

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Office
New Green Centre
Thurston
Suffolk
IP31 3TG



Tel: 01359 232854

e-mail: info@thurstonparishcouncil.gov.uk

SENT AS AN E-MAIL

Mr. P Isbell
Chief Planning Officer –Sustainable Communities
Mid Suffolk District Council
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich IP1 2BX

23rd April 2020

Dear Mr. Isbell,

APPLICATION FOR RESERVED MATTERS - DC/20/01249

Proposal: Submission of details under Outline Planning Permission 5070/16 - Appearance, Scale, Layout, and Landscaping in respect of Phase 2 – Erection of 104 No. dwellings

Location: Land On The North Side Of, Norton Road, Thurston, Suffolk

Case Officer: Vincent Pearce

The Parish Council, having considered this application via email circulation to Councillors with final approval of response via Video conference between Chair, Vice-Chair and Proper Officer of the Parish Council (under delegation), would like to confirm that it strongly objects to this application in its current form.

The Parish Council is disappointed that the applicant has failed to engage in a meaningful manner with either the Parish Council or the Ward Members. The applicant has only attended one meeting (13th March 2020) with the Parish Council prior to the submission of reserved matters. At this meeting, the submitted plan was shown to the Parish Council which is in direct conflict with the original phase 2 expectations of this site and with the outline planning permission granted for the whole site. The Parish Council's viewpoint was made very clear to the representatives and yet despite there being clear opposition to the plan being discussed, the applicant failed to engage in any meaningful debate with the Parish Council or even the community in which the site is located. A copy of the notes taken at that meeting can be viewed at Appendix A.

The Parish Council objects to the application on the grounds that the density has been increased by incorporating similar numbers into the area expected for Phase 2 but on a much smaller area thereby leaving other areas for a further application to be submitted.

Overall the Parish Council feels that the overall proposal fails to take into account the made Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and has repeated all of the negative aspects that were criticised in Phase 1. Generally there is an urban feel to the dwellings being proposed and the Parish Council is disappointed that this has been the tone for the remaining phase of this development.

The made Thurston NDP, as described by the examiner, and as supported by the parishioners of Thurston, is described as providing a strong practical framework against which decisions on development can be made and it is against this document that this application should be determined as it has significant weight.

The Parish Council would request that the application be refused until the following concerns are addressed:

