscandlon (Chairman), Councillor D W Connor (Vice-Chairman), Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor B M Keane, Councillor Mrs K F Mayor, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Mrs F S Newell, Councillor D R Patrick, Councillor T E W Quince, Councillor D Stebbing, Councillor W Sutton.

APOLOGIES: Councillor M G Bucknor

Officers in attendance: G Nourse (Head of Planning), Ms A Callaby (Planning Performance Manager), Ms C Flittner (Area Development Manager), R McKenna (Principal Solicitor - Litigation and Planning), Miss S Smith (Member Services and Governance)

Other Members in attendance: Councillor A K Melton, Councillor J R Chambers

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

P63/13 **F/YR10/0804/F**
CHATTERIS - LAND SOUTH EAST OF CHATTERIS, LONDON ROAD,
CHATTERIS
(HALLAM LAND MANAGEMENT LIMITED AND BS PENSION FUND TRUSTEE
LTD)

The committee had regard to its inspection of the site (as agreed in accordance with the Site Inspection: Policy and Procedure (minute P19/04 refers)) during its deliberations.

Members considered letters of representation from local residents.

Officers informed members that:

- the Planning Application reference number should be suffixed with O for Outline;
- the Cambridgeshire County Council Asset Information Definitive Map Officer commented:
 - Byway 24 Chatteris crosses the site and it has been accommodated within the development of the site. Can more details be provided on how the development will affect the Byway. The intention to put in new footpaths and cycle routes on the site is welcomed and more details are requested at the Reserved Matters stage;
- a further letter of objection has been received from a Tithe Road resident noting their objections to this proposal. Infrastructure in reference to roads and increased traffic and demands on water supply and sewerage taking into account low water pressure in the area now, noise and light pollution and change to the landscape views that the resident has at the present time. The resident has concerns over devaluation of their property and increasing antisocial behaviour in the local area.

Though there is an area set aside for a new primary school who will build this and it would only provide 60 to 80 new places per year which would not be enough for the size of development. The resident feels that there is not enough margin between the rear of their property and gardens of the new development. The resident agrees that more housing is required but this is to large a development on arable land;

- the issues raised above are considered in the main report and issues regarding the byway can be dealt with via conditions;
- the Master Plan is illustrative of home zones and footway links;
- there is a phasing plan with 380 dwellings planned to be delivered in the first phase and the other phases were explained;
- the Tithe Barn will be central to the development and sports provision is planned to the north of the site;
- the scheme is considered policy compliant, viability details have been submitted in confidence;
- when the plans originated there was some mention of a contribution to leisure for Chatteris, there is no formal policy regarding this and leisure provision can only be considered if identified as a local need. Officers made reference to a recent appeal in January 2013 considering a similar aspect of contributions to a sports hall and leisure and the Planning Inspector ruled that the application did not demonstrate that this was necessary or relevant to the development and this should act as a warning that a development should not be seen as a shopping list;
- viability is a hot topic and the national policy framework advises that viability covers the cost of any requirements for affordable housing, taking into account infrastructure, cost of the development, competitive returns and the need to consider what the owner can reasonably expect the return to be to make the development viable. This development is 14% deliverable, shown following the outcome of the Open Book Assessment.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the local council participation procedure, from Councillor Melton, District Councillor. Councillor Melton stated that he thought that the application would have received more interest and that he had expected the Council Chamber to be packed and he was disappointed as this development signifies one of the biggest changes in the town of Chatteris over the past 20 years. He pointed out that he was born and lived on the Tithe Estate and had known it would be up for development since 1949. He is aware that it has protected accesses subject to the 1960s Land Act.

Councillor Melton stated that he is a local member and is not against development but welcomes it and this proposal will change the nature of the town over the next few years. He stated that he agreed with the Town Council that the link road should be built before major aspects of the development are built to ensure there is less traffic through the town and a weight limit in the town in relation to construction traffic.

Councillor Melton stated that he does not support small play areas and welcomes strategic sizeable well equipped open space in the next phase of the development. He pointed out that the land identified is Grade 3 arable land and will be no significant loss to the farming community. He says that it has been said that the land floods, he stated that it has never flooded, it is high land, there is some pooling of water near the dyke but does not flood.

Councillor Melton made reference to the Council's three bin waste collection scheme, stating that this development is at the design stage and more innovative ways of collecting waste should be looked at carefully.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mr Blackwell, a Property Consultant from Bidwells representing Hallam Land Management. Mr Blackwell thanked members for the opportunity to speak.

