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| APPLICATION No: | EPF/1801/05 |
| SITE ADDRESS: | Land Adj 21Albion Terrace, Sewardstone Road, Waltham Abbey |
| PARISH: | Waltham Abbey |
| APPLICANT: | Homestyle Properties |
| DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL: | Erection of 6 no. terraced houses with 3 no. affordable housing. (Resubmitted application) |
| RECOMMENDED DECISION: | REFUSE |

REASONS:

- 1 The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The proposal represents inappropriate development and is therefore at odds with Government advice, Policy GB2 of the adopted Local Plan and Policy C2 of the adopted replacement structure plan for Essex and Southend on Sea. The latter state that within the Green Belt permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances for the construction of new buildings or for the change of use or extension to existing buildings except for the purposes of agriculture, mineral extraction or forestry, small scale facilities for outdoor participatory sport and recreation, cemeteries, or similar uses which are open in character. The application for dwelling houses fails to comply with Policies GB2, resulting in a considerable harm to the Green Belt. No very special circumstances have been put forward to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.
- 2 The site is within the Lee Valley Regional Park. The proposed development is at odds with Policy GB10 of the adopted Local Plan, in that the use of the site for dwelling houses would have an adverse affect on the character and appearance of the Regional Park.
- 3 The site is adjacent to the A112, a classified highway. The proposal will intensify vehicle traffic, which would cause deterioration in the efficiency of the through road and also cause a danger to highway safety. In addition the vision splay would be inadequate causing a highway hazard. Both are contrary to policy T17 of the adopted Local Plan, and policies T7 and T8 of the replacement Structure Plan.

Councillor Knapman has called this application to committee.

Description of proposal:

Erection of six 3 bedroom terraced houses. The terrace would be 29m long, 14m deep and 7.5m high with 7 parking spaces to the rear of the site. Three of the dwellings are proposed to be affordable housing.

The proposal is very similar to one refused in May 2005 under delegated powers. The only difference between the two proposals is that the previous proposal did not include any social housing.

Description of Site:

An 'L' shaped area of land to the south and rear of a residential terrace at Albion Terrace. The King George Reservoir is to the immediate west. The land is flat and has been partially hard surfaced at some time in the last few years. The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt, Lee Valley Regional Park, and adjacent to the District boundary with the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

Relevant History:

WHX/140/57 Residential development - refused
EPF/1799/03 Use of land for car washing - refused and dismissed on appeal
EPF/805/05 – Erection of six 3 bedroom terraced houses - refused

Polices Applied:

Structure Plan

C2 Green Belt
H5 Affordable Housing
T7 Road Hierarchy
T8 Safety

Local Plan

GB2 Green Belt
GB10 Lee Valley Regional Park
H5 Affordable Housing
H6 Securing affordable housing
DBE 1 Design of new buildings
DBE 2 Amenity of new buildings
DBE 4 Design in Green belt
DBE 8 Amenity Space
DBE 9 Amenity
T17 Traffic Criteria
U2 Flooding

National Planning Policy Guidance

PPG2 – Green Belts

Issues and Considerations:

The main issue in this application is whether this proposal is appropriate development within the Green Belt, and if not, whether there are any very special circumstances that would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Any impact on the Lee Valley Regional Park, traffic implications and impact for flood risk are also relevant.

Green Belt

Structure plan Policy C2 states that within the Green Belt permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings for purposes other than agriculture, mineral extraction or forestry or other specified purposes. Local Plan Policy GB2 states that planning permission will not be granted for the use of land or the construction of new buildings unless it accords with the laid down criteria, which are similar to those identified in the Structure Plan.

The site is wholly within the Green Belt, and the proposed dwellings are not intended to serve the purposes of agriculture or forestry. Therefore this proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is by definition harmful. Moreover, it is considered that the loss of this plot to a new ribbon development would be seriously detrimental to the amenity of the Green Belt by reason of reducing the openness of the area, which is its fundamental characteristic.

It is therefore necessary to consider whether any very special circumstances exist in this case that are of sufficient weight to override the harm that would be caused by the proposal and justify allowing inappropriate development.

The applicant argues that as three of the six houses would be affordable such very special circumstances exist.

No information has been provided to say in what form the affordable housing shall take, however. The applicants argue in a supporting statement that as the site over the last few years has seen many different occupants of an undesired nature, for many reasons they are sure that a development of houses would be welcomed by other local residents and with the need for more affordable homes locally they would like to think that members would agree with this proposal.

Previous undesirable uses of the site include that of a car wash. The car wash was unlawful and planning permission to continue that use was refused by the Council and a subsequent appeal dismissed with the Inspector citing its impact on the openness of the Green Belt as the reason for his decision. Previous uses of the site such as the above cannot be taken into consideration when dealing with this application and although this particular site is in a poor condition PPG2 makes it clear that the condition of the land is not material to the continued protection of Green Belt land.

Suggestions were made to the applicant previously that 100% affordable housing may represent very special circumstances and that such a proposal might be looked at more favourably, however the applicants state that this would not be financially beneficial and are unable to propose this.

A proposal for 50% affordable housing is not considered to be very special circumstances of sufficient weight to override the harm that would be caused by the proposal and justify allowing inappropriate development. The proposal for the erection of 6 houses in the Green Belt remains unacceptable and there is no justification in planning terms to allow housing on this site.

Design & Building in Context

The terrace has a very similar appearance to the long terrace to the immediate north, and would be not dissimilar to the properties to the southeast within Waltham Forest. It is considered that the detailed design is acceptable. However, it would infill a gap between existing buildings that forms part of the Green Belt. The loss of that part of the Green Belt to housing would be harmful to the character of the locality and therefore it would be harmful to the street scene.

Lee Valley Regional Park

The site is within the boundaries of the Park. The Park Authority has requested that this application be refused, as the proposed dwellings would represent an undesirable ribbon development in the Metropolitan Green Belt and Lee Valley Regional Park, which would adversely affect the amenity of the area.

Flooding

The site lies within a flood plain. The applicant submitted a Flood Risk Assessment in conjunction with the previously submitted identical application, which has met the concerns of the Environment Agency.

Highways

Essex County Council as highway authority has commented that the applicant does not appear to own sufficient land to provide adequate vision splays. The sub-standard vision splay that is proposed would result in a hazardous lack of vision along the adjacent highway. In addition, the proposal would intensify use of a substandard access onto a classified highway, which would be detrimental to road safety.

Conclusion

This proposal is contrary to Green Belt policy, Regional Park policy and would have an adverse effect on highway safety. Special circumstances of sufficient weight have not been demonstrated to override the harm this proposal would cause. Therefore it is recommended that this application is refused.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

WALTHAM ABBEY TOWN COUNCIL – object on the grounds of overdevelopment.

LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK – The development represents an undesirable ribbon development in the Metropolitan Green Belt and Lee Valley Regional Park, which would adversely affect the amenity of the area.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – The development would result in an unacceptable degree of danger to all road users.

NEIGHBOURS – No response received

