

Planning Application P/2015/01645

Land off Efflinch Phase 2

Barton under Needwood Parish Council Comments

Summary

The Parish Council notes that the proposed development appears to be contrary to Local Plan Policy SP 8;

The Parish Council feels that a more appropriate layout is required which better reflects the village's form and character;

The Parish Council is disappointed that the Planning and Design and Access Statements do not appear to have taken account of the wealth of design guidance available. Accordingly it urges the Local Planning Authority to request a design review of the layout, design and materials under the provisions of Local Plan Policy SP 8 High Quality Design

The Parish Council strongly urges the Borough Council to seek a housing mix for the development, which more closely resembles its own Housing Choice SPD;

The Parish Council welcomes the maximum amount of affordable housing being provided on site;

The Parish Council welcomes the cycle route on the southern perimeter of the site but wishes to ensure appropriate measures are put in place in order to prevent abuse. In addition, we recommend that a Travel Plan be prepared which sets out appropriate sustainable transport measures in order to reduce reliance on the car.

(1) Introduction

1.1 This is the reserved matters planning application following the grant of outline planning permission for 25 houses (P/2014/01490). The site is situated directly to the south and west of the Phase 1 scheme for 130 houses. At outline stage the applicants submitted an illustrative layout.

1.2 According to the Planning Statement, the revised layout for this application appears as a continuing arm of the development rather than a bolt-on extension. The dwellings have been sited so that they will address the new streets as a means of maximising surveillance of public routes. The

orientation of the buildings to the roadway, present identifiable frontages. They also articulate the boundaries of the site and respond to its location at the edge of the settlement.

(2) Principle of Development

2.1 We understand that notwithstanding the outline consent for the site, this reserved matters application still needs to be considered against present planning policy, and this means the relevant policies of the adopted Local Plan. It is noted that the site lies outside the settlement boundary of Barton. Whilst this has been acknowledged in the applicant's Planning Statement, no reference has been made to the appropriate planning Policy SP 8 for development outside settlement boundaries. Instead the applicants rely on the principle of development having been established by the outline consent. It will be for The Borough Council to decide what weight it can attach to the policies of the adopted Local Plan in relation to the material considerations of the planning consent.

2.2 The Planning Statement states that as a Tier 1 village Barton has a strategic allocation for 130 houses and an additional development requirement of 25 dwellings in order to meet the overall housing needs of the borough. The Statement then goes on to say that this phase 2 scheme demonstrates how the 25 additional dwellings can be delivered in Barton in accordance with the Local Plan (Planning Statement para 4.1.3). This is not our understanding or interpretation of the Local Plan. As a Tier 1 village Barton has indeed an allowance of 130 and an additional development requirement of 25 dwellings. We understand that this requirement for 25 dwellings is intended to cover windfall development within the settlement boundary of the village. It was never intended that the requirement should be used up in just one scheme in this way. We, therefore, believe that the applicant's justification for the scheme in terms of it meeting this development requirement for 25 houses cannot be supported.

(3) Layout

3.1 The development framework accompanying the original outline planning application sets out a number of design principles and guidance on such things as layout, character and appearance. We assume that these are still relevant for this phase 2 scheme. The overarching principles are that the development:-

- ***should respect the existing village character;*** ☐
- ***should be well integrated with the existing form and character of*** ☐ ***Barton should appear as a natural addition;*** ☐
- ***should preserve and enhance the existing environmental assets;*** ☐

- **that the development should respond to the location within the □ National Forest; and □**

- **should ensure green infrastructure is at the heart of the scheme □ by designing high quality green spaces**

3.2 In commenting on the original outline and the reserved matters application for the 130 houses and on the outline for phase 2, the Parish Council has been consistent in its approach of appealing for a design and layout, which reflects the character of the village. Unfortunately the proposed phase 2 layout merely extends the access road at the far eastern end of the phase 1 southwards with the main arterial road doubling back on itself.

