

Joint Planning Committee 17 September 2008

WAVERLEY B.C.	
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Addendum to report of Head of Planning

Item 5 - Application WA/2008/0788 Land at Dunsfold Park, Stovolds Hill, Cranleigh GU8 4BS

Additional information from the applicants

The applicants have submitted four separate papers responding to and commenting on the consultation comments and representations.

Section 8 Consultation responses and Parish Comments

Waverley Borough Council Housing – final comments included in full below.

The planning application relating to Dunsfold Park acknowledges the Council's requirement for 'affordable housing'. The applicant has worked co-operatively with Council officers in helping to outline its proposals. The proposal makes provision for 910 homes as being 'affordable', and for 2,601 new dwellings in total.

It is recognised that there is a need for more affordable housing across the Borough, and the development of additional affordable homes is a key Corporate Priority for the Council.

Nevertheless, at this stage, the Housing Service cannot support the planning application as it currently stands in so far as the proposals for affordable housing are concerned. The reasons are as follows:-

1. The eligibility criteria which the applicant proposes to use to prioritise nominations to the 'affordable homes' is as follows:
 1. persons in employment or applying for employment at Dunsfold Park
 2. persons in employment or applying for employment in Cranfold*
 3. persons on the Housing Register of the Waverley Borough
 4. lives in the Cranfold area in a concealed household
 5. lives in Waverley Borough in a concealed household
 6. persons from outside the Borough on the Choice Based Lettings scheme

Unfortunately, there is significant uncertainty for the Council as a Housing Authority in respect of 1 and 2 above because it is difficult to determine how many households could be eligible for housing at Dunsfold Park under this eligibility cascade. It is entirely possible that the numbers in 1 and 2 could be so great as to mean that few households in category three might be housed. The phasing of the affordable housing over some years, and the creation of demand for affordable housing by creating more jobs on-site gives rise to uncertainty about how many affordable homes will be accessed by ordinary applicants on the Council's Housing Needs Register.

2. The applicant is keen to promote the sustainability credentials of this new settlement/village. One of the ways of promoting sustainability is to encourage people who work in the new village to also live there in the homes to be built.

The applicant is proposing that the first criteria on which an allocation of affordable housing is to be made should be to those who are employed or applying for employment in the new settlement.

Whilst officers understand the philosophical approach behind this criterion, the consequence for the local housing authority is that those in the greatest housing need on the Council's Housing Needs Register will be unlikely to be housed at Dunsfold Park. This restriction effectively fetters the Council's ability to meet housing need, and the Council would not expect to have its ability to house people into affordable housing fettered.

The applicant's agent acknowledges that this is the case. However, it appears that the need to create a homogenous and sustainable settlement, with as few journeys as possible generated, means that the applicant is unable to change its requirement i.e. that first priority for affordable housing must go to people who are employed, or are applying for work, on the new settlement.

CONCLUSION

The Housing Service therefore has a fundamental OBJECTION to the application because of restrictions on who can be housed in the first instance on the new settlement. This fetters the Housing Authority's discretion to meet the needs of those in greatest housing need in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy. It therefore does not accord with the requirements of the Local Plan, and the Council's aspirations as set out in the Housing Strategy Statement.

As a result of this fundamental objection to the proposal before the Planning Committee, it would not appear possible to overcome this material planning consideration by way of provisions within a Section 106 Agreement, as mooted by the applicant.

Shalford Parish Council has further commented that it reiterates and emphasises that it is very concerned about the extra traffic emanating from the proposed development and the effect this will have on residents.

Section 11 Conclusion and recommendation

The Council's Housing Service's objection to the affordable housing proposals is a material planning consideration and should be the subject of an additional reason for refusal.

Additional reason for refusal

10. In the opinion of the Planning Authority the proposal for affordable housing unacceptably focuses on providing homes for employees of Dunsfold Park businesses and the expanded employment floorspace at the expense of local people in housing need. This conflicts with Government policy in PPS3 to provide housing for people who are unable to access or afford market housing. It would thus fail to meet the needs of those in greatest housing need contrary to Policy H4 of the South East Plan (Policy H3 of the Secretary of State's proposed changes), Policy DN11 of the Surrey Structure Plan and the Council's approach to affordable housing in the adopted Borough Local Plan, Corporate Priorities and its Allocations Policy.