Land to the West of Woodbastwick Road, Blofield Heath, Norwich

Proposed 6 dwellings
Design & Access Statement
Incorporating Planning

January 2017
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Introduction and Description of Proposal

1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of PPAP Pension Fund in support for a full planning application for 6 new dwellings on land to the west of Woodbastwick Road, Blofield Heath. This Statement sets out the main design and planning policy considerations, summarises the proposed new dwellings; and provides a justification for the scheme’s approval.

1.2 The site, proposed with 5 dwellings, received outline planning approval with application ref: 20161577 on the 7 December 2016.

Summary of Planning Application Submission Documents

1.3 The application documents submitted as part of the application comprise the following:
   • Covering letter;
   • Planning Application Form and Certificate of Ownership;
   • Proposed Site Plan;
   • Site Location Plan (red line plan).
   • House Type Floor Plans & Elevations.

The Site and Local Context

Site Description

1.4 The site is located off Woodbastwick Road in Blofield Heath, approximately 5 miles to the East of Norwich. The site is within the main village with a number of houses of eclectic sizes, ages and styles nearby.

1.5 The site itself is an informal area of grassland with hedgerows forming the boundaries. Immediately to the West of the site is open arable fields with existing housing to the North and South. Woodbastwick Road forms the eastern boundary with a mixture of existing housing and arable fields on the opposite side of the road.

1.6 A search of Broadland District Council’s planning register indicates the site does not have any relevant recent planning history. A number of planning applications have been submitted over recent years in the vicinity for numerous residential extensions but none affect this particular site.

Consultation

1.7 Informal discussions on the proposals based on 5 houses culminated in a pre-application enquiry letter with Broadland District Council Planning Officer on the 22 August 2016. Discussions were focused primarily on what was required for an application and how to address the relevant planning policies.

1.8 The planning policies and how this scheme complies with them are addressed in more detail later in this Statement and the accompanying plan.
Planning Policy Context

1.9 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the policies and proposals in the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purpose of determining this planning application, the Development Plan should be considered as a whole, with appropriate weight applied to each of the policy documents which make up the Development Plan.

1.10 At the time of writing, the relevant Development Plan for Broadland District Council comprises the Joint Core Strategy for the City of Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils (adopted in 2011) (referred to as the JCS) and the Broadland District Council Development Management DPD adopted in 2015.

1.11 The Government also prepares policy on different aspects of planning and the rules that govern and direct the operation of the planning system towards the local level. National Policy is also a material consideration that has to be taken into account in determining planning applications. For the purpose of this Statement, we have considered the Government's National Planning Policy Framework which was published in March 2012 and National Planning Policy Guidance, published on 27 March 2014.

Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (March 2011)

1.12 The JCS was adopted in March 2011 and sets out the spatial vision for development in Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk up to 2026.

1.13 A number of JCS policies are of relevance to the determination of this application:
   - Policy 2 – Promoting good design;
   - Policy 4 – Housing delivery;
   - Policy 9 – Strategy for Growth in the Norwich Policy Area;
   - Policy 14 – Key Service Centres;
   - Policy 20 – Implementation.

1.14 Policy 2 is targeted at larger scale housing projects and layouts but defines that development will be designed to the highest possible standards and will respect local distinctiveness.

1.15 Policy 4 sets out the housing delivery targets for the area, including affordable housing. Due to the small size of the proposed site, the affordable housing element is not applicable.

1.16 Policy 9 sets out the ambitions for growth in the Norwich Policy Area and sets a target of a minimum of 21,000 new homes to be provided across the NPA.

1.17 Policy 14 confirms that the village of Blofield (which includes Blofield Heath) is classified as a "key service centre" This policy states that "...land will be allocated for residential development..... (subject to detailed assessment including impact on form and character.....)."

1.18 Policy 20 is concerned with the JCS's implementation and sets out requirements for the provision of infrastructure to support new development.

1.19 The JCS was subject to legal challenge and the High Court Judgement on 24 April 2012 stated that those parts of the JCS concerning the North East Growth Triangle (NEGT) within Broadland should be remitted for further consideration. The judgement did not affect the
policies relevant to Broadland District Council in general and this planning application in particular. The remitted and revised parts of the JCS have now been adopted. The revisions do not affect this planning application.


1.20 The Proposals Map for Blofield Heath shows the site itself does not have any designation as such and there are no specific policies with regards to such proposals. These have, therefore, been dealt with "on their merit" basis as proposals have come forward.

1.21 Relevant policies from the Broadland Development Management DPD (2015) have been identified as follows:

- GC1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- GC2 – Location of New Development
- GC4 – Design
- TS3 – Highway Safety
- TS4 – Parking Guidelines

1.22 Policy GC1 allows "...the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.” The Policy goes on to state that "...where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are considered out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise...”

