

Application No: 13/2841C
Location: LAND NORTH OF, MOSS LANE, SANDBACH,
Proposal: Outline Application for 13 New Dwellings
Applicant: Peter Richardson
Expiry Date: 09-Oct-2013

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

MAIN ISSUES:

- Principle of the development
- Housing land supply
- The acceptability of the Layout, Scale, Appearance, Landscaping and Access
- Impact on adjoining residential amenities
- The impact upon ecology
- The provision of open space
- Provision of affordable housing
- The impact upon the Public Right of Way
- The impact upon trees and hedgerows

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is referred to the Southern Planning Committee as it involves a residential development of more than 10 dwellings.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

This application relates to an agricultural field located on the northern side of Moss Lane, Sandbach within the Open Countryside.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Outline Planning Permission is sought for the erection of 13 new dwellings.

All matters are reserved. As such, the application seeks permission for the principle of the erection of 13 dwellings on this site.

RELEVANT HISTORY

None

POLICIES

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Local Plan Policy

PS8 – Open Countryside

GR1 - General Criteria for Development

GR2 - Design

GR6 - Amenity and Health

GR9 - Highways & Parking

H1 & H2 - Provision of New Housing Development

H6 – Residential development in the Open Countryside and the Green Belt

NR1 – Trees and Woodlands

NR2 – Wildlife and Nature Conservation – Statutory Sites

NR3 - Habitats

Other Material Planning Considerations

SPG2 - Provision of Private Amenity Space in New Residential Development

The EC Habitats Directive 1992

Conservation of Habitat & Species Regulations 2010

Circular 06/2005 - - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System

Interim Affordable Housing Statement: Affordable Housing

Sandbach Town Strategy

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Strategic Highways Manager – Object to the proposed development on grounds that insufficient information has been provided in terms of;

- Analysis of the junction of Moss Lane with the A5333 in order to prove capacity for the traffic generation.
- No other highway information.

Environmental Health – No objections, subject to a number of conditions including: Hours of piling, the prior submission of a piling method statement, the prior submission of a construction phase environmental management plan, hours of construction and the prior submission of a dust control scheme.

United Utilities – No comments received at time of report

Canal & River Trust - No objections

Greenspace (Cheshire East Council) – Advise that there would be a deficiency in the quantity of provision of amenity Greenspace accessible in the area should the application be approved. As such a financial contribution is required towards enhancement of public open space/play provision within the vicinity of the proposed development. The contributions sought are;

Enhanced provision: £2,113.20

Maintenance: £4,730.00

With regards to Children and Young Person Play provision, the following contributions are sought;

Enhanced provision: £3,662.80

Maintenance: £11,940.00

Total: £22,446

Housing (Cheshire East Council) – No objections, but outline the requirements for affordable housing.

Public Rights of Way – No objections, subject to an informative advising the land owner of their obligations.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL:

Sandbach Town Council – Object to the proposal on the following grounds;

- Outside settlement boundary
- Highway safety

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:

9 letters of objection have been received (25, 29, 31 and 32 Moss Lane, The Gables, Greenways, Sunset View, 5 Mulberry Gardens and Sunnyside). The main areas of objection relate to;

- Development is in the Open Countryside
- Design
- Drainage capacity
- Ecology
- Loss of hedgerow
- Highway Safety
- Lack of community facilities

Other issues raised which are not material considerations include; the proposal would set a precedent, there is no need for further housing, loss of farming land and preference of renovation of existing dwellings in the town.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Design and Access Statement

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site is designated as being within the Open Countryside where Policy PS8 (Open Countryside) of the Local Plan states that development will only be permitted if it falls within one of a number of categories including:

- Agriculture and Forestry
- Facilities for outdoor sport, recreation, tourism
- Other uses which preserve the openness of the open countryside and maintain or enhance its local character
- New dwellings in accordance with Policy H6
- Controlled infilling in accordance with Policy H6
- Affordable housing in compliance with Policy H14
- Development for employment purposes
- The re-use of rural buildings or;
- The re-use or redevelopment of existing employment sites

As the proposed development is for the erection of 13 new dwellings in the Open Countryside, it is subject to Policy H6.

Policy H6 of the Local Plan advises that residential development within the Open Countryside will not be permitted unless it falls within one of the following categories:

- An agricultural workers dwelling
- The replacement of an existing dwelling
- The conversion of a rural building
- The change of use or redevelopment of an existing employment site in accordance with Policy E10
- Limited infill for those settlements identified in Policy PS6 or;
- Affordable housing

As the proposed development does not fall within any of the above categories, it is considered that it would be contrary to Local Plan Policies H6 and PS8 and would be unacceptable in principle.

