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25.10.2011

Dear Mr Burton

Re: Proposed Redevelopment. Wortley Village Master Plan. Ref: 11.001

I refer to recent correspondence between us and our meeting on the 17 August, when we discussed the progress of the above planning application, and in particular, the responses that you have now had from your consultations .

My e-mail of the 15 August confirmed that I did not feel that it was appropriate to withdraw the planning application at this stage, and we agreed at our meeting that, as a major application, it was not time restricted. There are a number of matters which will require further consideration by my clients before I am able to advise you of any changes to the proposals that we feel would be appropriate.

You have provided me with a summary of the consultations together with a copy of the various consultation responses and I have personally inspected the files to get a proper understanding of the concerns that have been voiced by residents and other members of the public. I will respond to these as follows:

General.

Before responding to the various consultees concerns, and addressing individual objections, I think that I should again point out that this is a single proposal for the re-development of Wortley village, encompassed within a "Village Master Plan". It is not a matter of picking and choosing those bits that you like and don't like.

The viability of the plan depends upon it providing a comprehensive package of proposals aimed at improving existing facilities, providing open market housing, old peoples housing, workspace, improved commercial premises, allotments, car parking, access and landscaping. Wortley village is not, and should not become, a secluded dormitory for well off commuters, but should continue to be a working village.

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In view of the size of the village, Wortley is extremely fortunate in having a church, PH & restaurant, club, post office, shops, allotments, and a history and landscape that attracts tourists and walkers. These facilities have not arrived in the village by accident, but have been the result of an enlightened landlord providing for the local community. It should not be forgotten, that the villages that we most admire and want to protect in this country are nearly all associated with large rural estates. The protection and ongoing management that has been provided by the owners over many hundreds of years has resulted in the places that we are now so anxious to encase in aspic !

A number of objectors have implied that the current proposals are simply a means for the owners to extract financial profit at the expense of the community. The Wharnccliffe Estate has remained in the same ownership for more than 500 years. This should be regarded as a remarkable tenure, and the fact that the present owners are trying to secure the viability of the village for the long term future should be applauded.

I think that it is worth pointing out that for many years there has been a UDP allocation for 3.25 Ha of housing land to South of the village over the area of the allotment gardens and to the East of The Old Vicarage. This is conveniently overlooked by those that comment on the current proposals, but dispels the view that the Estate are only interested in profit. At the current recommended density of 30 dwellings per hectare, this site would have accommodated 98 dwellings and been worth several million ! How many of the objectors would have turned down such an opportunity !

A rural estate is like any other business. It has to re-invest in its facilities, up-date its product, adapt with changing times and create an income stream that is sufficient to maintain the business and the people who work for that business whilst at the same time generating a profit margin to allow for future improvements. The Design & Access statement points out that in the past, Wharnccliffe Estate was able to rely upon income from mining, industry and agriculture. This is no longer the case, and the future viability of the village will depend upon income from a mix of residential, commercial and tourist interests.

Your Summary.

Consultation.

The village and the Parish Council have been consulted over a period of almost three years. An open meeting was held with the residents at Wortley Hall, and the Parish Council have been provided with copies of the master plan proposals.

Unfortunately, public participation rarely provides a balanced view. The public meeting was dominated by a small number of residents with personal issues in respect of the proposals. Those that were not happy then are very largely the same people who have written to object now that the application has been submitted. I will deal with all objections later in this response, but it is clear that most objections are restricted to those elements of the master plan that the individuals perceive will have an effect upon them personally.

The Parish Council were asked to respond formally to the master plan proposals before a planning application was submitted. They initially felt unable to provide a comment, but later debated the matter and advised the Estate on the 22 Feb 2011 that a majority by 11 votes to 5 votes were in favour of the principle of the 10 year development plan.

A copy of the minutes of the Special Council Meeting is attached

Green Belt.

Special circumstances.

The section above describes what are special circumstances. The Wharncliffe Estate is not a developer, but a long term owner of a rural village which needs to be protected and enhanced, not just for the owners financial benefit, but for the benefit of the residents, both present and future.

Very substantial parts of the village master plan will not provide any financial return, and others will not provide a return for many years. The Estate wish to retain as much of the existing and proposed property within the village as they can, and require an element of financial "pump priming" . The Design & Access statement advises a programme of development and makes clear that monies received from sales will be used to finance other works within the village.