Mr Blackwell stated that the application is for 1,000 new homes, 150 more than allocated. He pointed out that it compliments the strategic policy, provides a link road to the A142 and is a sustainable development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is an Outline application, with all matters reserved, the vision has been costed and Hallam Land Management Limited are keen to progress to Reserved Matters stage. Mr Blackwell stated that the development is well designed, is at the gateway of the Fens and the master plan illustrates detail for the byway. He pointed out that the application was submitted three years ago and S106 issues will be carried into the next stage of the process. The assessment process is ongoing at the moment, the open book viability exercise shows the economic return would become unviable if the affordable housing contribution were to be increased beyond 14%.

Mr Blackwell pointed out that the road costs would be absorbed by the development of the link road. He stated that Hallam Land can make the scheme by discounted benchmark and hoped that members will support the application, the timely economic growth of the area, transport, infrastructure and the provision of a school with costs being tailored to the provision of the essentials.

Councillor Connor asked Mr Blackwell if he could confirm if the link road would be built before the development. Mr Blackwell responded that the development would be phased, revenue would be required from the housing to provide the link road and the road would be provided at Phase 2a. Officers pointed out that 380 dwellings would be provided in Phase 1 from London Road. Mr Blackwell confirmed that when an additional 235 dwellings have been built the link road would be built in its entirety.

Councillor Cornwell commented that he understood that the link road is an expensive element of the whole project, stating that 380 dwellings is a small amount of housing, the school and social housing won't be required at this stage and he asked if the development could be timed and adjusted otherwise there would be chaos. It was pointed out that the link road is part of the costings, initial construction costs will be significant, there will be a mixed form of development as the scheme progresses, built as a balanced community. Highways have tested the plans and are satisfied with the proposals, the development works in technical terms and if the road were to be built quicker all costings would have to be looked at again. Mr Blackwell pointed out that the phasing has been looked at forensically and considered community requirements on a phased basis, if this were to change the dynamics of the proposed phases may mean that development does not get off the ground. He agreed that phasing could be looked at again but considered that it would most likely mean a non-starter as a multi-million pound link road would be affected by available funding and the highways authority are satisfied that junctions can cope with the proposed phasing.

Councillor Cornwell commented that a neighbouring authority had built a supply road before starting to build, this seems to happen all around areas near Fenland but not in Fenland.

Councillor Mrs Newell asked which roads would be used by construction traffic whilst the development is built. Mr Blackwell confirmed that a distributor road would be built through the development as the development continues, being 6 years to completion. He stated that a transport assessment has been undertaken carefully and best practice guidance has been adhered to. To get the project off the ground a sensible approach to cashflow and costs is required and phasing is a practical way for this to happen. Councillor Mrs Newell asked why the document from Highways had not been provided as proof at this meeting.

Officers pointed out that the Highway Authority has not raised any issues with the development and London Road will have been looked at to see if it can accommodate construction traffic for the first phase of 380 houses and the road at the second phase.

Councillor Patrick raised concerns that the school would not be built before the 380 houses and stated that it should be built in the first phase. Officers responded that there is existing school provision in the town and there is no proof that the first 380 houses will be occupied by families and children requiring schools and this could be dealt with at the Reserved Matters stage.

Councillor Connor asked if members should consider what kind of life residents will have down London Road whilst the first phase of 380 dwellings are being constructed. Mr Blackwell confirmed that the Highway Authority will have considered these questions and environmental impact to make sure that it works. Officers confirmed that it is not unusual for developments to be subject to a condition looking at construction management, commenting that there are usually solutions to mitigate problems. Mr Blackwell confirmed that these issues will be addressed at the Reserved Matters stage.

Councillor Mrs Mayor commented that she would like to ask further questions but did not feel it was appropriate to ask at this stage.

Councillor Cornwell commented that having heard the debate and concerns, he understands the capital problem of creating the link road and asked if there is any technical reason why development could not begin at Iretons Way rather than on a minor/residential road. Mr Blackwell responded that by having the development start at London Road revenue and costs would catch up, the other way would undermine viability and the ability to deliver the development successfully and could impact on coordination of other things happening ie trigger points for the school. Phasing works have been carefully considered, affects on amenity have been addressed and viability can be considered at Reserved Matters, the scheme has been thoroughly tested and works well.

Councillor Cornwell asked if the economics of the layout could be looked at from Ireton Way. Mr Blackwell stated that caution needs to be applied in this part of the region, he pointed out that revenues are not the best, there is a fine balance between revenue and costs and it is not easy to get it right. The proposal as it stands works however, he has concerns regarding viability and performance costs against revenue to provide S106 if the plans were to be changed and building started from the other end of the development.

Mr Barnes from Hallam Land Management declined his right to speak.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs Mayor commented that this is an outline application and raised concerns as to whether it should be agreed. She raised concerns about the link road and access to the development and construction traffic. Councillor Mrs Mayor asked if it is correct that neighbouring councils insist on these link roads before any development begins as she feels that construction traffic using London Road is completely wrong and pointed out that the Town Council have asked for construction traffic to gain access via the A142.