Housing land supply

Whilst PPS3 'Housing' has been abolished under the new planning reforms, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reiterates at paragraph 47 the requirement to maintain a 5 year rolling supply of housing and states that Local Planning Authorities should:

“identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land”.

The NPPF states that, Local Planning Authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. This should take account of various factors including:

- housing need and demand,
- latest published household projections,
- evidence of the availability of suitable housing land,
- the Government’s overall ambitions for affordability.

The figures contained within the Regional Spatial Strategy proposed a dwelling requirement of 20,700 dwellings for Cheshire East as a whole, for the period 2003 to 2021, which equates to an average annual housing figure of 1,150 dwellings per annum. In February 2011 a full meeting of the Council resolved to maintain this housing requirement until such time that the new Local Plan was approved. In December 2012, the Cabinet agreed the Cheshire East Local Plan Development Strategy for consultation and gave approval for it to be used as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect. This proposes a dwelling requirement of 27,000 dwellings for Cheshire East, for the period 2010 to 2030, following a phased approach, increasing from 1,150 dwellings each year to 1,500 dwellings.

It is considered that the most up-to-date information about housing land supply in Cheshire East is contained within the emerging Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) February 2013. The SHLAA has put forward a figure of 7.15 years housing land supply. This document was considered by the Strategic Planning Board on 8th February and the Portfolio Holder on 11th February 2013.

Policy change is constantly occurring with new advice, evidence and case law emerging all the time. However, the Council has a duty to consider applications on the basis of the information that is pertinent at any given time. Consequently, it is recommended that the application be considered in the context of the 2013 SHLAA.

Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires that there is a five year supply of housing plus a buffer of 5% to improve choice and competition. The NPPF advocates a greater 20% buffer where there is a persistent record of under delivery of housing. However, for the reasons set out in the report which was considered and approved by Strategic Planning Board at its meeting on 30th May 2012, these circumstances do not apply to Cheshire East. Accordingly, once the 5% buffer is added, the 2013 SHLAA shows that the Borough has an identified deliverable housing supply of 7.15 years.

The NPPF clearly states at paragraph 49 that:

“housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be

considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.”

This must be read in conjunction with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF which for decision taking means:

“where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or*
- specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.”*

However, Cheshire East can demonstrate a five year supply of housing land and it is considered that Policies PS8 and H6, which protect Open Countryside, are not out of date.

Layout

The proposed development is for 13 new dwellings.

The submitted indicative layout plan shows that the proposed dwellings would be erected in a linear pattern fronting Moss Lane, following a similar building line to the existing dwellings to the east of the site.

The dwellings would be inset from Moss Lane between 4.5 and 10 metres. The plots would be elongated in nature and extend between 34 and 40 metres in depth.

To the adjacent sides, the dwelling proposed to the far east of the site would be approximately 11.5 metres from the side elevation of No.32 Moss Lane. The dwelling proposed to the far west would be approximately 54 metres from the side elevation of Sunnyside.

Due to the linear pattern of development along this side of Moss Lane to the east and the regular building line that these properties have been constructed at, it is considered that the addition of the 13 dwellings along this frontage would respect the local character with regards to layout.

For the above reasons, it is considered that the indicative layout of the proposed development would be acceptable and would subsequently adhere to Policy GR2 of the Local Plan.

Access

The indicative layout plan shows that the proposed dwellings would be served by their own individual accesses onto Moss Lane which would lead to private driveways which are large enough to accommodate 200% parking.

The Council's Strategic Highways Manager has advised that the proposal *‘...is not acceptable to the Strategic Highways Manager given the sensitive nature of Moss Lane in traffic impact terms and the evolving traffic situation with the redevelopment of the Fodens site for housing.*

This application should provide an analysis of the junction of Moss Lane with the A533 to prove capacity for the traffic generation from this small scale development proposal.'

As such, given this lack of information, it is considered that the Strategic Highways Manager has insufficient information in order to assess the strategic impacts of the proposed application.

As such, it is considered that the proposed development would be contrary to Policy GR9 of the Local Plan.

Appearance & Scale

Policy GR2 (Design) of the Local Plan states that the proposal should be sympathetic to the character, appearance and form of the site and the surrounding area in terms of: The height, scale, form and grouping of the building, choice of materials and external design features.

In terms of its form, the indicative layout plan indicates that the applicant seeks to erect 5 detached dwellings and 8 semi-detached dwellings on the northern side of Moss Lane, Sandbach.

The indicative streetscene plan shows that all 13 dwellings would be two-storey in nature, consist of dual-pitched roofs and include dual-pitched-fronted features such as half-dormers, porches or gables.

7 of the 13 units would include subordinate, two-storey side outriggers which would include integral garages. 2 of the units would include detached garages.

