

Introduction

It is recognised that Felthorpe comprises one of the three villages forming the Horsford, Felthorpe and Haverlingland Village cluster. Only one new allocation is proposed for 30-40 homes on a site at Dog Lane, Horsford (Policy GNLP0264). This site was selected on the basis that it was for the redevelopment of a soft play centre and other commercial premises. It is noted from the documentation produced to accompany the Regulation 18 Site Allocations Document, that four sites were put forward for allocation in Felthorpe, with the scale of development ranging from 5-20 dwellings. All of the sites were rejected on the basis that they had poor access to core services and facilities in Horsford some distance away. In particular there was no safe walking route to Horsford Primary School which was 3km away.

However, it must be recognised that Felthorpe has a good range of facilities in its own right, including the Mariner's public house, car repair garage, car sales, florist and village hall with associated sports pitches. It is apparent that the provision of additional housing will aid the vitality and viability of local services and businesses. The village also has bus services to Norwich and Holt, with the nearest bus stops being located on The Street, circa 350 metres from the site. These stops are clearly in walking distance of the site. The level of facilities within Felthorpe in their own right are significant and this should be recognised in the description section of the village cluster assessment.

Proposed Development Site – Mill Lane, Felthorpe

My client is seeking for his site at Mill Lane to be considered with a view to it contributing towards the proposed growth within the Village Clusters within Broadland for allocation in the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The identification of such sites is on the basis that the Council need to ensure that 10% of their housing requirement is on sites of no larger than 1.0 hectare. This is confirmed by paragraph 68 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

This site is located on the northern boundary of the village and comprises previously developed land in the form of a redundant builder's yard. The site is occupied by a range of buildings and extensive areas of hardstanding and unquestionably represents a brownfield site. It is clear that the removal of the existing buildings and the redevelopment of the site for a development of circa 20 dwellings would result in improvements to the character and appearance of the area.

Access to this site would be from the existing access into the former builder's yard which is suitable to serve a development of 20 dwellings. Adequate visibility splays can be achieved onto Mill Lane, which is subject to a 30 Mph speed limit. It is recognised that Mill Lane is popular with walkers accessing the woods to the west of the site and the site promoters are committed to the provision of a Breedon Gravel footpath linking the site to the junction just off Mill Lane and The Street. This will not just benefit the residents of the proposed development but also local residents. It is also recognised that this will assist Felthorpe Parish Council in meeting their objective of improving footpaths in the village.

The site is not at risk of flooding and any contamination of the site would be remediated prior to the occupation of the dwellings.

As can be seen from the illustrative masterplan submitted with these representations a varied range of house types can be accommodated on the site. These could include a mixture of single storey and two storey properties. These will range from 1 bedroom to 5-bedroom dwellings. The existing office in the south western corner of the site is suitable for refurbishment and could be converted into a dwelling. In terms of affordable housing, 7 of the 20 properties will be affordable. The intention is that

some of the affordable units will be bungalows, specifically aimed at meeting the needs of the elderly in Felthorpe. This will have a benefit in that it could also free up existing under occupied dwellings within the Parish.

A small area of public open space is provided within the development, whilst it is recognised that existing sport and recreation facilities are located within the main part of the village. The site has good access to green space with woodland being located immediately to the west (Swannington Bottom Plantation).

It is recognised that the site to the south is also occupied by a disused timber yard and this could conceivably also be developed as an extension to this site. However, it is also recognised that this site could be brought back into commercial use and as a consequence an acoustic fence is proposed on the southern site boundary. The site is screened to the north and east by existing woodland

It is also noted that the adjacent site was subject to an application for the change of use of a builder's yard (Use Class B1) to a HGV drivers training centre (Sui Generis) and repositioning of entrance gates and fence (application ref 2019192) which was refused on the 4th March 2020. The fifth reason for refusal states that *"Policy GC3 of the Development Management DPD, Policy 5 of the Joint Core Strategy and Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework encourage the use of brownfield land in rural areas for sustainable employment uses and economic growth. However, development has to be sensitive to its surroundings. The proposed use of the site for an HGV training centre would have unacceptable impacts on local roads"*. Whilst Reason 6 states that *"The unclassified road (Mill Lane U57150) and adjacent roads serving the site are considered to be inadequate to serve the development proposed by reason of their poor alignment, restricted width, lack of passing provision and restricted visibility at adjacent road junctions. The proposal would give rise to conditions detrimental to highway safety. The proposal is contrary to the aims of Policy TS3 of the Development Management DPD 2015"*. However, the development of a former builder's yard to a residential use is very different in character to an HGV training centre and there is adequate room on Mill Lane for two cars to pass, as opposed to HGVs.

In addition, the re-use of the builder's yard or an alternative use has the potential to result in commercial vehicles re-using Mill Lane. If the existing lawful use recommenced or was intensified the traffic flows could actually be greater than those associated with a modest housing scheme. The decision taken in relation to the application 2019192 raises the question as the suitability of this part of Felthorpe for commercial uses.

Conclusion

In the light of above, this site is considered suitable for residential development and will result in the reuse of a brownfield site thereby reducing the need for greenfield land to be developed. The redevelopment of this site also accords with the advice at paragraph 118 c) of the NPPF which states that planning policies and decisions should *"should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes..."*. The proposal will provide an important resource of affordable housing, including bungalows, particularly aimed at elderly residents. The site owners are also committed to providing pedestrian enhancements along Mill Lane, which will benefit both existing and proposed residents. The site will also allow the existing mix of commercial buildings to be replaced by a well-designed housing scheme. In view of the above it is requested that this site be allocated within the Greater Norwich Local Plan on the basis that it will assist Broadland Council in meeting the proposed growth within the Village Clusters.