

Address to Members of Braintree District Council's Planning Committee – 29/09/2020

Land adj no. 4 Helions Road, Steeple Bumpstead – ref: 19/02258/REM

Good evening Members,

Background

As you will be aware the application site benefits from outline planning permission for 9 new 3-bedroom dwellings and associated development with this reserved matters application pursuant to such details.

Since the submission of this application in December 2019 the applicant, Troy Homes, has been committed to working collaboratively with officers to try to find a reasonable solution to the ongoing subjective design differences between the 2 parties. This has included responding positively to detailed officer design feedback where possible, seeking to engage in meetings and video calls with the officers and providing in-depth clarification on the reasons why not all of officer's design suggestions can reasonably be accommodated on the site. This includes taking into account the site constraints in terms of topography and utilities and the need to respect the boundaries of the village's designated village envelope.

The applicant also wishes to highlight that they have not disregarded officer feedback in this respect as implied within the Committee report.

It is important to add that, given that they would be responsible for selling these houses, the applicant also has a vested interest in ensuring a high-quality development is deliverable on the site.

Layout, Scale, Appearance and Impact on Neighbour Amenities

The NPPF makes clear that, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.

With this in mind together with the shared responsibility of the LPA and applicant in the need to achieve good quality design we wish to re-affirm a number of important points supporting the applicant's position in this instance.

This includes the proposed development's compliance with the Essex Design Guide in respect of separation distances with those between plots 1, 2, 3 and 7 and 8 in particular in excess of this guidance. As such, for officers to still attribute harm in this respect is very disappointing.

The submitted accommodation schedule also makes clear that a significant overprovision of private garden amenity space is provided across the site with no one garden unduly compromised. This again demonstrates full compliance with the requirements and expectations of the Essex Design Guide as well as associated adopted Local Plan Policy.

In terms of plot 9 this has been sensitively designed to take into account neighbour amenity considerations in Water Lane. This includes in respect of elevational treatment and multiple outlooks from bedroom windows. The applicant has also met with the Water Lane neighbours prior to the submission of this planning application and it is noted that no objections to these proposals appear to have been received from such occupiers.

The applicant has also amended the scheme's materiality following previous officer feedback and is confident that the treatment now proposed is fully acceptable for its mixed character locality.

Other comments in respect of boundary treatments are noted but this detail can be secured by condition if deemed necessary.

Other Matters

As set out within the officers Committee report the detailed proposals are acceptable in all other planning-related regards including in respect of landscaping, highways and flood risk.

Consultees

In addition the applicant notes that there are no outstanding objections from statutory consultees with Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council confirming their support for the applicant's current detailed proposals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these detailed proposals represent a sustainable and policy-compliant form of redevelopment in line with the associated outline planning permission, which establishes the principle of development. Notwithstanding this the sustainability of such proposals is re-enforced by the NPPF's tilted balance whereby it is clear that there are no adverse impacts associated with this proposal which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when weighed against the NPPF as a whole. This includes the realisation that the outline-consented 9-units would be lost from the Council's housing supply should this application be refused.

Therefore Members are urged to follow Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council's support for these proposals by granting reserved matters planning permission accordingly.

Thank you