Site 1.

This site was inspected by yourself and Martin Winnard. You both felt that, although in the Green Belt, a case could be made for limited development to help facilitate the remainder of the village plan. The Conservation Officer makes the point that the proposals are sensitively designed but that special justification is required.

The site lies between existing dwellings fronting on to The Flats and is enclosed by mature trees to the North and the natural contours to the South. Development would not have an adverse impact upon openness or character. It is not clear that the site formed a part of the historic deer park as it was clearly separated from it in the 1880's.

The current proposals will have minimal impact upon the Green belt when viewed alongside the proposed residential allocation in the UDP.

The construction of the proposed almshouses (site 9), will provide specially designed single storey houses for the elderly, and the proposed terrace of 2-3 bedroom cottages on site 3, small family dwellings close to the centre of the village. Neither site will offer houses for sale . Both sites, together with the infrastructure improvements that are proposed throughout the centre of the village will require initial funding.

Site 9.

A substantial part of site 9 is not within the Green Belt. The site is close to the centre of the village and the proposal is for a specialised development of almshouses aimed at providing much needed accommodation for the elderly and disabled. The almshouses will

be affordable, and it is hoped that they will be taken up by residents of the village and the surrounding Parish, whether they currently occupy property owned by the Estate or not.

The previous proposal for this site did not propose a development that was sympathetic to the immediate surrounds, the adjoining conservation area or the historic landscape. I have forwarded details of existing elderly residents who have confirmed their interest in renting an almshouse cottage.

Site 8.

The majority of Site 8 is allocated for residential use and is outside the Green Belt. The Conservation officer has no objection to the proposal and advised that the design of the new dwellings were in keeping with and preserved the character of the area. Having reviewed the matter, I am proposing to omit Plot 3, but to retain Plots 1 & 2, which will result in a very minor infringement of the Green Belt boundary.

Site 11.

The re-development of Site 11 proposes a development which occupies a reduced footprint in relation to the existing agricultural buildings . The proposed workspace is an appropriate use in the Green Belt and the Conservation Officer comments that it will result in an improvement to the agricultural aesthetic and views from the Avenue.

The existing buildings are occupied by the agricultural tenant of Wharnccliffe Chase. The land at Wharnccliffe Chase is ancient grazing with public access and is some distance from the village. The tenant requires winter housing for sheep, and the estate have agreed to erect a new purpose built sheep shed at Wharnccliffe Chase in a suitable and agreed location. The existing buildings at Wortley will become redundant to agriculture.

As with all other proposed developments within the village, the proposal to build purpose designed workshops and offices is a critical part of the whole. As has been recognised by the government and all local authorities, rural employment is important to the survival of rural communities. The proposed workshops and offices will provide flexible, high quality and sustainable accommodation that will encourage business to remain in the village with benefits to employment and the village economy.

As with most other proposals of the master plan, the construction of the workspace on Site 11 will not generate a financial return for many years. The units will not be for sale, but will be rented by the Estate. Any surplus income that is generated will be re-invested back into the Estate, in exactly the same way that it would with any other business.

The sustainable development of site 11 will include ground/air source heat pumps and solar energy to provide heating and hot water. The buildings will be constructed with sustainable local stone and timber.

Other Housing Sites

Site 2.

The proposed new dwelling on site 2 does not overlook the Old School House. The proximity of the dwellings is no closer than many other existing properties throughout Wortley village. Dwellings within the village relate closely one to another and are often divided by stone walls or hedges. Both the new property and the Old School House have generous private gardens.

I have submitted revised drawings to illustrate an increase in the offset dimension between the School House and the proposed new cottage. The shared garage accommodation has been reduced to 3 No garages.

The land to the rear of Avenue Villas has become overgrown and run down. The area would benefit from management and improvement. The tree report confirms that with proper design, there is no reason why the development of a single small cottage should threaten existing trees. It has already been agreed with the Tree Officer that existing trees should be subject to management and improvement works.

The site of the proposed new dwelling provides generous garden space , and slight adjustment of the cottage, allowing for the front elevation to face in a NE direction would improve sunlight penetration to the rear elevation and ensure that there is no compromise of the Councils space between dwellings standards.

A revised site layout plan has been submitted. This demonstrates that there is no overlooking and that the rear garden to the new dwelling will benefit from unobstructed afternoon sunshine.

