

PLANNING APPLICATIONS 2021/1089 & 2021/1090

LAND SOUTH OF BARUGH GREEN ROAD (SITE MU1)

Preamble

█ still maintains that the development proposed at site MU1 is an abomination. The content of the 2 planning applications only serve to reinforce this view. Not only will the proposals have a devastating effect upon a large and significant area of countryside, formerly safeguarded from development by its status as Green Belt, but it will have an equally devastating effect upon the living conditions of the many people who live on the fringes of the land.

The planning applications show that, besides the proposed buildings and the new link road, a major, and perhaps less fully appreciated to date, component of the proposals is a programme of extensive and substantial earth moving to prepare the ground and create development 'platforms' for the proposed buildings. This work will extend across the whole of the site; in some places it will involve considerable amounts of excavation, and in other places equally considerable amounts of material being deposited. The effect of this work, which would be not dissimilar to that of a major opencasting scheme, is something that was never made explicit during either the Local Plan or Masterplan Framework consultation exercises.

The visual impact of this work, which it is said is likely to take several years to complete, together with the inevitable disturbance it will cause, will have a serious and prolonged detrimental effect upon the living conditions of residents in the surrounding area, especially the many people whose homes are immediately alongside the land. On top of the loss of countryside, this will simply add insult to injury, something that no amount of amelioration will compensate for.

In addition to this general concern, other particular matters of especial concern are set out below:-

Phase 1 Housing

Despite earlier assurances to the contrary by a Strata representative the housing layout plan indicates that there will be 3 storey houses opposite the bungalows that border onto this part of the site. Even if the minimum intervening distance requirements are met this will have a very overbearing and oppressive effect on the occupiers of the existing properties whose living conditions will be adversely affected to an unacceptable extent.

While some translocation of parts of the species rich hedgerows is envisaged, no indication regarding who will be responsible for them is given. Nor are any details of the further planting on the edge of the land indicated.

Earthworks

The existing landscape, enjoyed by many, will be obliterated.

It is now become apparent, albeit by having to burrow into the documentation accompanying the applications, as opposed to the application drawings, that earthworks, involving an extensive series

of cut and fill operations affecting most of the land, will be a major component of the development proposed. Indeed, it is probable that this facet of the scheme will have as much if not more impact as the new buildings will, for instance, the new cuttings and embankments will be up to 34m high¹!

Regretfully, though, despite the scale of and extent of the earthworks, the submitted plans in this respect - a smattering of cross sections at 1:1250 scale – fail to demonstrate just how much change there will be in any meaningful manner. Bearing in mind that full detailed planning permission is being sought for the earthworks, the plans in this respect are wholly inadequate for such a significant element of a scheme of this magnitude – it does not enable the scale and impact of the proposed earthworks to be properly assessed and evaluated.

Even more alarmingly, the application documentation indicates that the earthworks will take will take some 8 years² to carry out. Astonishing! None of this was made apparent when the Local Plan and Masterplan Framework consultation exercises were carried out, but it is hard to imagine that this was not known about at the time. The inevitable noise, dust and creation of a ‘moonscape’ will have a very adverse effect upon the quality of life of the residents who live alongside and in the vicinity of the land. The very prolonged timescale for the work will only serve to exacerbate this effect.

On top of all this, the documents also state that all the hedgerows on the site are to be removed³. Likewise, all the trees, save for some in 2 wooded ‘gulleys’. Not only will this devastate the area, but this is wholly at odds with what the Design and Access Statement says, namely “*hedgerows and woodland should be retained where possible*”⁴. Nor is this consistent with the requirement in Local Plan Policy MU1 to “*Retain, buffer and manage the species-rich hedgerows and boundary features*”. The applicant has identified 9 species rich hedgerows. These inconsistencies only serve to diminish the credibility and integrity of the scheme and those who promote it.

Rights of Way

The application documents acknowledge that the site has a strong existing network of rights of way and footpaths. Despite this, it is stated that all these rights of way need to be closed during the extensive earthworks and construction phase⁵. Denying access to the area for what will be a considerable length of time will be seriously detrimental to all those who are currently entitled to use and enjoy the public rights of way that traverse the site. The degree of denial of these public rights is excessive.

¹ Environmental Statement, Ch 10 Appendix 10.7: Site Preparation and Earthworks Strategy section 3.1.

² Planning Statement para. 4.46; Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan para 4.1.1; Environmental Statement Chapter 3 para. 3.3.11.

³ Arboricultural Report, paras 1.1.6, 5.2.1; Environmental Statement Ch 3 - The Site and the Proposed Development, para. 3.3.10 .

