

## **Proposals for residential development on land at Cottingham and Middleton - Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Why is residential development being proposed?**

The site was previously assessed as Category 2 ('developable') in the 2009 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, produced by Corby Borough Council, and no major constraints to development were identified. For a site in a rural part of the Borough, the site scored comparatively well (it should be noted that the assessment criteria, which were drawn up by the client steering group, were such that very few sites outside of the main towns were able to score higher than Category 2).

At that time, the SHLAA identified potential for 82 dwellings at the site, although it should be emphasised that this figure is indicative rather than prescriptive. In the 2011 update to the SHLAA, the site was downgraded to Category 3; however, we understand that this was due to strategic assessments carried out by the Nene Valley Regional Park, which identified the site as in an area of high nature conservation sensitivity.

We have since carried out more detailed ecological surveys, and have been able to confirm that there are no significant nature conservation constraints facing the site.

### **2. How do the proposals relate to the Council's plans for the area?**

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraphs 47 and 49 of the NPPF, which was published in March 2012, are highly relevant when considering planning applications for housing development.

Paragraph 47 advises that, in order to significantly boost the supply of housing, LPAs should ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing. The same paragraph requires councils to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing, as well as '...an additional buffer of 5%...to ensure choice and competition in the market for land', or a higher buffer of 20% where there has been '...a record of persistent under delivery of housing.'

Paragraph 49 of the NPPF goes on to advise that:

'Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.'

The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is explained in paragraph 14 of the NPPF, which states that where the development plan is absent or relevant policies are out of date, permission for development should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole.

## Current Policy and Housing Requirements

Policy 1 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy ('NNCSS'), adopted in 2008, states that development in rural areas may only take place within village boundaries, while saved Policy P10(E) of the Corby Local Plan states that proposals for development in the open countryside will not normally be permitted, and that 'particular regard will be paid to the Special Landscape Areas and the need to avoid visual intrusion, especially in the Welland Valley.'

However, the most recent North Northamptonshire Annual Monitoring Report ('AMR'), which covers the period April 2011 to March 2012, states that the Borough of Corby has only 1.8 years of deliverable housing land. Therefore, any application for residential development in the Borough should be considered in the light of the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' as set out in the NPPF rather than against the development plan. The lack of a five year supply has been decisive in numerous appeals since the publication of the NPPF, even in cases where sites have important designations.

The North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit ('NNJPU') is consulting on a document entitled 'Draft Interim Policy Statement on Housing Requirements'. The dwelling targets in the Draft IPS are much lower than the dwelling targets in the adopted NNCSS, both for the Borough of Corby and for North Northamptonshire as a whole. We will be submitting detailed representations but the following summary points are highly relevant to consideration of our client's proposed scheme:

- The adopted NNCSS remains the statutory development plan (alongside the 'saved' elements of the Corby Local Plan).
- The lower dwelling targets in the Draft IPS have not yet been tested at a formal, independent public Examination. Only then, and when they have been found sound, can they have any significant weight as a material consideration.
- The NNJPU accepted at the Joint Committee of 13 June 2013 that the proper means of revising housing requirements is through the formal review of the NNJCS. However, adoption of the replacement Core Strategy is expected until mid-2014 at the earliest.
- The Inspector in the recent Irchester Appeal Decision stated that 'the adopted CSS...remains the only authoritative basis on which to assess the district's housing requirements.'
- Other recent Appeal Decisions have confirmed that interim housing policies and five-year housing land supply assessments which have not been independently tested at examination and which do not form part of the adopted development plan can carry only limited weight.
- The IPS will not be a statutory development plan document. It will not be the subject of Strategic Environmental Assessment or Sustainability Appraisal.
- Accordingly, there is no justification for working to the dwelling targets in the draft IPS. The North Northamptonshire authorities should continue to use the housing targets set by the adopted NNCSS.
- The Borough of Corby only has c.1.8 years of deliverable housing land when measured against the adopted dwelling targets. Paras 49 and 14 of the NPPF therefore become highly relevant. Unless any adverse impacts of approving the scheme would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, the NPPF advises that application must therefore be approved 'without delay'.
- Even if the lower dwelling targets in the Draft IPS were used (and they should not be, as explained above), Corby could not conceivably demonstrate a 5-year supply in the near future.

### **3. What is being proposed?**

The site is ideally placed to make a meaningful contribution towards the supply of housing in the Borough, being very well located immediately adjacent to the villages of Cottingham and Middleton.

The development proposals seek to respond to the identified need for new housing by proposing a high quality, innovative, sustainable and locally responsive new residential development at Cottingham which will enhance the local character and integrate with the surrounding context.

It is anticipated that the proposed residential development will comprise:

- Approximately 70 – 80 dwellings
- A mix of family housing, including some affordable units
- A range of accommodation, including bungalows
- A well-connected scheme that will provide easy access to the village centre by pedestrian and cycle routes
- Sizeable external space and on-plot parking
- Retention of the majority of TPO and other trees
- Other landscaping measures to minimise impacts associated with the development on surrounding residential development and the adjacent countryside

The indicative masterplan has been considered in terms of highway and pedestrian access and will provide a viable scheme for redevelopment, enhancing local amenity and the overall appearance/character of the surrounding area.

