

24/2006/040

THE TACCHI-MORRIS TRUST

ERECTION OF 5 DETACHED DWELLINGS AND 3 LOWCOST OWNERSHIP DWELLINGS AND ACCESS AT LAND OFF WHITE STREET, NORTH CURRY

332357/125287

OUTLINE APPLICATION

PROPOSAL

The site comprises agricultural land that lies outside of the settlement limits of North Curry and just to the south of the North Curry Conservation Area. The proposal is an outline application for the erection of 8 dwellings on land adjacent to White Street and a listed property known as Thatchers. Illustrative details show the provision of a new access off the northeast side of White Street with 4 houses fronting onto White Street and a new roadway running at right angles to White Street serving 4 additional houses (two on either side) and providing access to the land to the north and east of the site (the subject of application 24/2006/041 change of use to recreation/playing fields). The proposal includes three low cost “home ownership” homes, shown as a terrace fronting White Street with parking off the access road into the site. There are a group of trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order on the boundary of the site with White Street and these would be effected and some removed in order to provide the proposed access.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the proposed roads are not of an acceptable standard and will not provide a safe access for the proposal and I recommend the refusal of the application COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST views awaited. WESSEX WATER the site is within a sewered area with foul and surface water sewers. There is a water main in the vicinity of the site. SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST comments awaited. SERC no statutory species have been recorded at this site but legally protected species have been found within a 1km radius of the site including Badgers and their setts.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the proposed dwellings would be within the recommended falling distance of the boundary trees (subject to a Tree Preservation Order); the proposed access visibility splay requirements would de stabilise a number of TPO'd trees requiring their felling. These trees have high amenity value although some are in a poor state of health. CONSERVATION OFFICER the scheme will have a negative impact on the listed buildings. NATURE CONSERVATION AND SPECIES OFFICER views on wildlife survey awaited. FORWARD PLAN The proposed housing development would be contrary to Policy S7 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan. In line with national and regional policy this seeks to apply strict control to development in the countryside. There are exceptions to that strict control, which include housing in certain circumstances. Those circumstances include the provision of affordable housing on sites adjoining villages, where there is evidence of local need for such housing. The site of the proposal does adjoin a village and evidence of need has been submitted. However, the relevant Local Plan Policy, H11, states, in

line with advice at Annex B of PPG3, that such sites should not include open market housing, which this proposal does. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy H11. HOUSING OFFICER views awaited. LEISURE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER any permission should be linked to the provision of the sports facilities. Play provision should be provided on site in line with local plan provisions. NORTH CURRY PARISH COUNCIL are named as applicants and they strongly support the proposal

8 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- the application site is outside of the settlement limits of North Curry and adjacent to North Curry Conservation Area and should be ruled out by Taunton's own policies; the proposed housing is on Greenfield land outside of the building line breaching Taunton Deane's own policies for development; the development would be unacceptable, opposite a listed building and conservation area; the proposed access will result in the loss of roadside trees and hedges covered by a Tree Preservation Order; the roadside trees are habitat to many bird species including Green Woodpecker, Great spotted Woodpecker, Little Owl, Barn Owls and nesting starlings and removal of the trees will destroy this habitat; the proposed development would prepare the area for a larger scheme since, once the area is breached, it will inevitably lead to urban sprawl in this well developed village (there is ample space for more development, more sensitively sited for more housing on a prepared extension of Overlands, which could connect with the vacant land owned by the Trust at the rear of Longs House); if any excess land were to be used for additional sports facilities than this would again increase the traffic, be unnecessary and expensive to upkeep and divorced from the existing facility; the proposals are an affront to the village plan, are unnecessary and undesirable and should be rejected; the proposed access is ill thought out and impractical, it has limited visibility and would create a hazard; the road opposite 18 Longs Field has a steep gradient with inadequate vision for emerging traffic; White Street is used by a considerable amount of traffic including farm vehicles (many of which already span the full width of the road) and lorries, pedestrians including children going to school; there are no pavements along this stretch of White Street, down to the junction with Stoke Road; the junction with Stoke Road is potentially dangerous especially with parked cars in the vicinity and an informal bus stop; the proposed access is opposite Longs Field and would result in the narrowing of the road, which is already only 16 ft across and virtually one way and this would be a problem to all road users including pedestrians, larger cars, lorries and farm vehicles, combines and the like; further narrowing of the road would mean that traffic would find it impassable without damaging hedges and walls; traffic from the houses and recreation facilities would be high at times and would present an increased hazard to other users of White Street; the proposed access is unsuitable and would be dangerous; illumination of the area has been staunchly resisted by North Curry, will this proposal set a precedent?; the rural housing need survey identifies a need for 6 affordable housing units but only proposed 3, this appears to defy logic; the proposed 5 unaffordable houses should be substituted for 3 extra affordable homes and North Curry School is already full to capacity and cannot take another 8 families.

