Parish Council Comments - Planning Committee Meeting 26 September 2024

Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council

30/09/2024

Planning Register

Reference	2024/01056/FULM	Date Recd.	10/09/2024	Amendment	
Description	Residential development of 226 dwellings (comprising 158 market (inclusive of 1 no. self build plot) and 68 affordable), landscaping, public open space and associated infrastructure			Ward	Grappenhall
				App Type	FULL
				Dev Type	Major residential
				Plan Status	Undesignated
Location	Land South Of Curzon Drive, Keepers Road And Boddington Drive, East Of Lichfield Avenue, And West Of Stansfield Drive, WA4 3LG				
Applicant	Redrow Homes Ltd. and Homes England				

Local Council Comments (Refuse 26/09/2024)

Background

Members and officers of the Parish Council have been involved in pre application discussions between the developer (Redrow Homes) and local residents and significant amendments have been made to the proposed scheme following these discussions.

The Planning Committee of Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council (the Parish Council) considered the above planning application at an extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 26 September 2024.

Whilst the Parish Council supports many of the changes made to the scheme from that which was subject to pre-application consultation it has a number of concerns with the scheme subject to the current planning application.

Areas of concern

The mix of housing

Policy DEV2 of the recently adopted Warrington Local Plan (WLP) indicates that residential development should provide a mix of different housing sizes and types and should be informed by the Borough wide housing monitoring target as set out in the Council's most up to date Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) and any local target set by a Neighbourhood Plan (NP), taking into account site specific considerations.

The LHNA (2021) undertaken as part of the WLP provides evidence for the South Warrington sub area which includes Grappenhall and Thelwall.

The Grappenhall and Thelwall NP is at an early stage of preparation. However, initial consultation undertaken on the NP indicates that the mix of housing type/tenure is an issue that local residents feel strongly about, especially the need to provide smaller open market housing that is likely to be more affordable for first time/young buyers (particularly those who do not meet the criteria for 'affordable housing'); to provide for separating/divorcing couples that find themselves in a situation where they need to purchase two homes (often of a size capable of accommodating children) from the limited equity provided by the sale of one home or to provide for older people looking to down size (thereby freeing up larger family homes). In relation to housing for older people there would appear to be considerable support for bungalows.

A LHNA for the parish of Grappenhall and Thelwall has recently been commissioned, the findings of which are anticipated by the end of 2024. These could be made available to WBC if the application has not been determined by then.

The Planning Statement (PS) submitted with the planning application indicates that of the proposed 158 open market houses, there would be no 1 or 2 bed properties, 94 (59%) would be 3 bed properties, 61 (39%) would be 4 bed and 3 (2%) would be 5 bed properties (Table 6.1). Table 8.2 of the PS indicates that, in terms of open market housing, the proposed residential mix is 4% less in terms of 1 bed properties, 28% less in terms of 2 bed properties, 10% more in terms of 3 bed properties and 22% more in terms of 4+bed properties than the mix suggested as needed in the South Warrington sub area in the most recent LNHA.

Section 8 and Appendix 3 of the PS seeks to set out the justification for the deviation of the housing mix in relation to market housing from that set out in the LHNA. The Parish Council notes that it is suggested that the WLP policy wording provides for flexibility, a precedent has been set by recent decisions made by WBC on other housing applications and that the proposed mix has been informed by market advice and intelligence.

The applicant suggests that policy DEV2 of the WLP is not prescriptive and that the requirements of the LHNA are for guidance only. However, as indicated above, the WLP policy states that 'residential development should provide a mix of different housing sizes and types and should be informed by the Borough wide housing monitoring target as set out in the Council's most up to date Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) and any local target set by a Neighbourhood Plan, taking into account site specific considerations. In this respect the Parish Council highlights that the Thesaurus definition of the word 'should' indicates 'must', 'would', 'ought to' and 'have a duty to'. Therefore, it considers that the policy does not have the flexibility suggested by the applicants and should be applied as written.

Of the decisions suggested by the applicants as providing a precedent, the Parish Council notes that all of those cited were determined before the adoption of the WLP. Accordingly, it is considered that these do not provide a relevant precedent.

The applicants suggest that the proposed housing mix has been informed by market advice and intelligence. However, the Parish Council notes that the advice/intelligence received is from only one local agent. It is suggested that the views of one agent are not definitive. Moreover, the Parish Council would suggest that market demand and need are not one and the same. Demand is not in itself a reflection of need.