⁴ Design and Access Statement Para 2.9 bullet point 6

⁵ Environmental Statement Ch 3 - The Site and the Proposed Development, paras 3.2.5, 5.1.2; Environmental Statement Ch 6 Landscape and Visual Effects Table 14.

Residents' Living Conditions

While it is acknowledged there is no right to a view over the land, the effect of the development upon the outlook currently enjoyed by the many residents who live alongside the site is a serious and weighty consideration. Instead of enjoying pleasant semi-rural surrounds characterised by fields and associated greenery, residents' outlook will be dominated for a considerable and unreasonably lengthy period – 8 years or so – of unsightly earthmoving activity. This will inevitably make the residents' homes appreciably less pleasant places in which to live. This, in turn, will have a very serious and relatively long lasting detrimental effect upon the living conditions of those who live close to the site's boundaries.

Serious though this matter is in its own right, other elements of the information accompanying the planning applications give rise to further concern about residents' living conditions. The applicant accepts that **noise** generated by construction operations has the potential to reduce amenity value and disturb neighbouring land users, including residents⁶. The applicants simply brush this off by saying noise impacts generated by the construction phase would be temporary, but this simply is not good enough. It may be that work on the site will not go on forever, but to subject residents to at least 15 years' worth of disturbance - potential and actual - is wholly unreasonable. On top of the noise and disturbance, the applicant also recognises that the risk of **dust** soiling effects is "*high for earthworks and construction*"⁷. A further serious disadvantage for residents – something that will be hugely detrimental in its own right.

It is stated that **working hours** will be: 07.15 – 18.00 Monday to Friday and 07.15 – 13.00 Saturdays.⁸ Given that the work will be a 'bad neighbour', involving heavy plant and machinery which will inevitably be operating near to houses, the 07.15 start is unreasonably early. There should be no work whatsoever before 8.00AM. The applicant's suggestion that there should be no 'noisy' working until after 7.30am is risible. Apart from the term 'noisy' being vague and imprecise any work on the site will be noisy and will have the potential to cause disturbance.

Building heights are another concern. It is indicated that building heights for the residential element of the site would be up to 13.5m⁹. Even allowing for 3 storey houses, this is far too high – the height of the typical 2 storey houses flanking the site is around 7.5m to 8m at most. 13.5m high dwellings will be wholly out of scale with the existing housing that flanks the site, a significant proportion of which are bungalows. The presence of the new houses would have an unacceptably oppressive and overbearing effect upon the outlook from the latter.

The maximum height for the employment area buildings is 23m – nearly 3 times the height of 2 storey houses. As the employment area is located on the highest part of the site and is very close to both existing and proposed housing, the inevitable large, monolithic structures will appear wholly

⁶ Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan para 5.7.2

⁷ Environmental Statement Ch 12 – Air Quality para 12.7.2

⁸ Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan para 4.3.1; Environmental Statement Ch 3 - The Site and the Proposed Development para 3.4.4

⁹ Environmental Statement Ch3 - The Site and the Proposed Development para 3.3.26.

out of scale with their surrounds. Coupled with their envisaged height the presence of the employment will also have an unacceptably oppressive and overbearing effect on the nearby housing and will have a seriously adverse effect upon residents' living conditions.

Landscape and Ecology

The applicant's assessment notes that the extensive cut and fill earthworks, together with the site clearance, including the wholesale clearance of hedgerows and most of the trees on the land, would have significant adverse effects on the landscape. This would occur from the outset of the works and would persist through to year 15. Not surprisingly, it is accepted that there would probably be locally significant adverse effects upon semi-natural woodland, scattered trees and hedgerows¹⁰.

Equally unsurprisingly, it is acknowledged that residents in parts of the edges of Gawber, Pogmoor and Higham would experience a substantial adverse change in views and would be affected to a high degree¹¹.

Not only will the surface of the land be affected, but the information accompanying the applications notes that the majority of the habitats on the land will be lost. In particular, it is recognised that the works will result in the loss of suitable breeding and foraging habitats for bird species and habitats suitable for bat roosting, foraging and commuting. It is likely that there will be significant adverse effects upon birds locally. Clearance of woodland, scrub, hedgerows and grasses would result in the loss of this suitable habitat and harm to hedgehogs. The latter are known to be present on the land in far greater numbers than the one observed by the applicant's ecology consultant.

The Landscape Framework Plan shows 'biodiversity/wildlife corridors' within the site¹². These include one running eastwards from the site's boundary with Gawber School, continuing on the south side of Colster Close as far as the rear of properties in Wharfedale Road. Another corridor is shown more or less along the line of Farmhouse Lane on the southern edge of the site. Both of these are sensible as they relate to existing readily apparent uncultivated parts of the site. However, on the Landscape Master Plan¹³ these features are largely absent – only a narrow area of planting is shown at the rear of Nos 9-13 Colster Close. These omissions are serious aberrations – wildlife corridors, not cul-de-sacs, should be expressly provided for in the Landscape Masterplan. Indeed, the corridor in this part of the site should be extended by including the readily discernible uncultivated margin that runs alongside the rear boundaries of the properties on the west side of Wharfedale Road as far as Farmhouse Lane.

Overall

Section 7 of the Planning Statement extols the claimed benefits of what the applicant regards as a 'landscape led development' in a highly effusive manner. However, this essentially one sided approach does not paint the whole picture. It skates over the problems inherent in inserting a major development of this nature into a large area of countryside flanked by existing settlements. It is only when the information about the scheme, largely buried in the documents accompanying the

¹⁰ Environmental Statement Ch 7 – Ecology para 7.3.14

¹¹ Environmental Statement Ch 6 - Ibid Table 6.14

¹² Landscape Design Statement - section 2.1

¹³ Ibid – section 2.3 Landscape Masterplan Sheet 2

planning applications, as opposed to the planning applications themselves, is delved into, that just how calamitous the proposed development of the site would be becomes apparent.

The applicant's approach towards developing the site appears to be one of 'scorched earth'. Right from the outset, the existing landscape, most of its features, wildlife habitats, and the majority of the vegetation on the site and will be destroyed. The Landscape Masterplan indicates the provision of various landscape features, but regardless of how generous this may appear, it is likely to be a long time, possibly up to 30 years, before any new planting becomes established and matures. In the short term, in particular during the unreasonably lengthy 8 year earth 'remodelling' period, mayhem will prevail – the whole of the land will probably appear as a barren moonscape for a lengthy period of time. The loss of the green space within the site will inevitably have consequences for Barnsley's carbon footprint and environmental performance.

The creation of a 'blank canvass' upon which the works will be undertaken appears to be solely for the applicant's benefit and convenience, to ensure that the development be implemented without serious impediment. This 'bull at a gate' approach, however, overlooks the fact that most of the site is flanked by dwellings. Indeed, the statement that "*Areas of natural open space are important to both existing residents and people moving to Barnsley*"¹⁴ seems especially ironic. This is a point that Keep It Green 2014 and other objectors have made time and time again. Regrettably, to date this has fallen on deaf ears.

Disturbance, unsightly outlook, the overbearing and oppressive effect of new buildings and the loss of greenery and wildlife from the land will all combine to make residents' homes significantly less pleasant places in which to live. It is inevitable that residents' living conditions will be adversely affected by an unacceptable degree as a result of this highly insensitive approach. It pays scant regard to the fact that many people live alongside the site. Insufficient weight has been placed upon ensuring that the quality of life residents are entitled to be able to expect is not unduly impeded. The same applies to those who use the public rights of way within the site. Simply depriving people of their rights of access for a not inconsiderable period is wholly unreasonable.

There are numerous references to the adverse consequences of the proposed development scattered throughout the documentation accompanying the applications, especially the various Chapters of the Environmental Statement. Despite these acknowledgements however, the gist of the responses appears to be 'tough - the site is earmarked for development by virtue of Barnsley Local Plan proposal MU1'. The approach of hiding behind the Local Plan is wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory. Further acknowledgement of problems inherent in the proposals and their adverse consequences is also implicit in the numerous references to '*mitigation*' that pepper the application documents – shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted?

CONCLUSIONS

The 2 planning applications and the voluminous information that accompanies them underline everything that is wrong with the MU1 proposal. The fears about it expressed in the objections made by Keep It Green 2014 and others during the Local Plan and Masterplan Framework consultations are manifested in the current proposals. Indeed, given the information that has now

¹⁴ Environmental Statement, Chapter 6 - Landscape and Visual Effects para 6.120

come to light about the degree of earthmoving involved and the length of time this will take, matters are far worse now than when the proposals were first mooted.

Even though the proposal MU1 was scrutinised at the Local Plan Examination in Public, now that the full impact has been laid bare through the 2 planning applications, Keep it Green 2014 is firmly of the view that the time has come for the Local Plan proposal to be **revisited and deleted**. Failing that, at the very least, the applicant should not be allowed to ride roughshod over the site seemingly regardless of the consequences. A more sensitive approach towards developing the site, which pays far more regard to the living conditions of neighbouring residents, the site's natural features and habitats, and those who enjoy the existing rights of access, is called for.

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Local Plan and the Masterplan Framework, the defects inherent in the proposals are so serious that applications 2021/1089 and 2021/1090 should both be **refused**.