

Tamworth Road Developments

We welcome the fresh approach to the development of this site which this application demonstrates, in particular the reduction in the total number of dwellings proposed and the fact that the majority are now to be houses rather than flats. Nevertheless we wish to object to the application as it stands for two main reasons.

1. Affordable Housing

The application makes no commitment to the inclusion of affordable housing. The Housing Statement shows 44 houses and flats as market housing and 5 flats designated for affordable home ownership, but the Planning Statement says the matter is to be decided in negotiations on a S106 Agreement. Five affordable units would be about 10% of the total, whereas the Council's policy aspiration is for 40%. As we pointed out in our objection to the previous scheme, the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (last revised on 1/9/19) makes it clear that it is for the developer to submit a viability report if the target for affordable housing is not to be met, and that this must be made public.

If the Council are to get even close to the target for affordable housing set out in the District Plan they must insist on the full provision of such housing on sites of this size. Therefore no permission should be granted until any viability report has been submitted, assessed, and the proportion of affordable housing agreed. We understand that the site has been in the ownership of the applicant for many years, so land acquisition costs will have no bearing on the viability of redevelopment. As the site is a 'windfall' site, rather than one allocated in the District Plan, there is no imperative for it to be developed for residential use in order to fulfil the strategy of the Plan; therefore, unless the full quota of affordable housing can be provided, the application should be refused as contrary to District Plan policy.

2. Parking

We support the aspirations of the County and District Councils to improve public transport, and conditions for walking and cycling, so that people can make commuting journeys and short journeys around the town without needing to use a car. However we believe it is a fallacy to suppose that less car use will necessarily lead to lower car ownership. Therefore the development must provide parking for residents at least to the standard set out in the Council's policy, and the parking spaces provided must be convenient and available. As we understand them, the Council's standards (discounted for this zone) require 1.1 spaces for a one-bedroomed property, 1.5 spaces for two bedrooms, 1.9 for three and 2.3 for four. In the submitted scheme there are 14 4-bed houses which have only 2 spaces, and 12 of the 2-bed flats have only one.

The implication of setting out the requirement as fractions is that the spaces will be provided in such a way that households with more than the average number of vehicles are able to use spaces not needed by households with fewer vehicles. This can happen when spaces are grouped in a communal parking area, even if each space is allocated to a specific dwelling, because people will often be willing to allow a neighbour to use a space which they have no use for themselves. But when, as here, most of the spaces, are in integral garages that is much less likely to happen. Add to this the fact that tandem spaces are inconvenient to use because the front car has to be moved to let the back car out, and the fact that in the real world many people tend to use garages for storage rather than parking cars, and it is clear that there is likely to be a problem with irregular parking.

If the Council decide, as part of their response to the climate crisis, that it would not be appropriate to insist on more parking provision, measures will have to be put in place (a) to prevent residents of the development from parking in visitor spaces, on grass areas and footways, and (b) to prevent them from parking on Tamworth Road. A condition requiring Section 106 funding for a residents' parking zone on Tamworth Road (to which the new residents would not have access) would cover (b) but, since the roadways within the site will not be adopted highways, it is hard to see how indiscriminate parking could be controlled in perpetuity - a management company could be set up but would be free to set and change its own rules once established. In view of these difficulties we consider that the parking arrangements as currently proposed are not acceptable.

Other matters

Block E

The present pandemic has emphasised the need for outdoor space and, although there appears to be no requirement in the District Plan for any dwelling without a garden to have a balcony, it is very regrettable that no balconies are proposed for the flats in Block E. Given that the height of this block in relation to The Springs is a sensitive matter, it is unclear why it has been designed with a feature roof which increases its height unnecessarily.

Site Entrance

Several Tamworth Road residents have suggested that, for reasons of light intrusion, parking and highway safety, the entrance to the site should be further east, forming a cross-roads with Fairfax Road. We are not in a position to judge whether this would be a better solution, but feel that it deserves to have been properly assessed by the applicant and the Highway Authority. There is no evidence that any such assessment has been made.

Infrastructure Contributions

The Planning Statement refers to the Heads of Terms for a S106 Agreement, but there is no mention of medical facilities or any contribution to the NHS. NHS services are under pressure in Hertford, and the 200 or so additional people resident in the proposed development would add to that pressure. Contributions to medical facilities, as well as to schools, should therefore be insisted upon.

Terry Betts Trustee

On behalf of Hertford Civic Society

HCS Website and BLOG

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