### **4. How will the proposed development fit in with existing buildings and the surrounding area?**

A number of surveys have been undertaken to understand potential impacts arising from the development in terms of ecology, landscape and visual impact and trees. The current proposals have been designed taking into account the results of these surveys.

The public exhibition will allow us to test our proposals and establish what is considered acceptable on site, taking into account planning policy and other material considerations.

### **5. Will the proposed development cause any traffic problems?**

To consider traffic impact, a Transport Assessment is being prepared, which will be submitted with the planning application to the Borough Council. This will include a detailed assessment of the local highway network and will set out any proposed highway improvements to increase capacity and smooth traffic flow.

As part of the Transport Assessment detailed analysis of Cottingham, Middleton and the surrounding road network will be undertaken. The need for any highways improvements will also be discussed and agreed with the local Highway Authority, Northamptonshire County Council.

### **6. Will the development impact upon existing uses within Cottingham and Middleton?**

It is considered that the proposals will help to attract and retain local trade and employment within Cottingham and Middleton, in particular, the village shop, which is operated on a voluntary basis.

## **7. How will impacts from construction be minimised?**

We acknowledge that any new development can cause concern as a consequence of the perceived impact associated with the construction of the proposals.

Every effort will be made to ensure that this is kept to a minimum and the development will be built in accordance with the Considerate Builder's Scheme and the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

The requirement for a Code of Construction Management Practice is likely to be conditioned to the issuing of planning consent, should the application be deemed to be acceptable. This will require the submission of, and approval by the Council of details of how the developer will minimise any construction impacts during that phase of works.

In addition, the appointed contractor will liaise with local residents to ensure their needs are heard and considered throughout the construction process.

## **8. How is the Project Team considering Sustainable Development in the Design Process?**

The new development is being designed in accordance with the relevant sustainable design and construction policies contained within the Development Plan. The development is likely to be designed to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes (CfSH), which is the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. The Code aims to reduce our carbon emissions and create homes that are more sustainable.

## **9. Can the existing services and infrastructure accommodate further development?**

An investigation into the availability of services and infrastructure will be undertaken as part of the planning application process.

### **Planning**

## **10. When are you submitting the planning application?**

It is anticipated that the planning application will be submitted to the Borough Council within 2 - 3 months.

## **11. What are your expected timescales?**

It is expected that the application will take approximately 6 months to go through planning. If planning permission is granted then it is anticipated that the site will be marketed to interested parties, who may choose to bring forward all or individual parts of the proposals.

## **12. Will the application be outline/detailed/hybrid?**

The proposals will be submitted in Outline with the appearance, layout and scale of proposed buildings and landscaping detailed at the Reserved Matters stage to provide flexibility and to allow the detailed design of the site to be tailored to specific housebuilder requirements.

## **Consultation**

### **13. Why are you only consulting now?**

Discussions have been ongoing with officers at the Borough Council regarding the plans to develop the site. The project is now in a position where plans are far enough advanced to be able to show people what we are putting forward. It is important to us that we get feedback from those who live, work or visit the area in order to shape our proposals.

### **14. What is the consultation process? Is this the beginning or end of it?**

We are in the middle of the consultation process. Following the exhibition, we will continue to speak with Borough Council Officers and consult with groups and stakeholders in the area, such as Cottingham and Middleton Parish Councils, before publishing our final proposals for submission to the Borough Council. The consultation process has been invaluable so far in shaping the proposals you now see. We will continue to consult right up until the end of the process.

### **15. Who (else) are you speaking to? Have you spoken to the local community groups in the area?**

We have directly written to the majority of local residents and businesses in Cottingham and Middleton to invite them to the Public Exhibition and wish to continue the consultation process following this.

### **16. How will my comments and views be taken on board?**

You can submit comments at the exhibition or through our dedicated e-mail and freepost addresses (see below for details) up to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

We will be submitting a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to the Council, which will cover the consultation process up to submission of the planning application. The SCI is a document on public record submitted to the planning authority. The planning authority will take account of comments made and views expressed both during the course of conversation and also when making final decisions.

### **17. Can I see the results of the consultation process?**

Yes, the results of the consultation will be in the SCI, which will be a public document. We will also be keeping in contact with people who have been involved in the consultation process to ensure that they are up to date. A dedicated e-mail address - [cottinghaminfo@peterbrett.com](mailto:cottinghaminfo@peterbrett.com), and a freepost address - Cottingham Information, FREEPOST Peter Brett Associates, SCE 4241, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8BR, been set up to aid this process.

### **18. Will you continue consulting after submission of planning?**

Following the submission of the application, the Council will consult local neighbours and will advertise the application and ask for comments which will be taken into consideration in determining the application.