

27 January 2020

Comments on Report of the Chief Planning Officer re 17/02594/OT – Land off Racecourse Approach

The following are our comments on the Report of the Chief Planning Officer, dated 30 January 2019, regarding planning application 17/02594/OT.

Comments

1. At the Leeds City Plans Panel meeting on 29 August 2019 members from all political parties agreed that the site was poorly suited for residential development due to its isolation from Wetherby and lack of sustainability. However the Panel concluded by a majority vote that because it was in the approved Leeds Site Allocation Plan (SAP) it could not be refused. This approval was subject to the normal conditions and also that it be **“...subject to the submission of an amended Masterplan and Access Parameter Plan and following delivery of a vehicular access into the site to meet the SAP Site Requirements...”** This condition was added because the SAP states **“Highway Access to Site: Access points must be created onto York Road and Racecourse Approach B1224.....The access points will need to be linked within the site...”**. the developers raised no objection to this condition, and when specifically asked, said that the land on the south west corner of the SAP site did not constitute a “ransom strip”.
2. Now, the developers are returning to the Panel to suggest that they be allowed to try to meet this specific SAP and Plans Panel requirement by having a *bus only* access from the eastern end of York Road, which **“would involve forming an access across the avenue of protected trees”** This is clearly unsatisfactory because:
 - 2.1 It does not meet the SAP and Plans Panel requirement for vehicular access from the York Road onto the site,
 - 2.2 It will require driving a road through the protected trees and which ignores the SAP requirement that **“The design brief for the development should show the retention of key landscape features such as the avenue of trees.....”** Moreover, Page 51 of the Design & Access Statement (April 2017) states the following: **“As the historical assessment identifies, The Avenue of trees dates back to as early as 1909. Its retention is therefore an important consideration in any design proposal. The trees which are protected by a preservation order will be assessed and a comprehensive management plan agreed, including the removal of poor trees and replanting if necessary..... Any missing trees should be replaced as part of any development proposal as demonstrated to further emphasise this important route.”** However, the developer now states (para 2.11) that **“it is evident there are several gaps between some of the trees, and some of the trees have died, thereby allowing opportunities to cross the avenue of trees without any tree loss”** in direct contravention of previous promises to replant.

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2.3 An entrance in the suggested location is dangerously close to the roundabout at the junction with Racecourse Approach and will cross the site of a recent pedestrian fatality.

- 3 The developer claims that ***“it is clear that the landowner of the south western corner of the allocation is unwilling at this present moment in time to allow Taylor Wimpey an access through their site.”*** Our information is that when approached, the landowner offered to sell the whole of his land to Taylor Wimpey to allow them to develop access through this site and also to build the houses shown on their “Comprehensive Development Plan”. The third party landowner initially expressed support for the inclusion of the whole site within the SAP and, to date, this letter of support has not been retracted so it must be assumed that the landowner is supportive of Taylor Wimpey’s proposals for building 800 houses and also roads and houses on the land he currently owns, unless Leeds City Council hears otherwise from him.
- 4 In the Planning Officer’s report in para. 2.09, he states that ***“it is the applicant’s preference to secure an access in the south western corner as this would provide better links to and from the site.”*** And yet in para. 2.06 he states that ***“...work by the applicant, and agreed by the Highways Officer, concludes that it would not be appropriate to serve the entire allocation of 1,100 dwellings or indeed a significant amount of development from Carr Lane”*** Again this is in contravention of the SAP requirement that ***“.....The access points will need to be linked within the site...”***

CONCLUSION

1. It is clear from the comments above that the developer has yet to develop a comprehensive and realistic plan to meet the stated requirements of the SAP and the Plans Panel. Yet the site’s inclusion in SAP is the main reason for outline approval to have been given. **We would, therefore, urge that Leeds City Plans Panel does not accept the proposals contained in the Officer’s report and remits the development back to the developers and Officers, in order that they may put forward proposals which meet both the SAP and Leeds Plans Panel requirements.**