Site 6.

The Conservation Officer advises that the proposed new dwelling in this location would enhance and preserve the character of the Conservation Area.

The majority of trees on this site are self seeded sycamore, growing out of rubble which had been piled over the site in the past. The centre of the site is occupied by an unattractive pre-fabricated garage. The trees are growing close to one another and will, in time, have to be removed, leaving unbalanced and unattractive survivors.

The proposed cottage can be constructed without having a detrimental effect upon remaining trees and the re-development offers the opportunity to plant new semi mature specimen trees in substitution of those that are lost.

Affordable Housing

The village plan proposes a total of 26 dwellings. Affordable Housing is required at the rate of 25% of the number to be built when schemes exceed the 15 dwelling threshold. We are proposing that there should be 6 No almshouses which represents almost exactly

25 % of the total. It should be noted that no one site throughout the village is large enough to trigger affordable housing. In the circumstances reasonable negotiation in respect of this issue is appropriate.

You have accepted that there is no reason why the Estate should not manage the almshouses as they currently do with all other retained property in Wortley, and I have no doubt that conditions can be attached to the proposed Section 106 agreement. We are happy to discuss and agree occupancy criteria.

Site 3 is to be developed with small 2-3 bedroom cottages. There is a general lack of small terraced cottages in rural locations which are suitable for the young, small families or the active elderly. The estate are confident that there will be an excellent demand to rent.

Sustainable Construction.

The Design & Access statement makes clear that all development in the village will be undertaken in a sustainable way. The village itself is in a sustainable location and benefits from excellent facilities. All proposed new housing and the workspace units are in close proximity to the centre of the village and all facilities can be accessed on foot.

All new houses will be constructed to a minimum Code 3, based upon current recommendations and to improved standards as these are required. We are happy to confirm.

The larger sites, including sites 3, 9 and 11 will incorporate ground or air source heat pumps to provide heating and hot water together with solar panels where appropriate. All new buildings will be designed to be air tight, with above required standards of insulation and with high performance window systems.

Car parking.

I note the response to the proposed woodland car parking, and whilst I believe that this could be provided with minimal impact upon the existing trees, and in such a way that it was of real benefit in encouraging walkers and tourists, we are happy to remove the proposal from the master plan. Please accept this letter as confirmation of that.

The new car park at the centre of the village does not provide only additional spaces. As currently proposed, the village car park illustrates 50 spaces. Of these, 12 spaces are required for the terraced cottages at site 3, 18 spaces will be allocated to the village Club to replace those that are lost as a result of the creation of a landscaped garden, 6 spaces will be allocated for the use of allotment holders and 2 spaces will replace those lost as a result of the construction of the semi detached cottages (cottages 3). This leaves 12 additional spaces to provide for the overspill from the village centre shops, tourists, walkers visiting the park and village residents.

I would suggest that the best way to resolve this particular issue is for me to amend the proposals for the village car park, and to allow for 8 additional spaces , giving a total of 46 spaces at this stage. Spaces lost will be replaced by additional landscaping. If this proves to be inadequate in the future, a further planning application could be submitted for the additional spaces required.

The location of the village car park is at the centre of the village, close to the shops, PH and village Club, adjoining the allotments and easily accessed by the improved roadway. With the loss of the woodland car parking, it is also as close as possible to Wortley Park and in a location where visitors will be able to easily access the footpath network.

Other Matters

Yorkshire Water.

The development of the existing allotment gardens with 11 dwellings has been the subject of a previous planning approval. Discounting the small holiday cottage which is outside the village curtilage and will be served by an independent micro sewage plant, that means that the current application is proposing an additional 14 dwellings.

I can confirm that prior to any development taking place on site the Estate would be prepared to ask Yorkshire Water to advise on the capacity and suitability of the existing Waste Water Treatment Works. Should, for any reason this not prove to be adequate or improveable, it would be proposed to drain sites 7,8,10 & 11 to an independent sewage treatment plant in the field, Site 17.

Natural England.

Building and post emergence surveys have already been undertaken. In view of the fact that elements of the master plan may not be developed for several years, further surveys would be inappropriate at this stage.

Site Investigation.

Phase 2 site investigation works would be undertaken wherever this is recommended by engineers.

Next Steps.