It is detailed within paragraph 3.6 of the submitted Design and Access Statement that *'The scale and appearance of the proposed properties will be in keeping with the surrounding properties using facing brickwork and tile roofs.'*

Given that the majority of the surrounding properties are two-storey, detached or semi-detached with open brick finishes and dual-pitched tiled roofs, it is considered that the form and appearance of the proposed scheme would respect the local character.

With regards to scale, the indicative streetscene plan shows that the proposed dwellings would range between 7.8 and 8.2 metres in height. These heights would reflect the heights of the surrounding two-storey properties, as would the proposed footprints. As such, it is not considered that the height of the proposed dwellings would appear incongruous.

As a result, it is considered that the proposed development would adhere with Policies GR1 and GR2 of the Local Plan.

Landscape

The proposed development is enclosed on the southern (front), eastern (side) and western (side) boundaries by hedgerow.

There are no protected trees on the site.

It is advised within paragraph 3.4 of the submitted Design and Access Statement that *'The design proposes to retain the existing hedges on the site boundary. A new hedge is to be planted to the northern boundary to the agricultural field. Each new property proposed will be open fronted with its own private parking space and private amenity space.'*

In response to this proposal, the Council's Landscape Officer has advised that no details have been submitted with the application in relation to the presence of existing trees in the roadside hedge frontage and no landscape appraisal or visual impact assessment has been provided. As such, it is advised that should the application be approved, it would be *'...essential to secure a soft landscape boundary treatment to the northern and western boundaries.'*

With reference to the hedgerows, it has been advised that where it is proposed that hedgerow be removed, it should be assessed against the criteria in the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 in order to ascertain if they qualify as 'Important'. Should any hedgerows be found to be 'important' under and of the criteria in the regulations, this would be a significant material consideration in the determination of the application.

Policy NR3 (Habitats) of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review, states that proposals for development that would result in the loss or damage to important hedgerows will only be allowed if there are overriding reasons for allowing the development, and where the likely effects can be mitigated or the habitat successfully recreated on or adjacent to the site and there are no suitable alternatives. In order to comply with the policy, all of these criteria must be met.

In this case due to the lack of submitted information it is consequently unknown whether the hedgerow which would be lost is important. This issue will form a reason for refusal.

With reference to trees, given that there are trees on the site and there is no tree survey, details of tree constraints or arboricultural impact assessment, the submission does not meet the guidance contained within BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and constructions – and does not provide the level of detail required to adequately assess the impact of the development upon existing trees.

As a result of this lack of information in respect of trees, it is considered that the proposed development would fail to adhere with Policy NR1 of the Local Plan.

Amenity

Policy GR6 (Amenity and Health) of the Local Plan, requires that new development should not have an unduly detrimental effect on the amenities of nearby residential properties in terms of loss of privacy, loss of sunlight or daylight, visual intrusion, environmental disturbance or pollution and traffic generation access and parking. Supplementary Planning Document 2 (Private Open Space) sets out the separation distances that should be maintained between dwellings and the amount of usable residential amenity space that should be provided for new dwellings.

Having regard to this proposal, the residential amenity space minimum standard stated within SPG2 is 65 square metres. The space provided for all of the proposed new dwellings would adhere to this standard.

In terms of the separation distances, between the new dwellings themselves, all 13 units would lie parallel to each other.

No details regarding what openings are proposed on the side elevations of these units have been provided.

In order to be deemed as acceptable, the dwellings will need to conform with the separation standards listed in Supplementary Planning Note 2: Provision of Private Open Space in New Residential Developments. These standards include a 21.3 metre gap between main windows of directly facing dwellings across both the front and rear gardens and a 13.8 metre gap between the main windows of dwellings directly facing the flank walls of an adjacent dwelling.

In relation to the impact upon the neighbouring dwellings outside of the development site, the closest units are; No.32 Moss Lane to the north-east, Sunnyside to the southwest and the properties on the opposite side of Moss Lane to the development.

The gap between the dwelling proposed closest to No.32 and the side elevation of No.32 would be approximately 11.5 metres.

On the relevant side elevation of this neighbouring property there is a first-floor side window which serves a landing.

Given that this opening does not serve a principal habitable room, subject to their not being any openings on a relevant side elevation of the proposed closest dwelling which would represent a sole window to a principal room, it is not considered that the development would create any loss of privacy, light or be visually intrusive for this neighbour.

Sunnyside would be positioned approximately 54 metres to the southwest of the closest property proposed on the site. Given this large separation distance, it is not considered that the proposal would result in a loss of privacy, light or visual intrusion for this neighbour.

On the opposite side of Moss Lane, the properties would be over approximately 25 metres away. Again, as a result of this large separation distance, it is not considered that the development would create any amenity issues for the occupiers of these properties.

