

Our Ref: Planning Conformity\012- Craven\Planning Applications\Final Responses\April 08 - March 09

21 May 2008

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Dear Sian

Planning Application Number: 63/2008/8466

Residential Development With Means of Access From Otley Road.

Thank you for consulting the Assembly on the above. I am pleased to forward the following officer comments to you, based on the current and draft RSS.

The Assembly, as the Regional Planning Body, has been asked to comment on this development as its nature and location mean that it could have an effect on the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The current RSS for Yorkshire and Humber (based on the Selective Review of RPG12) was issued by the Secretary of State in December 2004. The RSS has the status of a Development Plan Document and forms part of the framework for decisions taken under section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), which means that decisions on all applications have to be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and Circular 08/2005 make it clear that a draft RSS submitted to the Secretary of State is a relevant regional policy against which strategic applications can be considered. This Assembly response therefore also highlights relevant issues that arise from the Yorkshire and Humber Plan (draft RSS) December 2005 – the RSS submitted to the Secretary of State.

Please note that the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to Draft RSS have now been published (September 2007). Government guidance (paragraph 4.19 in PPS12) states: "Where the regional spatial strategy...has been through an Examination in Public, and the proposed changes have been published, considerable weight may be attached to that strategy because of the strong possibility that it will be published in that form by the Secretary of State".

Assembly responses to consultations on strategic applications will therefore have to make it clear how the Proposed Changes impact on the policies quoted and to point out to local authorities that 'considerable weight' will need to be attached to them by the decision-making body and by Inspectors at Examinations of DPDs and application Inquiries. At the same time, it should be noted that the Assembly itself has made comments on the Proposed Changes and that the final version of the new RSS is expected in spring 2008.

Both the existing and draft regional spatial strategies aim to achieve a more sustainable pattern and form of development, investment and activity across the region, putting a greater emphasis on matching needs across the region with opportunities and managing the environment as a key resource. There is a particular emphasis on achieving the regeneration and renaissance of the region's city and town centres by making them the focus for housing, employment, shopping, leisure, education, health and cultural activities and facilities in the region (for example Policy P1, existing RSS, December 2004 and Policy YH5, Draft RSS, December 2005).

Regional Policy Context

Policies in the current RSS (December 2004) seek to focus development on the region's town and city centres, reduce the need to travel, ensure that development is accessible by a range of transport modes and support the renaissance and regeneration of the region's urban centres by promoting high quality developments that reflect the scale and character of the centres to which they relate (see, for example, policies P1, S4, E1, SOC3, T1, T2).

Policies in draft RSS (December 2005) build on these principles. The Core Approach (Policies YH1 – YH9) makes it clear that most new development, and high trip generating uses, should be focused on Regional and Sub-Regional Centres and that away from these sufficient development should be permitted in Principal Service Centres to enable them to fulfil their role as service centres (Policy YH8 building on policies YH5, YH6 and YH7 and Policies E2 and T1).

Both current and draft RSS discourage development of Greenfield land, and state that priority should in fact be given to the re-use of Brownfield sites within settlements. Second priority should be given to other suitable infill opportunities, and thirdly, to planned growth areas.

It should be noted that the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) replaces the terms "Regional Centres" with "Regional Cities", "Sub Regional Centres" with "Sub Regional Cities and Towns" and "Principal Service Centres" with

“Principal Towns”. The Core Approach of draft RSS is not changed by the Proposed Changes.

Location of development

The proposed development is located to the east on the edge of the settlement of Skipton. Policies P1 and E4 of current RSS and YH8 of draft RSS provide for an urban-focussed, transport-orientated approach to development. Policies P1 (b) and E4 (a) of current RSS state that, wherever possible, in considering development proposals preference should be given to land within urban areas.

Skipton is identified in draft RSS (2005) as a Principal Service Centre. Policy YH6 of draft RSS states that away from the Region’s Regional and Sub Regional Centres, Principal Service Centres will be the main local focus for housing, employment, shopping, leisure, education, health and cultural activities and facilities.