3.3 The street elevations show a fairly standard layout of a line of detached houses, all on the same building line with little variation. This appears to be in contrast to the East Staffordshire Borough Council's Design Guide's assessment of Barton, where, **"Buildings sit both front onto and side (gable) onto the street and add variety and interest to the street scene. There is a wide variety of building styles within the town which define these frontages....."** (para 4.46). Because the village has grown up over time, its overall character is random and with different styles. Houses don't just site fronting the road but are at right angles and at different set back distances. There appears to have been no attempt to reflect this character in the layout.

3.4 At the time of the outline and reserved matters application for the first phase of the development, the Parish Council made strong representations to the effect that the layout of the proposed development did not reflect the distinctive character of the village. The applicants stayed very close to the original illustrative layout and we felt that there were other options, which should have been explored. As a consequence we were disappointed with the illustrative layout of phase 2 and had hoped that this would be rethought so as to better reflect the Development Framework. Unfortunately, the illustrative layout appears to have been carried forward in this reserved matters application and an opportunity to explore alternative layouts has been lost.

3.5 To the developers this may just be another housing site, but to the community of Barton, with the inclusion of phase 1, it is a substantial addition to the village and the Parish Council feels that it should command the most appropriate layout and the highest quality design. We feel that phase 2 is just compounding an already poor layout. As a consequence, many of the comments we made then are repeated here.

(4) Design and Materials

4.1 There is a wealth of design guidance, which appears to have been ignored in the applicant's Planning and Design and Access Statements.

National Planning Policy Framework

4.2 The **National Planning Policy Framework** attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It regards good design as a key aspect of sustainable development and it should contribute positively to making places better for people. As the main principle of the National Planning Policy Framework is that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, it therefore follows that poor, low quality design or schemes, which do not make places better for people to live, do not constitute sustainable development and should be resisted.

East Staffordshire Design Guide

4.3 **The East Staffordshire Design Guide** provides some excellent advice regarding the design of new residential development. In particular it sets out guidelines regarding the need to design streets for people – ***“a carefully designed street can provide an attractive, safe and pleasant setting to a dwelling improving its attractiveness as a result”*** (para 2.2.1).

“Whether residential development is creating new streets or simply adding to existing, it will be important that it contributes to an improved environment. This will require a focus on the design of the dwellings, individually and together, and the design of the public spaces between buildings” (para 2.2.2).

“In residential developments a street should be a place for people and not simply a traffic route” (para 2.2.8).

4.4 With regard to house types the Design Guide offers clear guidance to developers.

“The Council understands that house builders may have their own house types with which they are familiar and which offer them economies in design and construction. However it will be important to ensure that development is appropriate to its context. It will be expected that, where appropriate, existing house types will be modified to suit the specific site context. For some sites standard house types may not be suitable at all and new types of architecturally designed buildings will be needed” (para 2.3.3).

“Many suburban housing developments seek to maximise detached houses on site and do so by locating lots of small freestanding ‘boxes’ very close together and side by side. This form of development, and the relationship between buildings it creates has little urban design merit and has no basis in the domestic design language of traditional housing estates in the Borough. As a result it should be avoided in preference for more interesting and authentic building forms and relationships” (para 2.3.7).

4.5 There is very clear guidance in the Design Guide about the characteristic architecture and materials found in Barton. Para. 4.46 states,

“Buildings sit both front onto and side (gable) and add variety and interest to the street scene. There is a wide variety of building styles which define these frontages, including domestic cottages and more substantial Georgian and Victorian brick buildings”.

4.6 Para 4.47 states, ***“The predominant building materials are red-orange brick with some limited Staffordshire blue brick for detailing. Stone has been mainly used for detailing..... Plain red clay tiles were used predominantly for roofs with Staffordshire Blue clay tiles and Blue Welsh slate. Roofs are steeply pitched and simply designed ending in gables some of which turn onto the street corner”.***

National Forest Design Charter

4.7 The Development Framework acknowledges the site’s location within the National Forest. As a consequence we would have at least expected some recognition in the applicant’s Design and Access Statement of the ***National Forest’s Design Charter***. The overall aim is to create quality spaces through the growth agenda which people are proud to call home. We feel that such an objective resonates with our own thoughts about the proposed layout. The Design Charter General Principles suggests that development should:-

- ***have a distinctive character – help to create an identity and a sense of place; □***
- ***be sustainable – materials and design should last well with less cost to the planet; □***
- ***be inspiring places – urban design should uplift the spirits, provide imagination and a variety of experiences to become truly memorable places; □***
- ***have an integrated design – built design and green infrastructure must function together; □***
- ***be people focused – urban and green spaces should be designed to look good, work well and feel safe; □***
- ***have legibility and connectivity – new developments should be easy to navigate.***

4.8 The Charter proposes more “greener” design principles, including using natural and local materials, using and showcasing more timber in building design. In terms of landscaping it suggests that developments should aim to achieve a high quality interface between the built environment and its wider landscape setting.