3 LETTERS OF SUPPORT have been received raising the following issues:- much needed affordable housing will help young local people to get onto the property ladder; there has been a poll of the village that has resulted in a positive reaction from the villagers, creating a positive feeling after all the recent negative news; the

proposal will result in much needed low cost housing along with some standard housing, effectively infilling albeit technically outside the village limits

POLICY CONTEXT

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy STR6 - Development in rural centres and villages, Policy 8 - Outstanding Heritage Settlement, Policy 49 Transport requirements for new developments.

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 - General requirements; S7 - Outside defined settlement limits, new building will not be permitted unless it maintains or enhances the environmental quality and landscape character of the area and: (A) is for the purposes of agriculture or forestry; (B) accords with a specific development plan policy or proposal; (C) is necessary to meet a requirement of environmental or other legislation; or (D) supports the vitality and viability of the rural economy in a way which cannot be sited within the defined limits of a settlement. New structures or buildings permitted in accordance with this policy should be designed and sited to minimise landscape impact, be compatible with a rural location and meet the following criteria where practicable:- (E) avoid breaking the skyline; (F) make maximum use of existing screening; (G) relate well to existing buildings; and (H) use colours and materials which harmonise with the landscape. (Chris Please type in full) H11 Rural local need housing. EN6 - Protection of Trees, Woodlands, Orchards and Hedgerows, EN8 - Trees in and Around Settlements, EN14 - Conservation Areas, EN16 - Listed Buildings.

Taunton Local Plan villages with no allocations - NORTH CURRY:-

19.50 North Curry is one of the most attractive villages in Taunton Deane, being recognised as an Outstanding Heritage Settlement in the Structure Plan. It is relatively large, and consists of a tightly knit core, set around Queens Square, from which ribbons of development extend in 5 main directions. More recent development has consolidated this form. It has numerous listed buildings, particularly at its heart, and an extensive conservation area. Attractive open areas around St Peter and St Paul's church and south of The Manor House are areas to remain undeveloped. The village is set within a finger of North Curry Ridge Landscape Character Area, which extends north-eastwards into the Somerset Levels Landscape Character Area. There is a prominent scarp slope to the north of the village which is a proposed Special Landscape Feature called the North Curry Ridge, where policy EN11 will apply.

19.51 North Curry has a relatively wide range of services including a health centre, village hall, primary school, post office and two shops. However, it has a relatively low level of local employment. The bus link to Taunton is at a minimal level suitable for commuting and school attendance.

ASSESSMENT

The application is located outside of the settlement limits of North Curry. Taunton Deane Local Plan policy H11 is an exception policy that allows for the development of small scale affordable housing schemes on land where housing would not be permitted (see above for full text). Government advice is that allowing sites outside

of settlement limits for rural needs housing is acceptable as it provides sites where land values remain at agricultural prices thereby reducing the costs of the development. Falcon Rural Housing have undertaken surveys of the North Curry parish and have identified a need for 6 low cost home ownership properties within the parish. This application includes a mix of 3 low cost affordable home ownership houses and 5 open market houses. The applicants argue that the landowner (a charitable trust) needs to erect 5 houses to fund the cost of the remaining 3 low cost homes, the provision of land for recreational purposes (24/2006/041) and that all other proceeds would be put back into the local community. Government Guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 Annex B and the exceptions Policy H11 does not allow for open market housing to be permitted outside of settlement limits to fund low cost homes and as such I consider that this proposal is contrary to the requirements of Policy H11 and S7 for development outside of settlement limits.

The proposed site access, off White Street, does not conform to the requirements of the Highway Authority and is contrary to Somerset and Exmoor National Park Policy 49. The access and proposed visibility splays will have a detrimental impact on a roadside group of trees covered by a tree preservation order and are likely to result in the felling of some of those trees to the detriment of the visual amenity and character of the area contrary to Policies EN6 and EN8 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan. The proposed site for housing is immediately adjacent to the northwest and northeast boundaries of a grade II listed building, "Thatchers". It is the opinion of the Conservation Officer that this would have a detrimental impact on the setting of the Listed Building contrary to Taunton Deane Local Plan policy EN16. Finally, it is also the opinion of the Conservation Officer that the loss of the trees would alter the rural character to the approach to the conservation area contrary to the requirements of Policy EN14. Proposal considered unacceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be REFUSED for the reasons that the site lies outside of the settlement limit of North Curry where new housing is not allowed and is considered contrary to the requirements of Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy STR6 and Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S7 and H11. The proposed access would be contrary to Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy 49 and Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S1 (A). The proposed access would result in the loss of trees considered to be of high amenity value adding to the local character of the area contrary to the requirements of Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies EN6 and EN8. The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the character and setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building contrary to the requirements of Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy EN16. The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the setting of the adjacent North Curry Conservation Area.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: 356467 MRS J MOORE

NOTES:

