

DECISION DATE 15 June 2005	APPLICATION NO. 05/00419/OUT A24	PLANNING COMMITTEE: 27 June 2005
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR CATEGORY 2 AND LOW COST HOUSING COMPRISING 16 THREE BEDROOM UNITS, 20 TWO BEDROOM UNITS AND 8 ONE BEDROOM UNITS WITH ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL WORKS AND IMPROVEMENT WORKS		SITE ADDRESS LAND ADJACENT CANAL, HAMMERTON HALL LANE, LANCASTER.
APPLICANT: Mr J. Critchley, PO Box 78, Lancaster, LA1 1FF.		AGENT: Fletcher Smith Architects.

REASON FOR DELAY

N/A.

PARISH NOTIFICATION

No Parish Council for this area.

LAND USE ALLOCATION/DEPARTURE

The site is located within a "Countryside Area" inside "The North Lancashire Green Belt". The site is also adjacent to the Lancaster Canal which is designated as a County Biological Heritage Site, Green Corridor and Informal Recreation Area.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

County Highways - recommends refusal - substandard access road and junction with A6 and no footways.

Chief Engineer - recommends refusal - as above.

County Archaeologist - no objection.

Strategic Housing - proposal would need to be considered by the Affordable Housing panel.

CPRE - objects - loss of Green Belt; conflict Local Plan Policies; conflict with SPG16 Housing Policies; loss of wildlife and habitats; detrimental to the recreational value of the canal corridor; precedent for further Green Belt development inside the "northern route"; dangerous and inadequate access.

British Waterways - no response received to date.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED

21 letters and a petition containing 103 signatures have been received objecting to this proposal on the following grounds:-

Increased traffic on an inadequate and dangerous access of substandard width and forward visibility; no footpath and a dangerous junction with the A6 inadequate visibility; would further encourage "rat run" traffic along Hammerton Hall Lane and lead to increased noise and disturbance as well as loss of privacy especially to the neighbouring St John's Hospice and Slynedales Cancer Care Centre; loss of designated Green Belt land, rural landscape, wildlife and views; loss of canal and roadside trees and vegetation; no need for further residential development on this unsustainable site.

REPORT

The site is a long but narrow, flat and open field which is presently very overgrown with weeds. It has continuous mature trees and hedgerows along all its boundaries. The Lancaster canal with the urban area of the City lies to its south while open fields and countryside lie to the north along with St John's Hospice and Slynedales Cancer Care Centre which overlap the eastern third of the site frontage to Hammerton Hall Lane.

The site is accessed via Hammerton Hall Lane which runs along its north side and connects the A6 in the east with Barley Cop Lane and Morecambe in the west. This road is subject to an access only traffic order but is well used by "rat running" traffic. It has substandard carriageway width, restricted forward visibility, no footways, a narrow hump back canal bridge and is tightly constrained by mature hedgerows on both sides. Furthermore, it has a dangerous junction with the A6 with severely restricted visibility to the right on emerging.

This proposal is an outline application for development of the site for "low cost" housing including 44 dwellings of various types and sizes (both houses and apartments) in a series of two storey blocks sited in linear fashion along the site, with communally maintained external amenity space and car parking courts but with no private amenity space. The application, however, only seeks detailed consent for the means of access and the siting of the unit blocks, all other matters being indicative only. However, the plan does indicate the total loss of all existing boundary hedge rows and trees. The plan also indicates the widening of Hammerton Hall Lane along the entire length of the site frontage to accommodate two way traffic and a footpath. The accommodation would all be category 2, low cost houses and apartments.

No indication of the sell out cost of the units is given and no other off-site highway improvement works are proposed. This site lies within the North Lancashire Green Belt as identified from the policy point of view by Policy E1 of the Lancaster District Local Plan. The development of this site would, therefore, conflict with Policy E2 of the plan which states that within the Green Belt, the erection of new buildings will not be permitted except for agricultural or forestry purposes or other essential open land uses and be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

The development would also conflict with the provisions of SPG16 of the Lancaster District Local Plan since this green field site located beyond the present limits of the urban area, clearly does not constitute a Category A site and in the light of regional policies of restraint, would extend the limits of the urban area beyond those considered necessary and sustainable at the present time.

The proposed development would also lead to a significant increase in the use of Hammerton Hall Lane and its substandard junction with the A6, the majority of which would remain unimproved and would, therefore, be seriously detrimental to the interests of highway and pedestrian safety.

The loss of mature trees and hedgerows from the site boundaries, especially the canal side would be likely to conflict with the interests of the canal corridor County Biological Heritage Site and its character and appearance and therefore its value as an informal Recreation Area and be contrary to the aims of policies E17 and R9 of the Local Plan.

Notwithstanding its proposals for low cost housing therefore, it is considered that this application should be strongly resisted.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

This application has to be considered in relation to the provisions of the Human Rights Act, in particular Article 8 (privacy/family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). Having regard to the principles of proportionality, it has been concluded that there are no issues arising from the proposal which appear to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT PERMISSION BE REFUSED for the following reasons:-

1. Conflict with policy E2 of the Lancaster District Local Plan and detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.
2. Conflict with SPG16 of the Lancaster District Local Plan and extend the limits of the urban area beyond those considered necessary and sustainable.
3. Detrimental to the interests of highway and pedestrian safety.
4. Detrimental to the character, appearance and nature conservation interests of the canal corridor and therefore contrary to the aims of policies E17 and R9 of the Lancaster District Local Plan.
5. Precedent for further Green Belt development to the detriment of its character and purpose of its designation.