HBF The Sign of a good place to live

4.9 The House Builders Federation, Design for Homes and the Design Council produced a design guide entitled, '***The sign of a good place to live***'. We do not know if the applicants are members of the Federation but if they are we assume that they would wish to subscribe to these principles in any development they promote.

4.10 The guide asks a range of questions about the design of new developments including:-

- ***does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones?***; ☐
- ***does the scheme create a place with locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?***; ☐
- ***are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners as well?***; ☐
- ***are streets designed in a way which encourage low vehicle speeds?***

Policy SP 24 High Quality Design

4.11 Regardless of the outline consent, surely the proposals need to meet appropriate Local Plan design policies? This means in particular Policy SP 24 regarding High Quality Design. It is unfortunate that the applicant's Planning and Design and Access Statements appear to have ignored this relevant policy. Without going into detail, the Parish Council regards many elements of this policy such as the need for developments to contribute positively to their context and create a sense of place and reinforce local distinctiveness as entirely appropriate.

4.12 The layout is very close to the illustrative layout in the outline application, but as we noted above there may be other options, which have not been explored. The street elevation lacks creativity and flair. We cannot help but feel that this layout again falls into the category of "lots of freestanding boxes very close together and side by side" – something, which the Borough Council's Design guide seeks to avoid.

4.13 It is clear that the Government wants to promote a high standard of design, and indeed good design is regarded as an important aspect of sustainable development. There is a wealth of guidance available about what this means, including the Borough Council's own excellent Design Guide. We have also outlined more recent guidance especially from the National Forest and the house building industry itself.

4.14 The problem we have is that we cannot reconcile the detailed proposals presented to us with all this advice and guidance. We just do not feel that the scheme has a distinctive character or creates a sense of place. In

accordance with the principles of the National Forest Charter we do not feel that this is an inspiring design uplifts the spirits! Accordingly we strongly urge the Borough Council to work with the applicants to undertake a design review in accordance with Policy SP 24 High Quality Design.

(5) Affordable Housing

5.1 Our understanding is that there is a need for social rented housing in the village and we would encourage the Borough Council to ensure that the maximum provision is made on site.

(6) Housing Mix

6.1 Para 3.2.1 of the applicants Design and Access Statement includes a Table setting out the housing mix for this phase of development. 84% is four and five bed houses. The remaining 16% are 2 two bed and 2 three bed affordable houses – see Table below.

6.2 The Borough Council's assessment of housing mix from its Housing Choice SPD indicates that in comparison there should be 14% four and five bed houses. The Parish Council's own research through discussions with local estate agents suggests that there is a gap in the housing mix in Barton for three bed houses as revealed in the SPD.

6.3 The Parish Council requests that the housing mix more closely resembles that contained in the Borough Council's Housing Choice SPD.

House types	Housing Choice SPD outside urban areas(%)	Proposed (%)
Housing for older people	35	
1 or 2 bed flats	22	
2 bed houses	6	8
3 bed	23	8
4 bed	10	64
5 bed	4	20

(7) Cycle Path/Travel Plan

7.1 We welcome the proposal for a cycle path running along the southern perimeter of the site as making an effective contribution to promoting sustainable transport for the development. We understand that this path may also be used for emergency vehicles. That being the case we would be concerned that an appropriate (collapsible?) barrier is installed to prevent abuse of the route by other vehicles.

7.2 In order to ensure that sustainable transport is genuinely promoted on the site, we would suggest that a Travel Plan be prepared setting out appropriate measures so as to reduce reliance on the car.