



Rendlesham Parish Council

'Committed to actively engage'

Heather Heelis FILCM DipHE
Parish Clerk

T: 01394 420207

E: clerk@rendleshampc.org.uk

www.rendlesham.suffolk.gov.uk

Sent to: planning@eastssuffolk.gov.uk
Philip.ridley@eastssuffolk.gov.uk

19 October 2020

In the matter of Planning Application DC/20/1035/FUL

REPRESENTATIONS IN OPPOSITION TO THE APPLICATION

Introduction

1. The Parish Council remains strongly opposed to this planning application, which proposes unacceptable residential development in the District Centre of Rendlesham. These Representations explain that, notwithstanding the views of Officers previously expressed, the proposed development is contrary to the Rendlesham Neighbourhood Plan. They also explain that the proposed development is contrary to the newly-adopted Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.

The Rendlesham Neighbourhood Plan

2. The Parish Council has previously explained in detail why the proposed development is contrary to the terms of the Rendlesham Neighbourhood Plan (representations of 27 March 2020).
3. Furthermore, on this point, the Parish Council were in agreement with the Applicant, which has accepted that the proposals do not comply with the Neighbourhood Plan. The applicant's Planning Statement in support of the application conceded at para. 2.57 that the proposal was "a deviation" from the Neighbourhood Plan. This was on the basis of an

Parish Office, Rendlesham Community Centre
Walnut Tree Avenue, Rendlesham, Suffolk, IP12 2GG

acceptance (para. 2.54) “that affordable housing deviates from the policy requirements of RNPP1”.

4. In those circumstances, it is surprising, and concerning, that Officers reached the conclusion that the proposed development complies with the Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Policy RNPP1 includes:

“In the Rendlesham District Centre... the emphasis will be on maintaining or enhancing those uses and services the community has identified.

...

Proposals for redevelopment or change of use involving residential development will only be permitted where they maintain or enhance the existing or established employment, leisure, education, retail or community uses and future needs thereof.”

6. This is in the context of the following elements of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- The Neighbourhood Plan identified erosion of the District Centre to housing as a specific weakness (Fig. 10, p.31). Plans on pp.44-45 note the erosion of the centre of the village.
- Likewise, it was a weakness that “Facilities and opportunities within Rendlesham are not adequate for Rendlesham to be a sustainable village” (Fig. 10, p.31).
- An opportunity was identified to create a District Centre that will provide the leisure, educational, retail and community infrastructure to support a growing community (Fig. 11, p.32).
- A specific threat identified was the loss of land in the District Centre to uses other than leisure, education, retail and community infrastructure which should support a growing community (Fig. 12, p.32).
- Consideration of public involvement noted (para. 6.01) that consistent feedback “has been that infrastructure facilities/services are not adequate to support the current population”.
- It was therefore considered that the District Centre was central to the future-proofing of Rendlesham (para. 6.01).
- Supporting text referred to the views of the community (para. 6.04, pp.34-35):

“The overwhelming message from the many consultations that have been carried out over the last 18 months has been that the residents of Rendlesham, have serious concerns with the way that the centre of the village has been allowed to decay. The strong feeling is that the heart of the village is shrinking and dying because of the closure of the Sports Centre and the Angel Theatre and the lack of opportunity for other businesses to relocate to the District Centre. It therefore follows that, the priority for the RNP should be to safeguard

and develop the District Centre as a community resource to provide for a sustainable future.”