Policy P1 in current RSS (2004) requires a sequential approach to site selection. YH8B of draft RSS (2005) also makes it clear that a sequential approach should be taken in determining applications to ensure that developments are either reusing land or buildings within centres, infilling sites within centres or are sites that are well connected on public transport routes and that can maximise accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling. Policy YH8C requires a transport-orientated approach to ensure that development makes the best use of transport infrastructure is focussed along existing or planned public transport corridors and maximises accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling. It is clear from the information provided that a sequential approach to alternative site selection has been carried out.

It should be noted that the Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) recommends changes to Policy YH8. These do not alter the Core Approach or change the site selection/accessibility orientated approach set out above.

Housing

The application states that the proposed development will provide 280 residential units. Draft RSS (December 2005) sets an average annual net completion rate of 250 dwellings for Craven between 2004-2011, 200 dwellings between 2011-2016 and 180 dwellings between 2011-2016.

The Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes to Draft RSS (2007) sets Craven an average annual net additions of 250 dwellings between 2004-08 and 180 dwellings between 2008-2026. Therefore this proposal will make a significant contribution to delivering housing in the Craven district.

The applicant states that the majority of the dwellings will be two-storey single family dwellings. Housing mix will need to be a key consideration in this development. Policy H4 in draft RSS (December 2005) emphasises the need for the current mix of housing in the Region to change so that it better supports the creation of more sustainable communities. The Secretary of State’s Proposed

Changes to draft RSS (2007) recommends that plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes should ensure the provision of homes for a mix that reflects the needs of the area, including family homes, to create sustainable communities. It will be important for the local authority to ensure that there is an appropriate housing mix.

The applicant is proposing that 40% of the total housing provision on site will be affordable. Existing RSS encourages local authorities to set targets for the provision of affordable housing based on housing needs assessments (Policy H4). Draft RSS identifies Craven as an area of 'high need' for affordable housing (based on the Regional Housing Strategy, 2005). Policy H3A of the draft RSS suggests that in areas of 'high need' (including Craven) over 40% of homes (on sites of 15 homes or more) need to be affordable. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to Draft RSS (2007) suggests that over 40% of housing in Craven should be affordable.

Accessibility

Accessibility criteria are set out in both the current and draft RSS (Table 7.1 and 7.2 of current RSS and Table 16.8 and 16.9 of draft RSS). These tables include acceptable walking and overall journey times for the population that would be travelling to the site. It should be noted that the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) makes no recommendations with regard to these criteria.

It is not clear from the application whether or not an assessment against the accessibility criteria has been carried out.

Car Parking

Policy T2 of the draft RSS states that the maximum parking standards for new developments must be in line with Table 16.5. There is not sufficient detail provided with the application to assess whether this be the case.

It should be noted that the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) makes no recommendations with regard to these criteria.

Renewable Energy

The sustainable use of resources is a key theme in both current and draft RSS. Policy P6 of current RSS (2004) encourages new development to maximise energy efficiency and minimise resource demand. Policy ENV5 of draft RSS (2005) requires at least 10% of energy to be used in sizable new development is to come from on-site renewable energy sources. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to draft RSS (2007) removes this threshold, recommending that local authorities set their own proportions of the amount of energy to come from local renewable sources. Craven District Council should ensure that renewable energy is promoted and secured in the proposed development.

Conclusion

In conclusion to the comments made the Assembly would support the development in principle as it is on the edge of the Principal Town of Skipton, but on the basis that:

- The housing mix reflects a local needs assessment and the need for an appropriate housing mix, including levels of affordable housing.
- At least 10% of the energy to be used in the development is to come from on-site renewable energy sources.

If you have any queries about this response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Andy Haigh
Acting Head of Service
Planning Delivery and Conformity