

Committee Report

Item 8E

Reference: DC/20/02129

Case Officer: Daniel Cameron

Ward: Debenham.

Ward Member/s: Cllr Kathie Guthrie.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT WITH REGARDS TO THE DRAFTING OF THE SECTION 106 AGREEMENT – AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Description of Development

Planning Application. Erection of 18no dwellings (including 6no affordable dwellings).
Construction of new vehicular access off Low Road.

Location

Land South East Of, Low Road, Debenham, Suffolk

Expiry Date: 12/11/2020

Application Type: FUL - Full Planning Application

Development Type: Major Small Scale - Dwellings

Applicant: Landex Ltd

Agent: Artisan PPS Ltd

Parish: Debenham

Site Area: 1.05ha

Density of Development: 17.1 dwellings per ha.

Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions and any member site visit: The application was previously determined by Planning Committee on the 9th December 2020. It was resolved to approve the application as per officer recommendation with additional conditions with regards to sustainability and ecology and for the Section 106 Agreement to secure the opportunity to close up the access to Low Road, should the neighbouring site become available.

Has a Committee Call In request been received from a Council Member (Appendix 1): No

Has the application been subject to Pre-Application Advice: No

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

This application has been returned to committee as an issue has arisen in regards to the drafting of a the Section 106 Agreement and the type of the affordable housing to be delivered on the site. Therefore, the matter is returned to the original decision maker in order to resolve the issue.

PART TWO – APPLICATION PARTICULARS

1. Site Description

- 1.1 The site is located on the southern side of Low Road, Debenham with Cherry Tree Farmhouse located to the immediate northeast and the Gardeners Road estate directly opposite on the northern side of Low Road. To the south and to the west of the site, large agricultural field patterns are apparent.
- 1.2 The site itself is 1.05ha in size and roughly rectangular in shape. It is laid to grass with tree and hedgerow to its boundary with Low Road. Trees are also noted to the boundary with Cherry Tree Farmhouse and to the adjoining field to the south, but they are less dense and more sporadically placed.
- 1.3 The majority of the site is level with the notable exception of a ditch running along the frontage of the site to Low Road.
- 1.4 The majority of the site is located within flood zone 1, however, flood zones 2 and 3 are noted at the boundary of the site to Low Road. Cherry Tree Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building, while the site sits within the Rolling Valley Claylands Special Landscape Area.

2. Approved Development

- 2.1 The application proposes the erection of 18 new dwellings on the site with six of those to be provided as affordable dwellings. Residential dwellings would be a mix of two storey and single storey provided as terraces, semi-detached and detached houses.
- 2.2 All proposed dwellings exceed the Nationally Described Space Standard.
- 2.3 The housing mix is as follows:
 - Six, three bed houses.
 - Three, three bed bungalows.
 - Three, two bed houses.
 - Three, two bed bungalows.
 - Three, one bed bungalows.

Of these, all three of the two bed houses and all three of the one bed bungalows are offered as affordable housing.

- 2.4 The proposed access from the site is made from Low Road, contrary to the provisions of the site allocation within the Debenham Neighbourhood Plan. However, consultation with the Highway Authority notes no adverse impacts arising from the proposed access. Visibility splays, parking and manoeuvring spaces within the application site are considered to be sufficient and the site also proposes the widening of Low Road at the site frontage to 5m in width.
- 2.5 DEB3 is a site allocation set out within the Debenham Neighbourhood Plan to the immediate south of this application site and the immediate north of Ipswich Road and would provide 4ha of land for between 60 and 140 new homes with access to be taken from Ipswich Road.

- 2.6 Members considered that the access to the site was acceptable and required that provision be made to ensure that the access to Low Road be closed up should the access through the neighbouring site be brought forward.