- Density of the build – there is a significant urban feel to the design which neither complements nor enhances the village. Overall the density, by limiting the scheme to a much smaller area, has increased and fails not only to respect the spatial strategy within the village but also that of Phase 1.
- Furthermore the layout fails to take into account guidance as given within Suffolk County Council's (2000 revised) Suffolk Design for Residential Areas, the Government's Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 as well as Historic England's Streets for All documents. The Thurston NDP provides exemplar information on the street scenes that are acceptable – Chapter 5 Housing and Design – at page 39 has an example of Spatial Organisation that would be supported.
- The current proposal not only fails to take into account the Spatial Organisation as mentioned in the Thurston NDP and the Thurston Character Assessment 2017 but it would appear that the applicant has decided to use Page 38 of the Thurston NDP (Spatial Organisation – how not to) as its design model.
- The applicant has failed to take into account the Officer Comment submitted in the Officer Report for Phase 1 in which it is stated that “it is considered appropriate for phase 1 to have what is an urban/suburban feel where it adjoins other development but as later phases move northward to may be appropriate to spread density around in order that elements over look the adjacent woodland and/or the planned large are of open space have a looser more organic layout with reduced densities to provide a stepped transition from urban to rural.
- The Parish Council therefore contends that there should be a more rural feel to the development coming forth under Phase 2 and wishes to see a less regimented form of design with the use of cul-de-sacs to avoid the ‘tunnel’ effect. Given the location of Phase 2 on the site there should be more connection with the rural landscape surrounding the site and the use of soft landscaping to shape views and enclose space is sought.
- As has been mentioned previously by the Parish Council on other significant planning applications within Thurston, it is disappointed to note that, contained within this phase, there are a number of 2 and a half storey dwellings. As has been stated previously, within the northern side of the village, there are no 2.5 storey dwellings. The Parish Council is concerned that their inclusion at different roof heights from the surrounding dwellings will provide for a street scene that is neither in keeping with the surrounding area nor enhancing of the area as a whole. Acknowledging that a number of 2.5 dwellings were approved at Phase 1 stage, the Parish Council draws reference to that fact that these were to be sited on the crescent which would read as a place in its own right and that at the Planning Referral Meeting of 24th July 2019, the Committee was in agreement that there was a need to ensure that Linden Homes, the Parish Council and the Planning Officers continued discussions for future areas coming forth in terms of there being no 2.5 dwellings and no urban layout.
- Mixture of house types – the Parish Council acknowledges that there is a mix of house types and sizes within the 2nd phase and once again has a concern with the size of the smaller dwellings and would request that all properties are built to current Nationally Described Space Standards as published March 2015 and endorse the comments made by the Strategic Housing Officer.
- Parking – although it is stated that the scheme has complied with the Suffolk County Council Parking Standards (2015), there is a concern that the provision of a total of 198 allocated parking spaces and only 26 garage spaces is insufficient for the mix of houses on the site. It is noted that paragraph 6.23 states that provision is made for cycle parking within garages and within the curtilage of the dwellings. Given that there are only 26 garage spaces on the site (Phase 2), it is difficult to see how the security of cycles will be accommodated.
- The Parish Council is further concerned that there is insufficient regard to the requirement of an expectation that visitors will require parking facilities which will lead to congestion on the spinal road as well as private roads thereby impacting on highway safety for all users. In total there are only 17 visitor spaces. The Parish Council would like to see a revised layout showing adequate visitor parking suitably located and accessible for use. The Parish Council is also concerned that the layout shows a significantly reduced level of parking provision for rented/shared ownership homes.
- With regards to play provision the Parish Council is disappointed, once again, to read that there is no provision for formal play equipment to be provided at the site in accordance with the S106 Planning Obligation accompanying the outline planning permission. The Parish Council has stated during the discussion of the 1st submission for Reserved Matters that it feels that given the wooded area to the north – east of the site layout there should be some form of recreational activity provided and it further expected that further details on the type of equipment coming forth would be submitted under Phase 2. The Parish Council formally requests that such a facility should be a discussion point and condition of any planning permission going forward as it will be of a demonstrable recreational and amenity value. As has been stated previously the Parish Council is committed to ensure that any new play provision within the village is strategically placed to ensure it complements existing provision and meets any known deficits. In general, it has been acknowledged that there is a need for ‘adventure style provision’ particularly attractive to juniors and older children.
- The Parish Council therefore requires that this provision is included within the second phase and takes advantage of the woodland areas.
- Whilst the site retains the same ingress and egress, there are concerns that any proposed increase will further increase the safety risks with the new school being effectively part of the same site.

The Parish Council is disappointed to state that despite requesting, on a number of occasions, clarification from the Planning Officer at Mid Suffolk District Council as to whether there had been discussions with the applicant over the proposed uplift in numbers, no response has yet been received from Mid Suffolk Planning Department.

It is further disappointed that the request by the Mid Suffolk Planning Referrals Committee of 24th July 2019 for Linden Homes, the Parish Council and Planning Officers at Mid Suffolk to continue discussions for future areas coming forth in terms of no 2.5 dwellings; no urban layout and provision of play equipment in accordance with the requirements of the Parish Council and the overall maintenance of the very small grassed areas has not come to fruition. The Parish Council does however note that the Planning Statement as submitted by the applicant states that a pre-application engagement relating to the second development has held in November 2019 which was attended by Officers of Mid Suffolk District Council, the Applicant, and members of the Project Team. It is stated that the meeting was held in a constructive and positive manner. The Parish Council confirms that it was not made aware of this meeting.

In summary, it is the Parish Council's submission that this application should be rejected to in its current form and that the matters raised are considered further prior to permission being granted.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria S Waples

V. S. Waples, BA(Hons), CiLCA
Clerk to the Council



Appendix A – notes of meeting of 13th March 2020

In attendance:

Hannah Short – Linden Homes – Planning and Design Coordinator; Lydia Voyias - Savills.

Parish Council - Chair C. Dashper; Cllr. K. Towers; Cllr. D Haley; Cllr. B Morris; Cllr. J. West & Mrs V Waples (Clerk).

1. Update on Phase 1 currently being built = 87 - Issues raise by the Parish Council:

Access and movement of vehicles - Linden had met with the planners before Christmas over a number of enforcement issues and in particular the verges on Meadow Lane – barriers should now be in place to offset further damage being caused. Repairs will be affected under a s278 agreement.