The Council's Environmental Health team have advised that they have no objections to the proposed development subject to the provision of a number of conditions. These suggested conditions include; including: Hours of piling, the prior submission of a piling method statement, the prior submission of a construction phase environmental management plan, hours of construction and the prior submission of a dust control scheme.

As such, subject to the above conditions, it is considered that the proposed development would adhere with Policy GR6 of the Local Plan.

Ecology

The Council's Nature Conservation Officer has advised that because the application will result in the loss of hedgerow along Moss Lane, as hedgerows are Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats, they are a material consideration.

It is recommended that the loss of these hedgerows be compensated for by creating new native species hedgerows as garden boundaries for the proposed houses. This can be secured by condition.

Furthermore, should the application be approved, it is recommended that a condition to safeguard breeding birds and a condition for the prior submission for details for the incorporation of features into the scheme suitable for breeding birds be imposed.

Subject to the above conditions, it is considered that the development would adhere with Policy NR2 of the Local Plan.

Open Space

No open space is to be provided as part of the scheme.

The Council's Greenspace team, have broken down the assessment of what is required into Amenity Greenspace and Children's and Young Persons Play provision.

With regards to Amenity Greenspace, it is advised that if the development were to be granted planning permission, there would be a deficiency in the quantity of provision, having regards to the local standards set out in the Council's Open Space Study.

As such, the Council would request a sum of money in order to provide enhanced provision and maintenance of local space.

In terms of Young Persons Play provision, again, should planning permission be granted, there would be a deficiency in the quantity of provision and a financial contribution would be sought to account for this deficiency.

As such, subject to a commuted sum being agreed and secured via legal agreement, it is considered that the proposal would adhere with Policy GR22 of the Local Plan.

Affordable Housing

The application allocates the provision of 4 of the 13 dwellings to be affordable dwellings which meets the requirements of the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing.

The Council's Strategic Housing Development Officer has advised that the tenure split should have 3 provided as social/affordable rented and 1 as intermediate tenure.

The Housing Officer has also advised that the affordable dwellings proposed will be 2 bed houses which will *'...go towards meeting some of the affordable housing need.'*

A legal agreement will be required to secure the delivery of this housing and trigger its release.

As a result of the above information and comments, it is considered that the affordable housing provision proposed would be acceptable.

Footpaths / Public Right of Way

The proposed would not directly impact an existing public right of way. However, there is an existing footpath to the west of the site (Public Footpath no.34).

The Council's Public Rights of Way Officer has advised that they have no objections to the proposed development but recommend an informative be added to the decision notice, should the application be approved, in order to remind the applicants of their responsibilities.

As the Council's Public Rights of Way Officer is satisfied with proposal, it is considered that the development would adhere with Policy GR15 of the Local Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

The site is within the Open Countryside where under Policies PS8 and H6 there is a presumption against new residential development, which would be harmful to its open character and appearance, which in the absence of a need for the development, should be protected for its own sake.

The NPPF states that where authorities cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land, relevant local plan policies are out of date and there is a presumption in favour of development. However, the 2013 SHLAA shows that the Borough has an identified deliverable housing supply of 7.15 years and therefore the presumption in favour of the proposal does not apply.

The proposal does not accord with the emerging Development Strategy. Previous Appeal decisions have given credence to such prematurity arguments where authorities can demonstrate a five year supply of housing land. The development of open countryside, where there is no established need to do so, is considered to be fundamentally unsustainable.

Furthermore, the proposal provides insufficient information in order to assess the strategic impacts of the scheme from a highway safety perspective and also a landscape, tree and hedgerow perspective. As such, the proposal is also contrary to Policies GR9 and GR4 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE

- 1. The proposed residential development is unsustainable because it is located within the Open Countryside, contrary to Policies PS8 and H6 of the Congleton Borough Adopted Local Plan First Review 2005 and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework which seek to ensure development is directed to the right location and open countryside is protected from inappropriate development and maintained for future generations enjoyment and use. As such it and creates harm to interests of acknowledged importance. The Local Planning Authority can demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land supply in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, consequently the application is premature to the emerging Development Strategy since there are no material circumstances to indicate that permission should be granted contrary to the development plan.**
- 2. Insufficient information has been submitted with the application to determine if the proposal would involve the removal of an "important" hedgerow as defined in the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Policy NR3 of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan**

First Review, states that proposals for development that would result in the loss or damage to important hedgerows will only be allowed if there are overriding reasons for allowing the development. Therefore the scheme is contrary to Policy NR3 of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review and guidance contained within the NPPF.

- 3. Insufficient information has been submitted with the application to determine the impacts upon trees. The submission does not meet the guidance contained within BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and constructions – and does not provide the level of detail required to adequately assess the impact of the development upon existing trees. Therefore the scheme is contrary to Policy NR1 of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review and guidance contained within the NPPF.**

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