CAWREY
LIMITED

REPORT ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

FOR PROPOSED SCHEME FOR SUSTAINABLE AFFORDABLE HOMES LAND OFF GROBY ROAD, RATBY

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
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Proposed Scheme for Sustainable Affordable Homes, Land off Groby Road, Ratby

Report on Public Consultation

Introduction

Prior to the submission of this planning application for 56 sustainable affordable and market houses on land off Groby Road in Ratby, the applicant, Cawrey Limited, undertook a programme of public consultation to determine the views of the local community and to determine the level of interest in acquiring an affordable home on a shared ownership or rented basis.

The programme of public consultation involved:

a) Briefing to representatives of the Parish Council – this took place on 24th January 2008;

b) Separate briefing to two elected Members of the Borough Council (Councillor Chris Boothby and Councillor Ossie O'Shea) on 08th February 2008;

c) Distribution of leaflets including a comments form (refer copies attached) to every household in the village (approximately 1,800). The leaflet outlined details of the scheme and invited local people to attend a public consultation event on 15th February 2008. The leaflets were distributed by the local Scout group over the weekend of 2/3 February 2008;

d) Exhibition of the proposals which took place in the Village Hall, Ratby on Friday, 15th February 2008 from 2 pm until 8 pm. The exhibition comprised a number of mounted presentation boards to identify the key features of the proposed housing scheme, including layout, house types and the unique sustainability features to be incorporated into the new homes; a 'rolling' power-point presentation was also available to view. The exhibition was attended by around 120 people of all ages and from all parts of the village, and included several members of the Parish Council and also the two Ward members who attended the briefing on 08th February 2008. Three members of the project team were on hand to answer any questions:
   - John Cawrey, Managing Director, Cawrey Ltd;
   - Geoff Prince, Town Planning Consultant, GPA Ltd; and
   - Rob Pocock, Architect, Tangent Architects.

e) The return and analysis of completed comments forms – in total 46 completed forms were returned, the majority to register interest in securing an affordable home; others commented on specific aspects of the scheme. Copies of the comments forms can be provided on request.

The overall scheme Master Plan shows 56 affordable homes together with sites identified for a day nursery and a doctor's surgery – these community facilities do not form part of the planning application, but subject to interest from providers of healthcare and education services could be subject to separate planning applications in the future - they represent sites which Cawrey Ltd would be prepared to make available for these purposes – these proposals in addition to the housing also generated a response from the public and are included in this report on consultation.

Local Interest in Affordable Homes

In total 32 people registered interest in an affordable home (details available on request), either for themselves or for a member of their family. In terms of house size, house type, tenure, the breakdown is as follows:

a) House Size:
   - Up to 4 bedrooms: 3 registrations of interest;
   - Up to 3 bedrooms: 15 registrations of interest;
   - Up to 2 bedrooms: 14 registrations of interest;

b) House Type:
   - Flat: 2 registrations of interest;
   - Bungalow: 3 registrations of interest; and
   - House: 27 assumed to prefer to a house.

c) Tenure:
   - Shared Ownership: 12 registrations of interest;
   - Rented: 9 registrations of interest;
   - Either Shared ownership or Rented: 11 did not specify.

A variety of reasons were given for seeking an affordable home in Ratby, including:

a) Personal circumstances including separation from partner and desire to remain in Ratby to be able to continue to bring up their children and be near to relatives and friends (local community support);

b) Need for larger property as family becomes larger and children grow older and need more private space. For example one family now has teenage children of the opposite sex but they only have a two bed-roomed house, and now need a three bed-roomed home;

c) No suitable affordable homes available locally – the general view was that the overall supply of affordable homes generally was very limited with one family giving the example of how their daughter (from Ratby) has now been housed in Lincolnshire (approximately 50 miles away) by a Housing Association as this was their nearest available property;

d) Desire to move back to village to be near to elderly parents;

e) Young couples desperate to get a foothold on the property ladder and to be able to live locally in the community in which they were brought up.