- The activities and services provided in the District Centre were to promote the four key areas of community, education, retail and leisure (para. 7.04).
 - Objective 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan is “To ensure that adequate community, retail, education and leisure facilities are provided to support the needs of the existing and future population of Rendlesham and its identified hinterland (surrounding parishes).”
 - Objective 1a is “To prevent the further erosion of community provision within the central area of the village by the designation of a District Centre and the permitted use of land and buildings within it”.
7. The Report to Committee argued that the proposed development fell within the proviso at the end of RNPP1, namely that the residential use of the site would “maintain or enhance the existing or established employment, leisure, education, retail or community uses and future needs thereof”. This is on the basis:
- (1) Occupiers of the eleven affordable dwellings would be in a position to access the existing services and facilities within the rest of the District Centre;
 - (2) There is no existing use on the site;
 - (3) The part of the policies relating to redevelopment or change of use of existing or established public buildings and/or key facilities cannot be applied as there is no existing building or facility on the site to be retained.
8. In response to these points:
- (1) If correct, this could be an argument for all vacant land in the District Centre to be permitted for residential use, as residents would be able to swiftly access existing facilities. This cannot be correct. The policy provides a strong preference for employment, leisure, education, retail and community uses in the District Centre of Rendlesham. There is no evidence that the new dwellings would maintain or enhance employment, leisure, education, retail or community uses of the District Centre. The dwellings would take up space which could be used by those proposed uses.
 - (2) Even though the site is not currently in use (the owners having refused to sell to the Parish Council), this does not prevent the fact that the Neighbourhood Plan is heavily restrictive of residential development in the District Centre.

- (3) Whilst there are no existing buildings or facilities on the Site, such uses would be strongly supported by the Neighbourhood Plan. The fact that the owner has allowed the Site to fall into disuse should not support unacceptable development on the Site.
9. Policy RNPP1 does not permit new residential units where they would support *new* uses. The focus is on existing and established uses. The policy would not support residential development on the basis that this would justify the opening of new retail units, for instance. The justification for the proposed residential development appears to be for the creation of new retail units which are otherwise said to be unviable.
10. Furthermore, RNPP1 requires consideration of the future needs of existing employment, leisure, educational, retail and community uses. There is no consideration of this in the Officer Report, and the applicant's Planning Statement does not even try to deal with the point. There is no evidence provided of compliance with this key aspect of Policy RNPP1. Permission should be refused on this basis.

The New Suffolk Coastal Local Plan

11. The proposed development is contrary to a number of significant aspects of the newly-adopted Local Plan.

Strategy for Growth and Spatial Strategy

12. Rendlesham is designated as a Large Village in the Settlement Hierarchy of Policy SCP3.2, but it is given no new housing allocations (Table 3.5). Policy SCLP12.1 expresses the minimum number of dwellings at Rendlesham to be "Existing Local plan allocations of 100, plus windfall". This can be compared with the approach for Aldringham cum Thorpe of "Existing Local Plan allocation of 40 dwellings, plus small scale additional development and windfall" (emphasis added). There is no express provision for Rendlesham to have small scale additional development. Unlike Framlingham and Leiston, there is no need for a future neighbourhood plan in Rendlesham to provide in addition to allocations in the made neighbourhood plan.

13. It is therefore clear that there is no imperative in the newly-adopted Local Plan for Rendlesham to be providing large amounts of new housing.

14. Policy SCLP3.1 states at para. (b) that the plan for growth includes sustaining and supporting growth in retail, commercial leisure and town centres. The use of a key part of the District Centre of Rendlesham for housing would be contrary to this mechanism for achieving the aims of the Local Plan.

Open Space

15. Policy SCLP3.5 states that “Open space should be provided on new residential development sites to contribute to the provision of open space and recreational facilities to meet identified needs, in accordance with Policy SCLP8.2”.

16. Policy SCLP8.2 includes:

“The Council supports the provision of open space and recreational facilities and their continued management across the plan area. Primarily to encourage active lifestyles and to increase participation in formal and informal recreation for all sectors of the community, and also to support the biodiversity, promote effective water management and to enhance the public realm. New residential development will be expected to contribute to the provision of open space and recreational facilities in order to benefit community health, well-being and green infrastructure.”

17. There is no open space provided on the residential area, or indeed on any part, of the site. This is a clear breach of the recently-adopted Local Plan.

Parking and Security

18. The two issues of parking and security are linked, by virtue of the large parking court proposed to be provided at the rear of the development.

19. Paragraph 7.13 of the Local Plan states:

“Some people, either self employed, or as a condition of their employment, are required to take their work vehicle (such as a van or recovery vehicle) home with them. Modern vehicles tend to be bigger than the size of residential garages and parking spaces which means that these are not always suitable or available for parking. Where possible, the Council will encourage larger residential garages and parking spaces in new and renovated residential development to help address this.”