3. Affordable Housing

- 3.1 Paragraph 65 of the July 2021 revision of the NPPF requires that at least 10% of the dwellings brought forward on major development sites (site of ten or more dwellings) be available for affordable home ownership as part of the overall affordable housing contribution for the site.
- 3.2 The applicants have offered the following tenure split for consideration within the drafting of the Section 106 Agreement:
- Three units (bungalows) for affordable rent. (50%)
 - One unit for shared ownership (17%).
 - Two units for discount market ownership/first/starter homes (33%).
- 3.3 The Council's Strategic Housing team has requested its preferred tenure split for the affordable housing to come forward on the site such that 75% of the affordable units be available for affordable rent and 25% for shared ownership. Four units as affordable rent, two as shared ownership.
- 3.4 In reviewing the Council's policies on the matter Altered Local Plan policy H4 makes no mention of a required tenure split. The Council's emergent policy with regards to the delivery of affordable housing (SP02) requires the tenure mix of affordable housing to be informed by the most up-to-date district needs assessment. In this instance it is considered to be the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) undertaken to support the emergent Joint Local Plan and dated January 2019.
- 3.5 With regards to the SHMA the following table sets out the proposed affordable housing tenure and mix within the Joint Local Plan period 2018 – 2036:

Mid Suffolk Housing Mix (tenure & size) 2018 - 2036					
Tenure & size	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 or more bed	Total
Shared ownership	147 (25.2%)	187 (32.1%)	148 (25.4%)	100 (17.2%)	583
Social rent & Affordable rent	289 (22.4%)	361 (28.0%)	303 (23.5%)	335 (26.0%)	1,288
Discount home ownership & starter homes (demand)	97 (22.5%)	143 (33.2%)	131 (30.4%)	59 (13.7%)	430
Total	533	691	582	494	2301
Total per annum	30	38	32	27	127

- 3.6 Within the table, affordable rent requirements account for approximately 56% of affordable housing, discounted home ownership for 19% and shared ownership for 25%.
- 3.7 The applicants consider their proposed mix to broadly reflect the requirements set out within the revised NPPF and would reflect the future requirements of the Local Planning Authority once the Joint Local Plan is adopted. With regards to the discounted units to be offered the applicants propose that they be subject to a local priority clause within the Section 106 Agreement such that preference for occupiers would fall to those with local connections to Debenham and then surrounding villages first before being marketed more widely within the district. It is also proposed that the discount on market value for the two properties be 30% and maintained in perpetuity and that the maximum purchase price for the properties be limited to £250k.

PART THREE – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The resolution of the 9th December 2020 still stands and conditions requested by Planning Committee at that meeting have been drafted and agreed in writing with the applicants. Both the Council and applicants consider that they meet the statutory tests for conditions set out within the NPPF such that following the completion of the Section 106 Agreement, planning permission can be issued, and preparation of the site can then begin.
- 4.2 The drafting of the Section 106 Agreement is currently stalled with the decision on the tenure mix to be agreed. As Planning Committee are the decision maker with regards to this application, the decision on whether to accept the applicants proposed tenure mix is within their gift to give.
- 4.3 With regards to the requirements of the NPPF, the Strategic Housing team proposed mix ignores the requirement of Paragraph 65 but is reflective of the Council's standard requirements in these matters based on existing adopted policy. However, this policy dates from the 1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan and was last updated based on information on the housing market from 2003. The mix offered by the applicants would be reflective of both the requirements of the NPPF and where the Council's requirements in these matters will be on the adoption of the Joint Local Plan. The tenure mix of three bungalows for affordable rent is also welcome given that they would be suitable for downsizing or for those with issues with mobility.
- 4.4 Officers consider that the delivery of an element of discounted market ownership properties within the affordable housing mix is advantageous. It delivers a type of affordable rented property that is not often offered. As an affordable housing product, shared ownership has been less popular historically as there are issues for purchasers with having to pay both their mortgage and then rent to the affordable housing provider as they attempt to build equity within the property. The Government has recently published a new standardised shared ownership lease (May/June 2021) however, it is not yet clear as to whether this addresses the issues with the product. Delivery of discounted market ownership products are more popular with purchasers and the obligations offered by the applicant would ensure that the reduced price of the dwellings would be able to be retained and passed onto future purchasers.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Officers therefore recommend that Planning Committee resolve to accept the tenure mix offered by the applicants and instruct officers to continue negotiation of the Section 106 Agreement on that basis. The benefits of the mix offered by the applicants outweigh that of the preferred mix of the Strategic Housing team. Further, given the changes to the NPPF to require delivery of discounted market housing on major development sites, the Local Planning Authority would be in step with the expectations of Government. Finally, it would begin the process of delivering the tenure of affordable housing set out within the most recent SHMA which would become a 'business as usual' practice once the emergent Joint Local Plan is adopted.