Many verbal responses (and some written) expressed the view that any affordable homes to be built in Ratby should only be made available to people who live locally or who have been brought up and/or work in the village. Indeed, respondents would welcome a firm commitment possibly through a planning condition to ensure that the affordable homes are offered to local people in the first instance.

Comments on the Scheme

The public consultation exercise generated a lively debate on the scheme. Comments are summarised below:

a) Design and Layout:
   - Modern, interesting, good appearance and pleasing to the eye;
   - Eco –friendly – growing recognition of the need to build and design more efficient homes;
   - Height of flats – these will be two storey and in appearance no different to the two storey houses;

- Ratby has enough houses – this is a matter of opinion not borne out by level of local interest;
- Capacity of the existing estate roads to cope with the additional traffic generated by the development – this matter is adequately addressed through the Transport Assessment.

b) Proximity to Motorway:
- Concerns expressed about motorway noise – a noise assessment is submitted with the planning application which demonstrates that the level of noise will be acceptable;
- Impact of Motorway –widening proposals: the applicant understands via the Highways Agency that this will take place within the boundary of the M1 and not require any additional land–take;

c) Access off Groby Road near to Motorway:
- Concerns about road safety along this busy section of road – the housing will be accessed from Fielding Lane; access onto Groby Road is part of possible longer term development associated with the Play School and Drs Surgery; however, Cawrey Ltd would wish to negotiate the use of this access for construction vehicles on a temporary basis to minimise heavy traffic movements through the village;
- Use as a cycle/footpath route to local secondary school in Ratby – this was generally welcomed by residents, subject to safe crossing of Groby Road at this point;

d) Impact on Neighbouring Properties (off Groby Road and Cottage Close)
- Cycle/pedestrian path should be fenced to prevent access into gardens of existing houses and ensure security – fencing is part of the scheme;
- Impact of new development on house prices – this is not a planning issue;
- Construction impacts in terms of noise, dust etc. Development site will be fenced and working hours agreed to with the Council if planning permission granted; wheel wash facilities will be put in place to avoid mud on roads; construction vehicles would access the site via a temporary access off Groby Road near the Motorway;
- Views of development from Cottage Close – these will be minimal as the existing green buffer will be maintained, regraded in part with additional tree planting on the bund to screen the existing and new development areas;

e) Day Nursery:
- Inadequate provision locally;
- Provide local employment;
- Facilitate employment and working arrangements for parents, particularly single mums with young children;
- A new Day Nursery would represent progress;
- Some suggested that this facility would be better located in the village centre;
- The Trustees and Staff of the Pre School in Ratby are concerned about the effects of a new Nursery on the existing Pre-School;

f) Doctor's Surgery:
- Need for a modern 21st Century Surgery;
- Others considered that the existing provision is adequate;
- Some suggested that if there is to be a new Doctor's surgery, then this facility would be better located in the village centre;
- A new Doctor's Surgery would represent progress;

- As the planned surgery is on the edge of Ratby off Groby Road, the proposed surgery could also serve Groby, which has limited facilities.

g) Other Community:
   - Several respondents expressed a view that a Youth Club/Centre is urgently needed;
   - Need for long term plan to expand Ratby Primary School;
   - Need is for a high quality multi-purpose community centre incorporating: parish office, theatre/lecture hall/cinema; consulting room, youth centre etc.

Conclusion

Overall it is considered that the public consultation has been a success and generated a considerable level of local interest. The feedback and responses have been generally positive, with a strong local appreciation that there is a need to provide affordable homes in Ratby. Indeed, this is borne out by the number of people registering an interest in being considered for an affordable home in Ratby. Respondents also acknowledged that this represents a suitable site for housing development, notwithstanding its proximity to the Motorway. Neighbours of adjoining properties, who expressed concerns about security, visual impact and disturbance during construction, appeared to be generally satisfied that adequate measures have been incorporated into the design to address their concerns.