

Report to District Development Control Committee

Date of meeting: 6th October 2009



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject: Planning Application EPF/1399/09– Garden Centre, 212 Manor Road, Chigwell – Outline planning application for 69 residential units (54 affordable), public open space and a community facility (D1 Use) with all matters reserved except access.

**Officer contact for further information: K Smith
Committee Secretary: S Hill Ext 4249**

Recommendation:

That the Committee considers an outline planning application on land Garden Centre, 212 Manor Road, Chigwell for 69 residential units (54 affordable), public open space and a community facility (D1 Use) with all matters reserved except access, which has been referred by Area Plans Subcommittee South without a recommendation.

Report Detail

This application has been referred by the Area Plans Sub Committee South on 16 September 2009. The report to the sub-committee (attached as Appendix 1) carried a recommendation from officers to grant planning permission (subject to a Section 106 agreement) and the planning merits of the case are attached.

Planning Issues

The debate at the Sub-Committee meeting was inconclusive, with some Members implying support for this scheme, which they felt was a better design than the scheme for the adjacent site and which incorporates a community facility and public open space. Conversely, some Members expressed concern with some elements of the scheme, in particular the size of the area of Green Belt land that would be developed and the number of units proposed to be development on both this site and the adjacent site. Generally, Members expressed a desire for a cohesive approach to the development of both this application site and the adjacent site (upon which there is a current planning application for 21 flats which is also on this Agenda).

Officers consider that that the provision of affordable housing on this site would make a valuable contribution towards the identified need within the District. When this is considered in conjunction with site specific factors (such as the proximity to the transport network and local shops, the location of the site on the edge of the urban area, the previously developed status of the land and the distinct boundaries to all sides of the site, which would retain a defensible boundary to the Metropolitan Green Belt), it is considered by Officers that there is a strong case for exceptional

circumstances to justify an exception to the normal green belt policy of restraint. Whilst this application only seeks outline planning permission, it is accompanied by indicative plans that illustrate that a development of this scale can be comfortably accommodated within the site. At a density of approximately 53 dwellings per hectare, the development of this site is considered to be acceptable in line with Government advice and the surrounding built-up area.

Further to the planning obligations set out in the Officer's report to the Sub-Committee, Councillor Knapman suggested at the Sub-Committee meeting that the proposed development of the two sites would generate additional demand for services which were provided by the Post Office within the local shops until its recent closure. The Post Office was closed following a review and consultation exercise undertaken by Royal Mail in 2007. Following the closure of this and other Post Offices across the country, Royal Mail provided local authorities with an option to re-open Post Offices, provided that they are 'cost-neutral' to Royal Mail and do not have a significant impact on surrounding Post Offices. Discussions regarding this matter are taking place between Officers, Essex County Council and the applicant's agent at the time of preparing this report.

Conclusion

Should the Committee recommend granting planning permission, the application will have to be referred to the Government Office for the East of England, as a departure from the Local Plan. The recommendation to grant planning permission should be subject to conditions requiring:

- The submission of the reserved matters
- The use of suitable external materials;
- Highway matters including details of the site access, the discharge of water from the site, the provision of the car parking, and the layout of the roads and footpaths in accordance with the Essex Design Guide;
- The submission of further information relating to tree protection and site landscaping;
- The submission of a Flood Risk Assessment;
- Construction matters including a restriction of working hours and the provision of wheel washing facilities;
- The submission of further information relating to site levels; and
- Further information/mitigation relating to contaminated land issues;
- The submission of further information regarding the potential for protected species on the site; and
- Further detail relating to the storage of refuse facilities.

It is further recommended that any grant of planning permission should be subject to a legal agreement to secure planning obligations, within 9 months of the date of a resolution, which may include:

- The amount, tenure and occupancy of the affordable housing;
- Highway Improvements (Works and/or financial contributions);
- Education Provision (financial contribution and/or other); and
- Community benefits (financial contribution and/or other).