1.23 Policy GC2 states that all new development proposals will "...be accommodated within the settlement limits defined on the policies map. Outside of these limits development which does not result in any significant adverse impact will be permitted where it accords with a specific ... policy of the development plan.”

1.24 Policy TS3 of the DPD refers to highways safety and in particular “development will not be permitted where it would result in a significant adverse impact.” The indicative site layout shows individual drives which will allow safe access and egress onto the Woodbastwick Road with sufficient visibility splays. Further details of access will be provided at any reserved matters stage.

1.25 Policy TS4 is a policy relating to parking guidelines where “appropriate parking and manoeuvring space should be provided” on new development. The accompanying plan indicates that this can be easily achieved without adversely affecting highway safety.

**Other Material Considerations**

1.26 In considering the planning application, an assessment of relevant material considerations should also be undertaken and appropriate weight applied. Certain material considerations may outweigh policies in the adopted Development Plan, particularly where Development Policies are out of date or have been superseded by National Planning Policy.
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

1.27 The NPPF was published in March 2012 and sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied in decision-taking and plan-making. It is a key material consideration in the determination of planning applications, particularly where Local Plans are out of date. The NPPF provides guidance for local authorities and decision makers and represents an up-to-date and comprehensive expression of national planning policy. On 6 March 2014, the Government launched the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) with the aim of simplifying the planning process. With regards to rural housing, the NPPG broadly reaffirms the stance of the NPPF and supports such schemes provided they meet the requirements outlined in The Framework.

1.28 Paragraph 14 emphasises that “at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking..." For decision-taking this means:

“Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and 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 this Framework taken as a whole; or
– Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.”

1.29 With specific regards to housing development, paragraph 49 states that "housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development."

1.30 On decision-taking, paragraph 187 states "Local Planning Authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible."

Design Principles

1.31 Based on the existing surrounding residential properties, the proposed dwellings are to be two storey. In addition, the site layout takes inspiration from the surrounding residential development without compromising on visual amenity and the private amenity areas of neighbouring properties. Based on pre-application discussions with the planning officer, an outline planning application and an assessment of existing surrounding dwellings, the design rationale for this project are:

– Trees and Landscaping – Where possible, existing vegetation will be maintained to limit views and ensure the existing character of the site is retained.
– Layout and Scale - The scale of the proposed dwellings have been designed specifically for the site. Surrounding dwellings are a mixture of size, style and orientation resulting in an eclectic architectural mix. The resulting development should be a place where people will want to live, of which they can feel proud and which contributes positively to the local community and streetscene.
Highways - Safe access to and egress from the site can be created – responding to Policy TS3.

Ecology – The proposals seek to preserve the natural assets within the site as far as is practicable.

Contaminated Land and Drainage – The relevant desktop investigations will be carried out at the reserved matters stage. However, given the site’s recent use, it is not considered such investigations are necessary at this stage.

Sustainability – Blofield Heath is considered to be a sustainable location. There are regular bus services to Brundall and Norwich together with an abundance of facilities such as a garage, an Indian restaurant, post office, health centre and primary school.

5 Year Land Supply

1.32 At the time of writing, it has been acknowledged by Broadland District Council that they cannot demonstrate a current 5 year housing land supply with a 20% buffer applied in the Norwich Policy Area (4.89 – 4.94 years). In addition, the recent planning appeal decision reference APP/L2630/W/15/3007004 at Wymondham Rugby Club reiterated that the Housing Land Supply position is the Norwich Policy Area as defined in the Joint Core Strategy and there is a shortfall amounting to 4.22 years. When this occurs, paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that the Council’s housing policies cannot be considered up to date and as such sustainable development takes precedent. It is considered that this site does not present significant issues or demonstrably outweighs the benefits of the additional housing it will provide.

Summary and Conclusions

1.33 This application is made in the context of an adopted Greater Norwich Joint Core Strategy that confirms that planning applications which positively contribute to the local housing requirements meet key JCS Policy Requirements.

1.34 The planning application is in 'general conformity' with the Greater Norwich Joint Core Strategy and does not depart from it, since it proposes residential development in a sustainable location within the Broadland Norwich Policy Area. The proposal also conforms with the existing Development Management DPD.

1.35 Due to the small size of the site, it can be developed within existing infrastructure and without adversely affecting neighbouring dwellings. Safe access and egress to and from the site can be achieved without affecting local transport links.

1.36 The NPPF is clear and explicit (paragraphs 54 and 55) that local authorities should wherever possible be supportive of new housing in rural areas which can enhance and contribute to the vitality of communities. This Statement supporting the application demonstrates that any perceived adverse impacts do not significantly outweigh the proposals’ benefits.

1.37 As such it can be demonstrated that there are no adverse impacts arising from the development that are sufficient either individually or collectively to outweigh the benefits, particularly taking into account the weight that must be given to the sustainable location of Blofield Heath.
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