

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 30th July 2019
DEPARTMENT: Planning Service
HEAD OF PLANNING: Peter Baguley

APPLICATION REF: N/2019/0782

LOCATION: Land off Billing Brook Road

DESCRIPTION: Erection of 4 semi detached single occupancy bungalows (8 bungalow units in total) to provide Supported Living Housing, a Staff Management Building and new vehicular and pedestrian access road off Billing Brook Road

WARD: Talavera

APPLICANT: Northamptonshire County Council/Northampton Partnership Homes

AGENT: Maber Architects

REFERRED BY: Head of Planning
REASON: Council owned land

DEPARTURE: No

CONSULTATION BY NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That the Council raise **No Objections** to the proposed development.

2 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 The proposal is for the erection of 4 semi-detached single occupancy bungalows (8 bungalow units in total) to provide Supported Living Housing, a Staff Management Building and new vehicular and pedestrian access road off Billing Brook Road.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The application site comprises an area on open space located to the east of Billing Brook Road. It undulates in land levels but generally rises to the north and west. The site is predominantly grassed but benefits from a number of established trees to its boundaries and also a mature oak tree in the southern part of the site.

3.2 Thorplands Primary School is located to the west of the site beyond the Billing Brook Road and there are residential properties on Waterpump Court and Great Field Court to the east and south of the site. There is a footway to the north of the site (Woodfield Walk) that links to a footbridge over

the Billing Brook Road, with a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and outdoor gym in an area of open space to the north of the footway.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 None relevant.

5 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Statutory Duty

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014), and Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies.

6 National Policies

6.1 The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following sections are of particular relevance to this application:

Paragraphs 7-12 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 61 - Housing needed for different groups in the community.

Paragraph 127(f) - Create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities.

Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places.

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

6.2 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

Policy S1 - The Distribution of Development

Policy S10 - Sustainable Development Principles.

Policy H1 - Housing

Policy RC2 - Community Needs

Policy BN1 - Green infrastructure

Policy BN2 - Biodiversity

Policy BN9 - Planning for Pollution Control

6.3 Northampton Local Plan 1997 (Saved Policies)

Due to the age of the plan, the amount of weight that can be attributed to the aims and objectives of this document are diminished, however, the following policy is material to this application:

Policy E20 - New Development (Design)

6.4 Supplementary Planning Documents

Northamptonshire Parking Standards (September 2016)

Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004

7 CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS

- 7.1 **Arboricultural Officer (NBC)** – A comprehensive report has been submitted which provides a good level of detail: to seek to prevent harm to the retained trees the control measures specified must be implemented in a timely fashion and properly maintained throughout the duration of the development. However, whilst the report recommends ground protection measures to accommodate the development whilst causing the least avoidable harm to the roots of those retained trees they offer no detail of how that may be achieved. A site-specific document will be required that will demonstrate how the proposals can be implemented without causing harm to the adjacent trees; this text could probably be secured by Condition.
- 7.2 **Environmental Protection (NBC)** – Environmental Protection have commented to NCC direct and raised no objections subject to conditions to address land contamination, air quality, and construction hours.
- 7.3 **Northants Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor** – No objections.

