

Application 16/1335N

LAND OFF EAST AVENUE WESTON – GLADMAN DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED

Outline permission for up to 80 dwellings (including affordable housing), introduction of structure planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children's play area, surface water flood mitigation and attenuation, vehicular access point from East Avenue and associated ancillary works. All matters to be reserved, save for the main site access.

OBSERVATIONS OF WESTON & BASFORD PARISH COUNCIL

A previous application for 99 dwellings by Gladman was refused by the Strategic Planning Board on 29th July 2015 (application 15/1552N). The applicants have appealed to the Secretary of State and a public inquiry is currently awaited.

The reasons for that refusal were as follows:

1. The proposed residential development is unsustainable because it is located within the open countryside contrary to Policies NE.2 (Open Countryside), NE.12 (Agricultural Land Quality) and RES.5 (Housing in the Open Countryside) of the Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan, Policy PG5 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek to ensure development is directed to the right location and open countryside is protected from inappropriate development and maintained for future generations enjoyment and use. As such it creates harm to interests if acknowledged importance.
2. The proposal would result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The use of the best and most versatile agricultural land is unsustainable and contrary to Policy NE.12 of the Borough of Crewe & Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and the provisions of the National Policy Framework.
3. The scale of this development would exceed the spatial distribution for Weston and would not respect the scale of Weston which is at the lowest tier of the settlement hierarchy. The development would be contrary to Policies PG2 and PG6 of the emerging Cheshire East Local

Plan Strategy

4. The application site is adjacent to a known land fill site and as a result the land has the potential to be contaminated and there may be ground gas being generated on this site. Insufficient information has been submitted with the application in relation to gas risk and as a result it is not possible to determine whether there will be an adverse effect from pollution on the health of the future occupiers of the proposed development. The development is therefore contrary to Paragraph 120 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy BE.6 of the Borough of Crewe & Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011

Members of the Strategic Planning Board wanted the refusal notice to include an informative expressing their concern about highways issues.

These reasons are in the Parish Council's view equally applicable today when considering the application for 80 houses.

The Parish Council's Objection.

The Parish Council strongly objects to this outline application for the following reasons:

- The site lies wholly outside the Weston Village Envelope as defined on the Proposals Map accompanying the Crewe & Nantwich Adopted Local Plan 2011. Policy NE.2 of that Plan states that all land outside the settlement boundaries as defined on the Proposals Map will be treated as 'Open Countryside'. Within 'Open Countryside' only development which is essential for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, essential works undertaken by public service authorities, or for other uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted. An exception may be made where there is an opportunity for infilling of a small gap with one or two dwellings in an otherwise built up frontage. The development of 80 dwellings in this location clearly doesn't comply with Policy NE.2. In the Weston & Basford Parish Plan over 70% of the residents questioned said NO when asked 'do you agree with the development of open space'.

- Weston Village is already under pressure for more development and Weston & Basford Parish more so. The applicants make no reference to the Strategic Sites proposed as part of the emerging Local Plan within the Parish. The Parish Council has accepted in principle the Strategic Sites of Basford East and the proposed South Cheshire Growth Village which together could potentially provide up to 1800 dwellings. This in itself represents 150% increase over the existing number of dwellings within the Parish which numbers around 1200. The application site is not included within the emerging Local Plan. The Parish, which is small compared with most others in the Borough, is accepting more than its fair share of housing within the Local Plan period and in doing so is punching well beyond its weight!! It is considered totally unacceptable to have an additional development of the scale now proposed imposed upon the parish.
- Weston Village alone contains approximately 400 dwellings. The addition of a further 80 will represent around a 20% increase. This scale of increase will in the Parish Council's judgement completely destroy the character of the Village and be seriously detrimental to the amenities and quality of life currently enjoyed by the residents many of whom are elderly. A primary aim of the Parish Council's representation to the emerging Local Plan is to retain the character of the existing communities which make up the parish. This in so far as Weston Village was concerned was strongly reflected in the Parish Plan and will form a cornerstone of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish which is currently under preparation.
- The application site is very open in character, the only physical boundary to the south being a raised hedge line. This lack of containment will in the Parish Council's opinion leave the site wide open to future 'development creep' across a very large open field towards Weston Hall and physically link the Village with the Wychwood Developments.
- The proposed vehicular access into the site is to be from East Avenue, a narrow estate cul- de- sac serving Weston Primary School and flanked on one side by elderly persons bungalows. East Avenue is extremely congested and often gridlocked, particularly at peak school times, and

has little or no off street parking space. Uninhibited access for emergency vehicles is already extremely difficult. The same comments apply to the section of Cemetery Road which is the main feed road from the proposed development onto the primary road network. Cemetery Road is also used as a rat run for motorists to and from the Shavington direction seeking to avoid congestion on the primary road network. The only other potential access to this site is from Meadow Avenue which is again part of a narrow estate road network, totally unsuited to accommodating residential development of the scale now proposed. In summary 80 new houses equates to 192 new residents and a minimum of 192 new cars (the applicants figure). The existing road system within the Village is totally incapable of satisfactorily and safely accommodating a development of this scale. The applicant estimates that the houses would be built at a rate of 25 to 30 per year – this equates to 3 years at the very least of intolerable conditions for the elderly residents of East Avenue during construction operations. *Appended to these comments is a short Power Point presentation illustrating existing congestion and grid lock in East Avenue and Cemetery Road at peak times in the school day. The morning peak, in particular is likely to coincide with heavy movement from the proposed development.*

- Foul and surface water drainage is already a significant problem in this part of Weston. The applicants propose to connect into the existing system. The Parish Council question whether this is capable of coping satisfactorily with this extra demand.
- Weston Village is in the Parish Council's opinion totally unsuitable when factors such as lack of facilities – school already operating at capacity, inadequate bus service, remote medical practice and only one small shop – along with congestion are taken into account. This application does nothing to address such issues which will be greatly exacerbated if a development of this scale is allowed to proceed.

Weston & Basford Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council have recently commenced work on a Neighbourhood Plan for Weston & Basford. The neighbourhood area was designated on 5th May 2015. The Neighbourhood Steering Group issued a Parish wide questionnaire in July 2015 and are now drafting policies to be included within the plan. A

Local Housing Needs report has been prepared and a Landscape assessment and ecology report is currently being prepared by the Cheshire Wild Life Trust.

It is clear from the results of this first questionnaire that over 90% of those who responded from the settlements that make up the Neighbourhood Plan Area – Weston Village, Basford, Stowford, Englesea Brook, Gorsty, Wychwood Village and Wychwood Park – want to retain the rural character of the area and only allow new small scale development either within the existing or carefully extended settlement boundaries.

The vision of the Neighbourhood Plan is for the seven settlements which make up the Parish of Weston & Basford to retain and develop their own character and to thrive as vibrant communities. The aim is for each community to evolve, grow and prosper in a sustainable way and to provide an outstanding quality of life for current and future residents.

The proposed development by Gladman, the subject of this application, is totally contrary to the vision of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and the views of local residents as to how they wish to see their communities grow and their area develop in a planned and sustainable manner.

Work on the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing and it is being supported by Cheshire East. Whilst it may be argued that it carries little weight at this stage, it is clear that from the views of the local community to date, the development of 80 houses in Weston as proposed is totally alien to the way the village has developed in the past and is unacceptable as a way forward.

The Parish Council urges the Committee to refuse this application.

WBPC/AT. 26/4/2016