

Written Submissions

Tuesday 15 December 2020

Item 5a – 2/2020/0726/REM, Nordon, Salisbury Road, Blandford Forum, DT11 7UA

John Turnbull – Against the application

The Outline application was approved by Committee in February 2019 and a lot has changed since then.

There are 350 homeless households in Dorset and in September there were 475 people on the Housing Register for Blandford.

Allegedly, the application before you is for 40 “affordable” dwellings which when approved will only legally require Aster to provide 8 dwellings for social rent and 4 with shared ownership under the S106 agreement with the option of 28 open market dwellings. Any other tenure arrangements, i.e. the 40 “affordable” dwellings have to be only by agreement between Aster and DC, with no legal enforcement. If Aster does not provide 40 “affordable” dwellings then DC only have the option to pursue this provision through the planning legislation, lengthy with the right of appeal, and does not allow DC to go straight to court.

In 2018, North Dorset was the least affordable rural part of the country in terms of house price to local earnings and matters have only got worse with Covid 19. In October, 9,475 people were claiming out-of-work benefits in rural Dorset up from 3,775, representing 4.5% of the working population.

You will be approving an application which allegedly will provide 40 “affordable” dwellings, 32 shared ownership and only 8 affordable rent. With the catastrophic economic effects of Covid 19 the ability to raise a deposit, obtain a mortgage and pay the rent on that part of a shared ownership dwelling still owned by Aster is going to be nigh on impossible for a great number of people. The real need is for affordable rented properties. NDDC’s own Affordable Housing policy required 70% to 85% of all affordable housing to be rented.

With only the legal requirement to provide 12 “affordable” dwellings, I predict that within a very short space of time Aster will be submitting an application to remove the affordability of the remaining 28 units on the basis that the scheme is uneconomically viable and these 28 units will become open market houses.

Aster has a proven track record of requests to vary S106 and affordability agreements, for example Mampits Lane Shaftesbury with an

application to remove the “affordable” requirements due to funding and valuation problems.

Only this month, Sovereign Housing Association at Buxton Road Weymouth has reneged on their offer of 18 “affordable” units to now provide only 6. DC admits they can only enforce 6 under a S106 agreement.

Be warned, this will happen at Nordon and you will have on your conscience the loss of 28 much needed units of social housing for the 475 people on the Blandford Housing Register unless you vote ideally to refuse but more realistically defer this application.

Blandford Town Council – AGAINST

The Town Council objects to the application, and welcomes the fact that it is being considered by Committee:

- Nordon currently retains Conservation Area (CA) status and is therefore subject to policy B11 of the B+ Neighbourhood Plan, which requires: ' (i) consistently high standard of design and detailing reflecting the scale and character, including the layout of trees, development plots...and building form; ' (iii) 'No harmful impact on the townscape and roofscape';
- (iv) 'The retention and protection of trees...and other open areas which contribute to its character and appearance. '(Paragraph 2): 'All planning applications within the CA must demonstrate how the design proposals have sought to preserve and enhance the significance of the heritage assets and their setting in line with the recommendations of the Character Area Appraisal'.

BFTC therefore requests:

- A re-examination of the decision to demolish the Edwardian Villa, a heritage asset, and key feature of the CA and that other uses are explored.
- More of the 26 mature trees are retained. It is essential both the density and balance of proposed dwellings be addressed to meet the need locally of rented accommodation. The pandemic has drastically altered the mortgage market with deposits of 15% required. Rented properties are needed more than ever (75%-80% - see Mr Turnbull's submission). There is no evidence locally

that shared equity is required. ' BFTC would suggest a reduction to 30 dwellings;

- A LEAP play area forms part of the development as the closest play area is ½ mile away.
- Building design should at least reflect the character of other buildings in the area (in particular the Victorian Almshouses opposite and the predominantly eastern side of the Victorian/Edwardian Salisbury Road). They should be built to the highest modern & energy efficient specifications.'
- The entrance relocation would bring it closer to the busy junction of Salisbury Road and Kings Road – a major thoroughfare to Blandford centre. The current hub with both vehicles and pedestrians has already increased the volume of traffic and parking congestion in this area. As a result, the position has already witnessed several near-miss accidents, one involving a cyclist who fell in front of a car as it emerged from the DC Hub site. Retaining the current main entrance would also diminish the necessity to remove several substantial trees.'
- BFTC is consulted on naming roads and parts of the development.
- BFTC also objects to the s106 on the grounds that the overall delivery of affordable homes has been changed in this application from 100% to only 30% (12 units) which has significantly reduced the reason and justification for damaging the CA.

John Hammond – Applicant

Thankyou for the opportunity to present the applicant's case for the re-development of Nordon.

This is the final stage in securing a legacy to the former North Dorset Council and in presenting the applicant's case there is an element of mixed feelings about the loss of Nordon given I spent some very rewarding years working at Nordon, however from a pragmatic view I can also respect the Council's decision that its legacy should be the delivery of an affordable housing scheme.

The last North Dorset Planning Committee resolved to approve the principle of re-development including the replacement of the original building, Nordon. They also approved the layout and access leaving you

to consider the appearance and height of the dwellings as well as the new landscape planting.

Following that committee efforts were made to get the decision called in for Secretary of State review as well as seeking to get Nordon declared an Asset of Community Value. Neither succeeded, leaving you free to approve the final stage before Aster can get on site early in 2021 to deliver the affordable housing.

Your officers have asked Aster to make changes to a limited number of dwellings and to revise the landscape planting replacing a single tree species. Both requests have been agreed by Aster, indeed their design revisions go far beyond the conservation officers request.

As such you have confidence that the scheme does respect the Conservation Area and the principles established by the outline permission.

When I submitted this application I posted an update on LinkedIn. Liz Goodall responded that the re-development represented a fitting legacy to North Dorset. I would agree with Liz and urge you to approve this reserved matters application.