8 APPRAISAL

Principle of development

- 8.1 Policy RC2 of the Joint Core Strategy relates to open space and seeks to resist the loss of open space unless it can be demonstrated that:
- There is evidence that improvements can be made through the provision of a replacement facility of equal or better quality taking into account accessibility; or
 - The proposal will bring about community benefits that outweigh the loss of the facility; or
 - Having regard to the relevant open space study, the space is surplus or is little used.
- 8.2 In addition, Paragraph 97 of the NPPF also seeks to protect against the unjustified loss of open space of public value.
- 8.3 However, the Council cannot presently demonstrate a five year housing land supply. Therefore, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development in Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the development of the site for housing should be permitted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 8.4 The application site comprises the southern part of an area of open space that runs along the eastern side of Billing Brook Road. The two parts of open space are bisected by a footway that links to the footbridge over the Billing Brook Road, with the northern part of the open space containing play facilities in the form of a MUGA and outdoor gym and the southern part (i.e. the application site) comprising grassland with a number of mature trees. The Council's 2017 Open Space study classifies the site as Natural and Semi Natural Open Space and the 2016 Green Infrastructure Plan identifies the site as an Urban Open Space Green Infrastructure Component.
- 8.5 The proposed development would be located in the centre of the open space and would result in the loss of a large proportion of the existing open space. However, generous strips of open space would be retained around the proposed development to the boundaries of the site with additional tree planting proposed such that the existing green infrastructure connections would not be wholly lost. Furthermore, whilst the site appears to be used by local residents for informal recreational resource such as dog walking, the land level changes limit the activities that can take place on the site and it does not contain any play or recreational facilities.
- 8.6 In addition, the benefits arising from the provision of eight one-bed bungalows must be taken into account. Such dwellings would not only contribute to the Council's housing supply but would also provide specialist accommodation for persons with learning difficulties and autism to help

contribute to the different housing needs across the Borough in accordance with the requirements of Policy H1 of the Joint Core Strategy.

- 8.7 As part of a balanced assessment, it is considered that the community benefits arising from the proposed eight specialist housing units would outweigh the loss of open space in this instance. Therefore, no objections are raised to the principle of the proposed development.

Layout and Design

- 8.8 Saved Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and Policy H1 of the Joint Core Strategy place great importance on the quality of design of new developments and are in conformity with the NPPF which advises that planning should always seek to secure high quality design.
- 8.9 The proposed development would have a looped access road off the Billing Brook Road and the new bungalows and management suite would be clustered around a central courtyard area with a perimeter walkway and fence. Whilst the development would result in the loss of a large area of grassland, the layout would allow the retention of a number of the boundary trees and the mature oak tree within the site. The inward facing nature of the development and perimeter fencing is regrettable from a character of the area perspective, however the applicant has advised that the layout of the development is necessary due to the needs and vulnerable nature of future occupiers and Northants Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor has also raised no objection. Furthermore, the application has been amended since its submission to clarify that the boundary treatments for the rear gardens would be low in height with hedges to the rear such that the perimeter walkway would not be enclosed by high fences to either side. In addition, storm porches have also been added to the rear of the bungalows to create a sense of a more outward facing development. Overall, it is considered that objections cannot be sustained to the layout and design of the proposed development.

Residential Amenity

- 8.10 Saved Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan, Policy H1 of the Joint Core Strategy and the Core Planning Principles in the NPPF all seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
- 8.11 The proposed residential use would, by definition, be compatible with neighbouring residential properties to the eastern and southern sides of the site. Furthermore, the proposal comprises single storey buildings set well in from the boundaries of the site such that it would not appear unduly prominent or give rise to a loss of privacy to neighbouring properties. As such, the proposal would not have any adverse implications with regards to the residential amenities of neighbours.
- 8.12 Turning to amenities of future occupiers of the proposed development, all habitable rooms would be served by windows. Whilst the proposed rear gardens would be small in size and not particularly private, the development would benefit from a generous communal garden area and the new properties would be buffered from the paths neighbouring the site by the perimeter fence and walkway within the site and the retained open space outside of the development site. As such, and given the development has been designed to serve a specific type of occupier, it is considered that an acceptable level of amenity would be afforded for future occupiers.

Parking and highway safety

- 8.13 The application proposes 8 x 1 bed bungalows with a management suite and would be served by 23 parking spaces and a minibus space from a new access drive off the Billing Brook Road. The development would therefore benefit from generous parking provisions and it is noted that the application is subject to consultation with the Highway Authority, the comments of whom will be directed to the relevant Planning Officer at the County Council for consideration.

Other considerations

- 8.14 As this is a County consultation other technical issues will be considered by the County Council as the planning authority for the application, including the request for conditions from Environmental Protection to address land contamination, air quality, and construction hours, and also arboricultural and ecological matters.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 To conclude, as part of a balanced assessment, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable and it is recommended that no objections are raised to the proposed development.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 N/2019/0782.

11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The development is CIL liable.

12 SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



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