In the light of the above therefore, the Parish Council considers that the proposed housing mix in relation to open market housing does not accord with the relevant policy (DEV 2) of the WLP. It is particularly concerned that acceptance of the applicant's arguments, as outlined above, in relation to this application would set a precedent for future planning applications for residential development on the large housing allocations identified in the WLP within the Parish (Thelwall Heys and South East Warrington Urban Extension).

Layout

As WBC is aware there are significant traffic issues within the existing residential area adjacent to the application site at certain times of the day caused by the drop off/pick up of pupils at Grappenhall Heys school. These are such that on occasions the surrounding residential area is completely log jammed. The Parish Council considers that the proposed layout of the scheme, in the south-west of the site, has failed to provide an opportunity to address the issue of access to the school. Moreover, it is suggested that unless the existing situation is addressed the increase in the number of dwellings will merely serve to exacerbate the

problems.
Design – sustainability
The Parish Council is supportive of the inclusion of Air Source Heat Pumps and Electric Vehicle charging points to all properties as proposed. However, it considers that Solar PV panels should also be installed at the build stage.
Public Open Space (POS) provision
The Parish Council is aware that the original outline application on the site intended that the application site (phase 2) would provide the open space for the whole site comprising phases 1a,1b and 2. Whilst it is appreciated that the original outline application has since lapsed the Parish Council is concerned about the extent of POS overall particularly given the paucity of open space within the existing residential developments on phases 1a and 1b.
The applicant indicates that the proposed development would deliver a total of 26,191 sqm of POS. It is unclear whether such a provision would satisfy the WBC requirement for a development of the size proposed. Nevertheless, it is noted that in referring to the public space to be delivered para 6.29 of the PS refers to the POS comprising equipped play; play on the way; amenity space and natural/semi natural green space in addition to the proposed green and blue streets. Whilst it is questionable whether the proposed green and blue streets or the 'play on the way' should be included in any calculation of POS, the inclusion of the private amenity space for individual properties is entirely inappropriate if that is what is being suggested.
The Parish Council notes that the safeguarded land and verges are excluded from the POS. However, the extent of the verges is unclear from plan ref 1495-02-02-010. In relation to connectivity, it is noted that the connectivity plan ref 1495-02-02-009 and figure 6.3 of the PS indicate various paths on the area of safeguarded land. The Parish Council considers that this is likely to be somewhat misleading for both existing and future residents in that such provision would not be retained if the safeguarded area is to be developed for a link road at some point in the future.
Biodiversity net gain (BNG)
The Environment Act 2021 requires all new developments deliver a BNG of at least 10%. The BNG Assessment submitted with the planning application indicates that the proposed development would result in a 65.64% loss in biodiversity. It also indicates that it is not feasible to offset this on-site and it is therefore suggested that offsite mitigation should be agreed through a S106 agreement with the LPA and that a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan be conditioned as part of any planning permission. No details are provided regarding off-site mitigation. However, it is considered that the Parish Council should be included in any discussions regarding the provision of this.
Planning Obligations
The Parish Council notes the draft heads of terms set out in section 10 of the PS. However, it is concerned that in relation to public transport the only references are to the provision of new facilities such as bus shelters, as well as meeting the costs of re-routing existing bus services.
The closest existing shops to the application site are on Bridge Lane, Dudlows Green Road and in Stockton Heath. It is imperative that these facilities are accessible from the site by means other than the private car. The Parish Council is aware of the emerging proposals for the neighbourhood centre at Appleton Cross. However, this is some considerable walking distance from the site. Accordingly, the Parish Council considers that there is therefore a need for increased bus services to access existing and proposed services. The Parish Council also considers that there is a need for contributions towards other forms of infrastructure such as retail, health and education facilities to support both existing and future development.
Conclusion
To conclude therefore the Parish Council acknowledges that the principle of residential development on the application site has already been established. It also supports many of the changes made to the submitted scheme from that which was subject to pre-application consultation. However, it objects to the proposal as submitted in respect of the specific matters referred to above.

Planning Authority Decision ( )

Recommend Date >= 26-Sep-2024 AND Recommend Date <= 26-Sep-2024