I think that it is important that the details of the master plan are agreed between ourselves. The Estate have employed professional architects with a proven track record in this form of development, and other expert consultants. The Local Authority employ qualified Planning Officers, a Conservation Officer, Tree Officer, Highways Officer, Ecologist and others who are able to make professional judgements.

It is important that the Parish Council are consulted with regard to any changes to the master plan, but I see little point in doing so before we have agreed a scheme which is generally acceptable to yourselves. The Parish Council have previously indicated their support in principle to the master plan proposals.

Objectors.

I have read with interest the letters of objection that have been sent to yourselves. I thought it might be best to respond to them individually:

1. Objects to the woodland car park. Now omitted
2. 56 extra car park spaces. See details above on this .
3. Wortley Hall. Concerned about their access. It is not affected
4. Woodland car parking. Now omitted
5. Proposals totally different to those previously submitted, scheme only for financial gain, access over private road and woodland car parking. The proposals are substantially the same as originally proposed, the objector misunderstands the workings of a rural estate and speaks from personal interest.
6. Site 9 as previously refused. A personal interest . Revised and more appropriate proposals.
7. Sites 1,8,9,11,12,13 & 17, and Sites 4,5,6, together with all car parking. Mr England would obviously prefer to maintain the status quo. The 87 car parking spaces that Mr England refers to are presumably those that are attached to individual dwellings, workspace etc throughout the village. They are not provided within the village car park.
8. Woodland car parking, Leisure/Sports, traffic safety and the disabled. The woodland car park has been omitted, the allocation of the field as open space for possible future public leisure/sports facilities is up to yourselves, it has been offered in good faith. The proposed traffic management proposals will enhance traffic and pedestrian safety and new development will provide for disabled access.
9. Woodland car parking, need to fell trees and poor pedestrian access. See responses above .
10. Objects to all proposals on sites 6,7,8,10 & 17 that adjoin his own house. The development of these sites is generally in accordance with planning policy.
11. Village Club. See my letter in response.
12. Raising cash, Woodland car parking and sites 6,7 11. Personal interest in sites adjoining own home and misunderstanding of what a rural estate does.
13. Woodland car parking. See response above.
14. Conservation Area, loss of allotments, Green belt, excessive car parking, sustainability. See responses above. Far from a total loss of the allotment gardens, the current proposal include for retaining/replacing in the same location, unlike the approved planning permission which removes all the allotments and replaces a small proportion in a more remote location.
15. Site 9, Woodland car parking, proposed access to the village centre, leisure/sports allocation, employment site and holiday cottage in the Green Belt. Speaks from personal interest and objects to elements of the development that will directly benefit the wider population over future years. Other matters see the responses above.

16. Allotments lost to car park, New road and traffic safety and what about deliveries to Reading Room Lane. Point out that allotments are not lost unlike the existing planning permission, that the new road system aims to improve highway safety (the new access to Park Avenue is already approved) and that deliveries to reading Room Lane will not be affected (liftable bollard)
17. Traffic to site 7, Woodland car parking and Site 9. Site 7 is an existing developed site, allocated for housing and woodland car parking has been omitted.

In summary, I feel that there are few legitimate objections and that a very large number are either as a result of not reading the very detailed proposals that have been submitted in support of the proposals, or as a result of self interest. A common objection is the woodland car parking, and this has been omitted.

Finally, I believe that the petition that has been submitted on behalf of objectors to the village plan should be discounted as carrying no weight whatsoever. Who are the signatories, what is their interest and what exactly do they object to ? It would appear that a number of those that have signed the document live in Grenoside, Tankersley, Birdwell, Thurgoland, Dodworth, Cranemoor, Green Moor, Stocksbridge, Deepcar, Hants, Hoyland, Oxspring, Sheffield and Tivydale. There are several signatures from the same household.

I apologise for the length of this response, but I am anxious to address as much detail as possible as quickly as possible. The Village master Plan has been the subject of very detailed pre-application discussion with yourselves, the Parish Council, residents and a large number of specialist consultants.

In addition to a Design & Access statement, I have prepared a Village Design Guide. This has not been referred to by yourselves, the Parish Council or the residents, which I find somewhat disappointing as it was not a condition of our submitting a planning application, was produced at considerable cost to my clients and clearly demonstrates a desire to ensure that future development in the village, whether by the Wharnccliffe Estate or anyone else is controlled in way that ensures the protection and enhancement of this important village.

Yours sincerely

Chris Carr
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