

Narborough Parish Council comments on application by Gladman Developments for outline consent for 108 dwellings at land off Oak Road, Littlethorpe (19/0266/OUT)

Narborough Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the application by Gladman Developments for outline consent for 108 dwellings at land off Oak Road, Littlethorpe reference number 19/0266/OUT. **It wishes to object strongly** on the grounds that

- The application is not consistent with the current Blaby Local Plan and the emerging Strategic Growth Plan
- The site is not needed to meet current and predicted housing needs
- It is inappropriate given the impacts on the local area and its services
- It will add significantly to already high levels of traffic congestion
- Is a greenfield site that impinges on the green wedges designed to separate rural and village communities.

This application is not consistent with the recently adopted Blaby District Plan Delivery Plan, something the applicants acknowledge and thus cannot benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework. Gladmans argue that the need for housing and the economic benefits outweigh this and an exception to the Local Plan is warranted. Essentially this is a rerun of the arguments put to and rejected by the Secretary of State's appointed Inspector at the Examination in Public of the Local Plan Delivery Document last year.

Gladmans also assert that slow delivery of housing in the area is a further justification and additional housing sites are needed to meet demand conflating the national picture and trends with historic data for this locality which are no indicators as to future performance. However, whilst there is a demand for some specific types of housing in this area (which the application only offers in small part), overall housing demand is currently low and growth will be met in the area in the medium term from the New Lubbesthorpe Development and smaller consents already given at Warwick Road and Cosby Road locally. Gladmans admit that if they are granted outline consent they will sell the land and consent on to a housing developer and, therefore, any assurances that they may give about the nature of any final build or the timescale on which it might be delivered are worthless. In their critique on the housing crisis, the applicants do not mention or acknowledge the practice of land banking which is (and is recognised by MHCLG) as a significant factor in the slow delivery of housing and could happen here.

In the longer term, Gladmans seek to find additional support from the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan which will be delivered by the next generations of Blaby Local Plans for what is essentially a bolt on dormitory development adjacent to an existing community with minimal infrastructure. **The Growth Plan does not endorse this approach** but rather looks to protect the character and nature of existing rural and small urban settlements by looking to provide only limited growth to meet local needs. Larger housing development would be directed away from these areas to new locations in priority growth areas that have yet to be finally identified and would be built to include necessary social and other infrastructure. We support that approach. It is both premature and inconsistent to suggest that the Oak Road development is a necessary component of this plan. The size of the proposed new development in this application in relation to the size of the existing village of Littlethorpe is such that it would change the nature, feel and character of the village and its community.

The applicants are keen to talk up the economic benefits of their proposal. Whilst the National Planning Policy puts sustainable development at its heart, it does not give the economic component of sustainable development primacy and, we believe it is necessary to weigh the perceived benefits against the significant negative impacts which Gladmans have tended to gloss over. We also believe the economic benefits are overstated given this type of dormitory settlement is likely to be attractive to commuters who will work in larger economic centres such as Leicester and Coventry or even further afield utilising the rail network and its is not, therefore, a given that increased economic activity and spend will benefit businesses in Blaby and especially the immediate locality with its paucity of outlets.

We are concerned at the likely impact of such a large development on local services such as schools and GP services, some of which are already under pressure. In looking at this, account needs to be taking not just of the direct impacts of this proposal and the demands of existing population growth and gage profile trends but the cumulative impacts of other consented or likely development in the area such as those off Warwick Road and Cosby Road and at the old Council Depot.

Particular concern relates to the impacts of traffic and air quality. We believe the assessments made by the applicant's consultants significantly under estimate the likely volume of traffic movements. As the documentation points out there are no peak time day bus services through Littlethorpe and the bus links at Narborough are sufficiently far away that most residents would opt for other modes of transport and most likely drive or drive as far as the Park and Ride. The adjacent roads were not built to take high volumes of traffic. Currently the impact of the level crossing at Narborough means that at peak times traffic is queued back beyond the junction of Sycamore Road and Riverside Way for a significant period in any hour as the

crossing can be closed for 25% plus of the time. This will only get worse if this development goes ahead and again, the cumulative impact of already consented development such as that at the Mechanical Workshop in the heart of the village plus new housing off Cosby Road and Warwick Road and other likely developments including the Hinckley Rail Interchange Facility and improvements to the rail services on the Peterborough and Birmingham line which could lead to even more frequent closure of the level crossing. Our belief is that when assessed in combination, the traffic negative impacts are severe and that the impact of increased traffic queues at peak period can only have a significant and undesirable impact on air quality. We contend that this alone is sufficient reason to refuse this application.

Contrary to the Local Plan policies, this site intrudes into the areas of separation between communities designed to prevent sprawl and protect the integrity of small communities. It is a greenfield site on what is primarily agricultural land. The National Planning Policy Framework encourages both the use of brownfield sites first and protection of agricultural land and soils. This application fails all three of these key tests and, in our opinion, combined with the lack of demonstrable need are also sufficient reason to refuse this ill thought out and speculative application.

Whilst we do not disagree with the biodiversity assessment, any land has some biodiversity value. Value is not restricted to the presence or impacts on protected species or sites. The value of this area is primarily the connectivity it provides along the north side of the site with other areas in the River Soar floodplain. Hedging, even where it may be of low or medium importance is especially significant in biodiversity terms for the species it hosts and as a longitudinal feature. In order to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity, proposals for mitigation and compensation are tested against Natural England's Biodiversity Offsets calculator.

Residents in Littlethorpe are strongly against this proposal and we share their concerns. Nothing in the Statement of Community Involvement prepared by the applicants has allayed any of local residents' concerns.

We therefore strongly urge the Blaby Planning Committee to refuse this application.

If the Council is minded to grant consent, Narborough Parish Council would ask that it is subject to the following conditions

- The proportion of affordable starter homes is increased to 40%
- That works to the northern edge of the site to enhance biodiversity are included within any application for reserved matters and that new hedging is

planted and established prior to the removal of old hedging and replacement hedging is at least three times the length of any hedging removed.

- Features such as the children's play area and walking routes in the indicative layout form part of any reserved matters application.
- Reserved matters should provide for a minimum of 2 off road parking spaces for each dwelling.

In this eventuality, Narborough Parish Council would also ask for a S106 contribution for the following

- Provision of a convenience store, possibly run as a community enterprise, close to the boundary of the new development and existing housing.
- A new community hub, possibly through redevelopment of the existing Littlethorpe Village Hall, which would provide a new home for the Narborough and Littlethorpe Community Library, coffee bar, meeting facilities and community office.

Narborough Parish Council requests the opportunity to speak at the Planning Committee meeting at which this application is considered.