

CITY PLANS PANEL

THURSDAY, 1ST OCTOBER, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor J McKenna in the Chair

Councillors D Blackburn, C Campbell,
P Carlill, D Cohen, A Garthwaite, C Gruen,
A Khan, E Nash, P Wadsworth, G Latty and
P Gruen

40 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

41 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

42 Late Items

Although there were no formal late items of business, the Chair did accept the inclusion of supplementary information in respect of Agenda Item No. 6 – a letter of objection from the Horsforth Ward Members relating to the Horsforth Campus application (Minute No. 45 referred)

43 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests made at the meeting

44 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Walshaw

Councillor P Wray was in attendance as a substitute Member.

45 Application No.19/05272/FU- Full application for 152 dwellings at Horsforth Campus, Calverley Lane, Horsforth

The Chief Planning Officer submitted a report which sets out details of an application which sought approval for the construction of 152 dwellings at Horsforth Campus, Calverley Lane, Horsforth.

Site photographs and plans were displayed and referred to throughout the discussion of the application.

Planning Officers addressed the Panel, speaking in detail about the proposal and highlighted the following:

- Site/ location/context
- The Horsforth Campus site was closed in 2017
- The whole of this site is in Greenbelt The proposal is for 152 affordable dwellings on the site, consisting of 4 x 1 bed apartments, 20 x 2 bed apartments, 41 x 2 bed houses, 66 x 3 bed houses and 21 x 4 bed houses (including one single block of 24 flats)
- As an exception to the general presumption against residential development in the Greenbelt, The National Planning Policy Framework, at para 145g, states that this will not be inappropriate subject to a number of provisions including that the housing would meet a local need for affordable housing. The site is included in the Core Strategy as being part of the city's Strategic Green Infrastructure and part of the Leeds Habitat Network
- Landscaping strategy and provision of public open space
- Trees
- Biodiversity
- Design and character
- Housing mix/ space standards/ accessible housing
- Future maintenance of the site
- Highways improvement works (£250,000 contribution)
- Road safety issues
- Access for larger vehicles
- Car parking
- Education provision in the area

The Planning Case Officer reported that 80 representations opposing the application had been received.

The Panel heard from Councillor D Collins and Councillor J Taylor (Horsforth Ward Members) who were objecting to the proposals.

Councillor Collins informed Panel that the whole of the site was in the Greenbelt with greenery on all sides. Affordable Housing was the only reason for requesting 'special circumstances' for development. The site is included in the Core Strategy as part of the city's Strategic Green Infrastructure and the Leeds Habitat Network and should not, therefore, just be considered as 'in fill'

Councillor Collins explained that a previous application for up to 72 dwellings was acceptable to local Horsforth councillors at the time it was submitted. It complied with the guidelines of the NPPF with regards to development within the Greenbelt. The footprint, mass and height of the properties being proposed did not exceed that of the college buildings that were already present in the middle of the site, and that would be demolished and replaced with the 72 new dwellings. Members were informed that there were no

objection with this old planning proposal progressing providing it was still no greater than the footprint, mass and height of the old college buildings.

Ward Members are of the view that the decision to bring this application forward to panel appeared to be rushed and ill considered. There remained outstanding issues which require further clarification.

Referring to pages 7 & 8 of the submitted report Councillor Taylor said this was over development of a Greenfield site, the local road network could not support additional traffic from this development, education provision in the area was already over-subscribed and there was a lack of local facilities. A proposed contribution for off-site highway improvement works was considered to be insufficient.

Questions to Ward Members

- Could you explain why school provision in the area is an issue
- The previous application for this site, could you explain why that particular application was more acceptable
- Are Ward Members opposed to any housing development in Horsforth because of the lack of school places
- In terms of highway congestion, was “rat running” an issue
- Are the proposed highway improvement works acceptable and is the road layout within the site acceptable
- Ward Members had no objections to the previous application for 72 dwellings on this site but that site would also attract children who would require school places.

In responding Councillors: D Collins and J Taylor said:

- It was important that a sufficient choice of school places was available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, which was not the case for this application
- The previous application was for 72 dwellings, there was no increase in mass or height and there was no further impact on the Greenbelt
- There appears to be no enthusiasm to consider further education provision in Horsforth. There may be provision to expand Newlaithes Primary School but a lot of investment would be required
- Ward Members confirmed there was extensive “rat running” taking place in the area, there were often queues on Horsforth roundabout and New Road Side, which led to “rat running” through the Victoria Housing estate.
- Panel Members were informed that Ward Members had not seen details of the proposed highway improvement works. It was previously understood that proposals may include a “yellow box” but it had been assumed the site was not proceeding because the site was no longer in the SAP. In terms of the road layout within the site, the positioning of one single block of 24 flats in close proximity to the entrance was unacceptable, it was too over dominant in that location.