Councillor Mrs Mayor asked if outline permission were granted today could the request be made that the link road be put in first as she believe that the traffic should not come off London Road.

Officers referred to several aspects of design, methodology and the master plan and the employment element adjacent to the bypass, 380 dwellings have been factored in and it will be a gradual process, construction traffic will have been considered within the assessment by professionals and a construction management schedule is possible to assess impact on the road network and problems may not be as acute as expected and could be mitigated with a robust construction management plan. The Tesco site at Wisbech was given as an example as a site that required a construction plan. Officers pointed out that it would be difficult to defend the Council's position as a local planning authority if the application was resited on the basis of how the link road would be delivered;

- Councillor Miscandlon made reference to the site inspection where the committee had parked on the farm track to consider connections to the site from the A142 and asked if this could be used as an entry point to the site for construction vehicles from the A142. Officers agreed that with liaison from highways this type of entry may be possible as an alternative solution, pointing out that it is crucial that the access road can facilitate the deliveries and the visibility point at main junctions is capable and will not impact on the wider highway network;
- Councillor Stebbing suggested that a temporary road could be constructed following the route of the final road;
- Councillor Connor asked if officers could provide clarification regarding the London Road access as he was not happy with this proposal and requested that the comments of the town council be taken into account. Officers responded that a list of actions would be explored outside the meeting;
- Councillor Quince commented that he feels that a basic hardcore road is necessary. Officers agreed to explore the potential for a construction management traffic plan and how it will be delivered;
- Councillor Murphy commented that he was glad to see that a link road is being provided, this could follow Tithe Road through traffic, he pointed out that the application is for housing on London Road and the entrance could not be turned around and it should be left as it is. He commented that he is disappointed with the affordable housing provision but at least some is being provided. Councillor Murphy stated that the development meets the requirements of the Draft Core Strategy and meets most policies and the NPPF. He pointed out that Cambridgeshire County Council are happy in principle and that this is what is being considered today to agree in principle and commented that the Environment Agency, Middle Level, Natural England have no objections and the town council supports in principle. Councillor Murphy pointed out that requests from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue and Anglian Water are normal, it is a large area and will be built in a phased manner, in small stages. He commented that it is an ideal place for the development and the best area for expansion and reminded members that they are being asked to consider the application in principle only at this stage;
- Councillor Cornwell commented that members are being asked to approve the application in principle and asked if outline permission were to be granted would details of the development be in accordance with policies at the time of today or when the decision is taken later on the detail, for example housing mixes. Officers confirmed that agreement today would be a decision on the outline plans agreed in principle, S106 details would come later, future stages of the development would consider broader parameters of land and area allocation and at each stage of reserved matters reference will be made to the original outline application, on the basis of policies at that time within a prescribed framework and reserved matters taking into account new policies;
- the Legal Officer provided clarification regarding affordable housing, the current figure being 14%, he referred to the Bassenhally Development being a minimum provision in each phase, if the economy improves this figure will be reconsidered at each phase of the development and collected at the end of the development;

- Councillor Cornwell asked if any clarification could be provided regarding a start date for the development. Officers confirmed that the development would need to begin within two years of the Reserved Matters application being approved;
- Councillor Mrs Newell commented on officers information relating to the earlier example of an appeal decision regarding viability and asked how many houses had been involved in that case. Officers confirmed that it related to a development for 126 homes, resulting in 2% affordable housing;
- Councillor Murphy asked developers to take into account comments from the town council and the end frontage of London Road to be in keeping with the surrounding area when the development is completed. He pointed out that this is a high class area leading into the town of Chatteris and required houses in keeping with the area on London Road;
- Councillor Sutton asked for clarification from officers regarding the cost of provision of a pre-school by Cambridgeshire County Council in comparison to the reduction in cost presented by the developer. Officers confirmed that Cambridgeshire County Council have quoted £5,366,410 to build the school and the developer is of the opinion that they are able to provide the school at a reduction of £1,866,410 in construction cost;
- Councillor Mrs Newell commented that Kingsfield preschool is full to capacity.

Proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Connor and decided that the application be:

1. **agreed in principle the amount of development as specified and authorised Officers to proceed with finalising the detail of an appropriate S106 contribution schedule and to**
2. **authorise the Head of Planning, to formalise a suitable list of conditions and**
3. **support the return of the scheme to committee to agree the detail of the development.**

(Councillors Mrs Newell and Murphy stated that they are Members of Chatteris Town Council, but take no part in planning matters)

(Councillor Melton stated that he is a Ward Member for the Birch Ward, Chatteris)

(Councillor Chambers stated that he is the Chairman of Chatteris Town Council)

2.19pm

Chairman