20. This is reflected in Policy SCLP7.2, which includes:

“Proposals involving vehicle parking will be supported where they take opportunities to make efficient use of land and they include:

- a) The provision of safe, secure, and convenient off-street parking of an appropriate size and quantity...”

21. It is not clear from the Proposed Site Plan that the proposed residential parking spaces respect these principles. Furthermore, SCLP11.1 states that permission will be granted where proposals “avoid the perception of a car dominated environment”. A large amount of the site is to be taken up with parking or vehicle movement. Dwellings would be sandwiched between the road and a large area of parking and lorry movement. It would be a car dominated environment.

22. Policy SCLP11.1 states that permission will be granted where proposals “Take into account the need to promote public safety and deter crime and disorder through well lit neighbourhoods and development of public spaces that are overlooked”.

23. The July Report to Committee states at para. 7.48 that “the shared parking court arrangement for residential dwellings is not a preferred option”, but that it “acceptable to avoid multiple accesses onto a bend on Sycamore Drive”. This is tantamount to saying “if there is to be residential development on the site, the unfortunate parking arrangement is the best that can be done”. The justification provided in the applicant’s Planning, Design and Access Statement is that allocating residential parking spaces to each dwelling “would prove unviable under the restriction that no vehicular access will be allowed opposite or near to the primary school off Sycamore Drive” (para. 6.16).

24. In similar fashion, the comments from Suffolk Police’s Designing Out Crime Officer have expressed concerns, including in relation to parking being at the rear of dwellings and not immediately adjacent to residents’ properties, and the possibility that the area around the rear of the proposed convenience store and rear of plot 11 could become a congregating area for antisocial behaviour. It is stated that the application will heighten the possibility of antisocial behaviour in the area. The July Report to Committee says at para. 7.54 that “the disadvantages of a rear parking court are recognised”, but that “it is unavoidable for this scheme”.

25. In the Parish Council's view, the approach in the July Report to Committee is putting the cart before the horse. It assumes that the residential development is to go ahead on the site. But there is no in-principle policy support for residential development on the site, quite the opposite. The Council should not accept suboptimal parking solutions, or security situations, in order to achieve the residential development of the Site. Planning permission for residential development of the Site should be refused because the required approach to parking would be suboptimal.

Ecology and Trees

26. Policy SCLP10.1 includes:

“All development should follow a hierarchy of seeking firstly to avoid impacts, mitigate for impacts so as to make them insignificant for biodiversity, or as a last resort compensate for losses that cannot be avoided or mitigated for. Adherence to the hierarchy should be demonstrated.

New development should provide environmental net gains in terms of both green infrastructure and biodiversity. Proposals should demonstrate how the development would contribute towards new green infrastructure opportunities or enhance the existing green infrastructure network as part of the development. New development must also secure ecological enhancements as part of its design and implementation, and should provide a biodiversity net gain that is proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposal.”

27. Policy SCLP11.1 includes that permission will be granted where proposals “Take account of any important landscape or topographical features and retain and/or enhance existing landscaping and natural and seminatural features on site”.

28. The July Report to Committee indicates that areas of scrub and scattered trees provide some value. The Report states that compensation should be possible. Compensation would not be possible for the proposed loss of a mature oak tree, which is regrettable as it is part of the biodiversity value of the local area (para. 7.43). At para. 7.45 it is that the loss of trees, particularly the mature oak, is unfortunate, with further reference to compensation.

29. These comments should be seen in the light of the hierarchy referred to in SCLP10.1. The loss of established natural elements cannot be discounted or glossed over on the basis that there will be compensation. Further, it is not enough to say that the loss of the oak tree is unfortunate but inevitable given the residential development of the site. Again, this is putting the cart before the horse. The fact that the scheme causes harm in biodiversity and arboricultural terms is a reason why permission should be refused.

Pedestrian and Vehicular Use

30. Policy SCLP7.1 states:

“Development will be supported where...

- g) It reduces conflict between users of the transport network including pedestrians, cyclists, users of mobility vehicles and drivers and does not reduce road safety”

31. Policy SCLP11.1 refers to an expectation that proposals will prioritise safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle movement. It refers to the aim that developments are permeable and legible “which are easily accessed, throughout the site and connections outside the site, and used by all, regardless of age, mobility and disability”. The proposed development has delivery vehicles crossing the proposed pedestrian and cycle access, which is an existing public right of way. This represents an obvious potential for conflict.

32. The July Report to Committee argued that the development of the Site would make the right of way “a more pleasant environment for pedestrians” (para. 7.50). However, it also accepted in the next paragraph (7.51) that delivery vehicles entering the service yard at the rear of the retail units would need to cross the pedestrian right of way. The Report accepted that this “is not an ideal relationship”. The applicant’s Planning Design and Access Statement accepted that this was “not an ideal solution”, but was required due to a neighbouring landowner would not provide access (para. 6.07). The indicative delivery schedule provided by the applicant (Planning, Design and Access Statement, para. 10.06) includes wide timing brackets, three of which the operator of the store would not control. Little weight can be placed in the indication of times. (This is relevant also to the question of noise and harm to amenity).

33. The Parish Council contends that this is yet another reason why planning permission should be refused.

Community Uses

34. Policy SCLP8.1 provides support for community uses in the Local Plan. This is consistent with the objectives and approach of the Rendlesham Neighbourhood Plan. The use of a large part of the site for residential development will reduce the area available for uses (including community uses) supported in Policy RNPP1.

Sustainable Construction and Drainage

35. Policy SCLP9.2 sets out a number of demanding requirements in relation to sustainable construction standards. As a development of more than 10 dwellings, the proposed development would need to achieve energy efficiency standards that result in a 20% reduction in CO2 emissions below the Target CO2 Emission Rate in the Building Regulations (subject to limited exceptions). Further requirements in relation to materials and waste, heating, cooling and lighting are set out in Policy SCLP9.2.
36. The Parish Council is aware of no indication that these requirements would be met.
37. Policy SCLP9.6 sets out the requirement that developments of ten dwellings or more should utilise sustainable drainage systems, unless they are demonstrated to be inappropriate. There is no proposal for sustainable drainage systems on the site, such as integrated into landscaping and green infrastructure, contribute to the design quality of the scheme, and deliver sufficient and appropriate water quality and aquatic biodiversity improvements. The fact that deep filtration would be the only possibility for the Site in residential use, does not mean that residential development with deep filtration should be permitted. The site should not be used for residential development at all.
38. Furthermore, it is clear from the response from Suffolk CC Flood and Water Management that there are serious outstanding questions regarding the proposed approach to drainage on Site. Suffolk CC refers to “concerns as to whether the proposed infiltration rate is a realistic representation of the actual infiltration rate at the depth of the soakaway”, and that the half empty time of the soakaway is “significantly above the maximum 24 hours requirement”. Indeed, at 227.23 hours, it would appear to be vastly above that requirement. The Parish Council argues that these issues are fundamental, they are concerning and they should be resolved prior to a decision as to whether to grant planning permission. At this time, permission should be refused.

Housing Accessibility

39. Policy SCLP 5.8 includes:

“On proposals of 10 or more non-specialist dwellings at least 50% of the dwellings will need to meet the requirements for accessible and adaptable dwellings under Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations. ... Only in exceptional circumstances would a lower percentage of M4(2) dwellings be permitted. In such circumstances applicants would need to demonstrate that provision is either unfeasible or unviable and that development incorporates alternative measures to enhance accessibility and adaptability where possible.”

40. It is not clear to the Parish Council that this requirement would be met. The July Report to Committee refers only to the provision of two ground floor accessible flats, and not to the proportion which would meet the requirements of Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

Affordable Housing Tenure

41. Policy SCLP5.10 states the following in relation to the tenure of affordable housing:

“Of...affordable dwellings, 50% should be for affordable rent / social rent, 25% should be for shared ownership and 25% should be for discounted home ownership”.

42. It is not clear to the Parish Council that the proposal specifies that the required tenure mix would be provided.

Conclusion

43. For the above reasons, the Parish Council contends that planning permission for the proposal should be refused.

ALISTAIR MILLS

Landmark Chambers

Monday, 19 October 2020