- The previous application of 72 dwellings were not affordable homes. Although it was accepted that such a development may attract some children this would be far less than from a development of 152 affordable dwellings

The Chair thanked Councillors D Collins and J Taylor for their attendance and contributions

The Panel then heard from the applicant's agent, Mr Phil Brock who was speaking in support of the proposal

Mr Brock began by thanking the Chair for providing an opportunity for the developer to address Panel. Mr Brock explained that this may appear as a very new, and potentially emotive proposal, given the site's reversion to Greenbelt following the recent SAP court ruling. However, the site had been progressed through the planning process over the past 5 years. Part of the site had an existing consent, whilst the whole site was suitable for development under the provisions of the NPPF.

He said this site was first presented to Members in October 2015 when outline approval was secured for 72 units. The balance of the site subsequently allocated in the SAP in July 2019, supporting a comprehensive allocation for 206 homes

Members were informed the site had been subject to extensive public consultation and until the SAP court ruling, this application was not particularly controversial, and was allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan voted for by 91% in the referendum.

Mr Brock suggested that a SAP allocation was not essential for the grant of planning permission, since in this case paragraph 145 of the NPPF, confirmed the proposal falls into one of the exceptions where new buildings would not be inappropriate development. In this case the complete redevelopment of previously developed land which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Greenbelt, and where the development would meet an identified affordable housing need within the local authority area. As outlined in the planning case officer's report, this position had been supported by the Planning Inspectorate and Secretary of State, in the Oxford Brookes Campus decision in April this year.

Mr Brock explained Affordable housing was in short supply across the District, but the need was particularly acute in Horsforth. In December 2018, nearly 2000 (1,914) people were on the Horsforth LCC waiting list, including over 400 in the highest category of need (Band A). Every 2 bed affordable home was subject to bids from 260 households, whilst the average waiting time for a 3 bed home in Band A was almost two and a half years.

Mr Brock said it was important to stress all 152 units proposed were affordable, delivering both the 35% Policy requirement (53 units) plus a further 99 on top. Subject to planning "Stonewater" (the developers) intend to

complete development by 2025, providing a substantial number of affordable dwellings to help address the significant unmet need for local people in the short term with a mix of social rent, affordable rent, rent to buy and shared ownership.

Mr Brock said the benefits of the proposal go far beyond 100% affordable housing including:

- Reuse of a previously developed site in a sustainable location, with shops, services and public transport within walking distance.
- Public access to over 3ha of new green infrastructure and significantly securing the long-term management and enhancement of protected habitat areas.
- In recognising Climate Emergency, every house will benefit from PV panels.

Economic benefits including employment opportunities in the construction and supply chains and through reinvestment opportunities created for Leeds City College.

Members were informed that the College was a non-profit organisation and need to raise their own funding to deliver education within Leeds. Horsforth Campus was a surplus site, vacated in 2017 and the College with the Council had sought an appropriate rationalisation strategy through an agreed Planning Application and Site Allocation process. The SAP process and Court ruling had created a critical gap in the Colleges capital programme which would impact on education provision in the City and creates significant burden holding costs.

In concluding, Mr Brock said the proposal does not rely on the SAP allocation. The site had approval for 72 units on the developed footprint, and the NPPF allows for development on both developed footprint and associated curtilage in this case. The scheme would deliver significant benefits as highlighted but significantly deliver 100% affordable housing in excess of policy and support continued education investment for young people and adults in Leeds and on that basis the developer would gratefully ask Members to support the officer recommendation.

Questions to the applicant's representative (Mr P Brock)

- How many different house types are the developers able to offer
- The design of the proposed house types was very poor, there were no redeeming features, they were too "box like"
- The positioning of one single block of 24 flats in close proximity to the entrance was not satisfactory, it was too overbearing at this location, could it be re-positioned elsewhere on site
- Who would be responsible for the maintenance of the greenspace

In responding Mr Brock said:

- There were 12 different house types available (A – L), designed to be in keeping with the local area and the Horsforth Design Statement
- The house designs were respectful to the design guide for Horsforth, reflecting the local architecture of the area together with some contemporary elements
- The Developers do not normally deliver apartments but had included apartments on this site to be in accordance with the housing mix policy. Many of the apartments meet the assessable design standards and provide contemporary design and a flagship entrance
- Members were informed the Developers would maintain the greenspace and this would be included within the Section 106 Agreement