Existing access - farm access off Meadow Lane - no proper access – Linden need formal access prior to commencing next stage – s278 agreement needs to be in place which the Highways Dept / Legal Teams are just about to sign this off. Agreement to be signed and then licences will be issued. Verges will be regraded, topsoil, reseeded and farm access stopped up once the main access point has been installed.

Carriageway on Meadow Lane damaged – Linden ensured that the Contracts Manager carried out a pre-commencement survey on the road to allow damaged caused to be corrected etc.

Wheel wash – why still not in situ? Linden confirmed that the road sweepers contracted for a certain number of visits per week – is this happening, and could it be extended? Contracts Manager to be requested for an update on this and to ensure a wheel wash was installed without delay. The Parish Council stated that there was no need to ensure drainage was on site for this as the water would be recycled.

Verges – how are they going to be corrected? Linden confirmed that under the s278 agreement these will be reinstated.

Hedgerow – Linden stated that on Meadow Lane majority to be retained and in parts will be enhanced.

Separate access for school – HS stated that Linden had obligations to service the school entrance site – contractually obliged to provide this under the terms of the planning permission.

General update for Phase 1 – reserve matters approval – started on site prior to Christmas – 1st units at front – infrastructure– roads and drainage. Show home open late Spring/early Summer 2020. Start selling from that point onwards.

2. Phase 2 – balance of site is to be covered by this. Thurston NDP adopted October 2019. Benchmark for assessment of any future applications.

Linden circulated two layout plans– one for the balance of homes to come forward under the live outline planning application – 133 and one for an uplift on the outline approval of 200 homes to take the total numbers on site to 267 – this would be subject to a new application to be submitted.

The Parish Council expressed deep concerns as it had expected that the balance of the site was to come forward for 133 which would take the total up to 200 – as approved. It was noted that the plan submitted for 133 had deliberately left areas on the site blank merely to allow for a resubmission of the plan to show that it was acceptable to take an uplift of the site to 267.

The Parish Council reiterated that it had expected the conversation to be over the plans to be submitted which would show the layout to take the site up to 200 which was approved at outline. As there was a request to discuss something totally different to the approval that had been given, the Parish Council were of the opinion that further discussion at this point would have little merit.

Remaining land as shown in green on both plans was land upon which nothing would be built and would be retained as per the approved outline plan as green open space and woodland – Lady Greene Wood –

the plan also showed this wood split in two – clarification was required as to the woodland included within the application.

The Parish Council raised the following general issues:

- There was an expectation that the plans to be submitted would adopt a more rural approach – PC questioned why the density was now to be upped – original permission was for 200.
- The Parish Council stated that it felt that Lindon Homes were trying to hijack the process by which permission had been granted for a specified number of dwellings.
- Failure to take into account the comments raised at the first reserve matters submission - Parish Council felt that both plans had ignored all comments made in the Officer Report. Total disregard for what has been said and no clear intention of following what has been said in the Thurston NDP and what was said in the Officer Report as submitted for the Reserve Matters for the 1st phase.
- PC raised the specific issues with the reserve matter plans as submitted:
 - Layout - crescent shape
 - Street scene – not in keeping with the ideal as per the Thurston NDP
 - Density – too high
 - Rural feel – why was the street scene and layout so urbanised
 - Garages – every four/five bed has one or two garages. Why so little.
 - Every plot should have a garage as well as parking space allocated irrespective of the SCC Parking Guide
- PC issues with the uplift plans as submitted:
 - Uplift to 267 – numbers and therefore density
 - Crescent shape
 - Layout – not in keeping with the street scene of the Thurston NDP
 - Density – far too high
 - Urban feel
 - Garages – only the four/five bed has one or two garages. All other dwellings only have a parking space allocated.

PC plus points: only one as far as the PC could see; Cycling provision – shared surfaces can accommodate cyclists and links through the estate to points beyond.

3. Request from Linden Homes as to some guidance over play equipment – photos shown by Linden Homes of woodland play area equipment suitable for young persons with all equipment designed to be quite naturalistic. Aim to open up the footpaths. Natural aspect of the landscape (wooded) to be enhanced or at least not compromised.

Parish Council confirmed that, given the number of developments coming forth, that they had previously expressed the aspirations for all play areas to be complementary and that all should be convenient to access for all in the village.

Play areas close to attenuation ponds could be an area for Under 12s and might be most suited for the type of equipment in the photos shown.

Linden confirmed that they expected to submit reserve matters in next couple of weeks and the uplift application to follow a few weeks later.