The Chair thanked Mr Brock for his attendance and contributions

Members raised the following questions to officers/ applicant's representatives

- Would each unit have 2 parking spaces
- Why was the site no longer included within SAP
- Were there any proposals for the design of a child's play area
- Could outdoor gym equipment be considered along the cycleway
- The overall design requires significant improvement, an iconic design is required for this Greenbelt location
- The proposed 760 trees to be planted, were they all to be located within the site
- Were there any highway improvement works planned at Calverley Lane/ New Road Side Junction(A65)
- This site was previously included within the SAP, what weight would a Planning Inspector give to this if this application was to be turned down
- The plans suggest that a number of garage doors face directly onto the street, often such garages are converted into living space and can be difficult to defend at appeal
- How far would residents have to walk to get to the nearest public transport
- What weight was to be given to the distribution of housing across the District
- Did this development meet the accessible housing standards
- What was the distance to local services (Shops, doctors, community facilities)
- What was the walking distance to the nearest school
- It was the view of Ward Members that there were no surplus school places in the area, so where would children from this development go to school
- Were local Ward Members involved in a suggested Development Workshop

In responding to the issues raised, Planning Officers/ the applicant's representatives said:

- The LCC Highways Officer said; 41 x 1 bed dwellings would have 1 car parking space per unit, 64 x 3 bed dwellings would have 2 spaces per unit and the 15 x 4 bed dwellings would have 2 spaces per unit. Members were informed that this would be in line with the design guide requirements for affordable housing. The proposed car parking was adequate but visitors would be required to park on-street
- Members were informed that this site was taken out of SAP because it was one of 37 sites affected by the High Court decision this year.
- Members were informed that the creation of a play-space may be difficult, to the south of the site was the biodiversity area, there may be space in the middle of the site, but ideally the site needs to be overlooked by properties. Officer's suggested it may be possible to provide a suitable play-space which families could pause at rather than a destination.
- Officers suggested it may be possible to link a trim trail to the play-space
- The development is sympathetic to the local area with a mainly red brick design but further discussions could be held with the developers to seek a more attractive design solution for the site
- The Senior Nature Conservation Officer confirmed that it would be possible to accommodate 760 trees within the overall site although there was a good grassland area which should not be turned into woodland. Currently considering the south/east and northern areas. Members were informed that details of the landscaping scheme to be provided would be conditioned
- The LCC Highway Officer said there were no proposals for highway improvements works at the Calverley Lane/ New Road Side Junction(A65), since this stretch of road was currently operating well within capacity (Paragraph 10.16 of the submitted report referred)
- The Head of Strategic Planning advised that Members should not attach weight to the former status of the site allocation in the SAP, since the High Court decision had removed the allocation from the SAP at this stage and that weight could instead be attached to compliance with the NPPF and the existing planning permission
- The LCC Highway Officer confirmed that trying to defend the loss of a parking space at appeal was difficult
- The LCC Highway Officer said the nearest public transport was within the standard walking distance of 400m from the centre of the site
- The Head of Strategic Planning suggested that weight could be attached to housing development within the area (SP7: Distribution of land and allocations) and also that Policy SP1: (Location of land development) focuses on development in sustainable locations including main urban areas and extensions to main urban areas
- The Planning Case Officer said the development comfortably exceeds the policy requirements with regard to accessible housing suitable for a variety of needs

- Referring to page 26 of the submitted report the LCC Highway Officer confirmed that the development meets with Core Strategy accessibility targets
- The Planning Manager, Children & Families said the accepted walking distance to a Primary School was 2 miles, Newlaithes Primary School was at a distance of approximately 580m
- The Planning Manager, Children & Families said that all Horsforth schools were popular and as a consequence had no surplus spaces, any vacant spaces being filled by children from outside the area. Members were informed that there was sufficient capacity for children living in Horsforth, but it was important when applying for a school place that parents preference a Horsforth school
- The Planning Case Officer confirmed that Ward Members had not attended the design workshop referred to and had not expressed support for the design of the houses, but that Ward Members had met with officers on a number of occasions to discuss the development.

In offering comments Members raised the following matters:

- There had been previous development on this site so the principle of development had been established
- The majority of Members were of the view that the house type design was poor
- There was concern that Greenbelt land had been taken out of the SAP, one Member suggesting that this Panel needs to act as Guardians of the greenbelt
- This proposal goes way beyond Policy GB7 “Previously developed land”
- Members were disappointed that there were no highway improvement works planned for the area
- There was concern that a comprehensive landscaping scheme had not be developed
- School capacity for the Horsforth area was a concern

The majority of Members were of the view that development of this site was acceptable in principle, a small number of Members were opposed to the development suggesting it should be refused.

It was moved and seconded that development of this site be accepted in principle, the application being deferred to allow further discussions on design to take place, the application to be brought back to Panel on completion of those discussions

Upon being put to the vote the motion was passed 8 votes to 4

An amendment was moved and seconded that the application be refused on the grounds that the “greenbelt test” had not been made

Upon being put to the vote the motion was lost 4 votes to 8

RESOLVED – That development of this site be accepted in principle, the application being deferred to allow further discussions on design to take place, the application to be brought back to Panel on completion of those discussions

46 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Thursday, 22 October 2020 at 1.30pm (Remote Meeting)