



Ms [REDACTED]

4 July 2012

Dear [REDACTED]

At its meeting on 2 July, the Council discussed the proposed development and has instructed me to make at following response to you.

Pre Application Consultation Thorp Arch Estate

Walton Parish Council has considered the pre application proposals put forward for development of the Thorp Arch Estate having studied the information packs provided and following visits by residents and Parish Councillors to the consultation event. We understand you have requested a further meeting which will be attended by Cllr R Brown and Cllr D Aspland and will take place on 17 July to further discuss the proposal.

The Wighill Lane element of the proposals:

The Parish Council believes that the declaration of your intent to submit an application to develop between 60 – 80 houses on land at Wighill Lane, which is within the Walton Parish Council boundary materially affects the process the Parish Council has embarked upon to develop its Neighbourhood Plan. We believe we are duty bound to re survey opinions on the 'Areas for Development' and 'Areas for Improvement' contained within our Draft Plan to reflect this element of the proposal as it affects the development possibilities put forward in our recent consultation. We are disappointed that despite having met twice with the Estate Manager during the development stages of the Plan the housing development likelihood of this site was not brought to our attention until after we had commenced our consultation thereby incurring costs the Parish Council could otherwise have avoided.

We intend to undertake a further supplementary survey later in the year as part of the development of the Walton Parish Neighbourhood Plan. We will inform you of the timing, details and outcome of that survey once such detail is available, as we have done throughout the entire process so far. Depending on the outcome of that survey we reserve our right to make further representations on that element of the proposals.

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That having been said, we would wish to make it clear that such a growth in homes in the Parish (86%) is significant and yet this location is remote from the heart of the community. We believe that the development should be connected to Walton village as it is in Walton Parish and occupying homeowners will pay a parish precept to Walton Parish Council.

In developing our Neighbourhood Plan we developed a set of Guiding Principles which set out the long term vision for the community. Many dealt with the issues of connectivity, and improving our community, inclusivity, and encouraging healthy lifestyles. The results of the survey of the Draft Plan show overwhelming support for these Guiding Principles and yet this development completely ignores them. The development proposal is effectively for an enclave of 60 – 80 homes without our parish. The enclave is excluded from the Parish by a highway which has no footpaths and is destined to become unacceptably laden with traffic as a result of your development strategy. It is neither connected nor inclusive of its home parish nor will it encourage a stronger community spirit within the Parish.

We believe that it is imperative therefore that, should they progress, the proposals should include a pedestrian crossing on Wighill Lane at the newly proposed junction to the housing development, connecting to a cycletrack/footpath at the north side of the road, which would run westwards inside the hedges which run alongside Wighill Lane thereby physically connecting up the two communities in a safe and sustainable manner. We believe this connectivity would assist the physical and cultural bonding of the two communities, encourage healthy lifestyles and more interaction within the community. On the wider scene it would also create more overall circular connectivity in the area. It could address the non-compliance of your proposal with the Draft Walton Neighbourhood Plan.

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan demands HGV Closure points around the Parish. Should this development proceed the construction of this element of your proposals would generate significant volumes of commercial and HGV traffic over several years. As with all major development proposals within the Parish, the Parish Council would require the Estate's binding undertaking that all HGV and Commercial traffic related to the development of this site should be directed to use the B1224 and Rudgate for access and egress of the site. For such a directive to be successful it will need to be built into all contractual documentation between all parties involved. The Parish Council has had the support of other Developers in taking this approach. The British Library newspaper storage building, being a specific example of the delivery of this principle.

The second development element on the SHLAA site 1055:

With regard to the remainder of the development proposals, we note these are within the Thorp Arch Parish Boundary on the site known as SHLAA site 1055. The original SHLAA proposals were that this site would be developed to a level of 696 homes over a much longer time frame. The increased scale of the revised proposals and the traffic access and egress points are of concern to Walton Parish Council.

Numbers are an issue for the Parish Council because of the traffic impact on our community. Walton already suffers as a community from the traffic impacts of the Estate. HGV Traffic, high volumes of smaller vehicles, speeding vehicles and rat running by both HGVs and small vehicles have all been raised as concerns by our community over many years. The solutions are always partial and short term.

The community wants to live in harmony with the Estate and help to encourage its success. However, based on our interface with the Estate on this matter it seems the relationship you wish to pursue seems to be entirely on your terms.

This proposal bears remarkable resemblance to the proposal put forward by Rockspring which was rejected by the planning inspector in 2005. The Estate has regurgitated a scheme which has most of the same fundamental flaws which we as a community cannot support, not because we wish to be in conflict with the Estate but because you appear not to be listening to nor addressing our concerns.

You may believe you have dealt with traffic impacts in Boston Spa and Thorp Arch, raised by the inspector in 2005, by altering the priority of Walton Road/Church Causeway to discourage traffic from entering those communities and by offering traffic calming in Thorp Arch. However, the consequence is that Walton will bear the entire brunt of traffic growth, which is unacceptable to this community.

Your consultants argue that their studies show the entire extra volume of traffic can be sustained by the existing highways and road junctions with little modification. While technically they may believe this to be so, the reality according to those who live here is that it is preposterous. In particular, proposing no alteration whatsoever to the Walton Road/Wetherby Road junction is unbelievable given the increase traffic and the dangerous layout of the junction currently. This argument will not subside and Walton Parish Council will vigorously oppose your applications until this specific approach is amended. It is unacceptable that any existing residents of Walton or indeed future residents who will occupy your development should be forced to suffer eternal traffic misery when there are acceptable alternatives which your organisation will not open its mind to.

It is the view of Walton Parish Council that for any such housing development on the Estate to be successful and sustainable third party land will need to be acquired to provide a relief access road which would eliminate the traffic conflicts.

We understand there is a cost to such a proposal but by reviewing your proposed strategy and reconfiguring the proportions of 'affordable' and high quality housing such an approach would be viable. In any case, we believe the proportion of 'affordable' housing is not sustainable because the level of demand you predict is most unlikely to materialise, and that in this matter, for the same reasons as you failed in your last application you will almost certainly fail again on this occasion.

The proposal you are considering is effectively dumping a large suburban housing development on an infrastructure capable of only just supporting a couple of small rural settlements and some local businesses none of which will diminish to compensate for the likely growth.

Finally, The Draft Neighbourhood Plan demands HGV Closure points around the Parish. Should this development scheme proceed its construction would generate significant volumes of commercial and HGV traffic over many years. As with all major development proposals within the Parish, the Parish Council would require the Estates binding undertaking that all HGV and Commercial traffic related to the development of this site should be directed to use the B1224 and Rudgate for access and egress of the site. For such a directive to be successful it will need to be built into all contractual documentation between all parties involved.

Walton Parish Council reserves its right to comment further on emerging proposals relating to Thorp Arch Estate. We wish to improve the harmony between local business operations and the residential community. We are willing to work to assist the estate to develop a long term strategy which delivers that Guiding Principle of our Draft Neighbourhood Plan and would hope the Estate would withdraw from this application proposal with a view to developing a long term collaborative approach with Walton Parish Council, Thorp Arch Parish Council and other relevant stakeholders.

Yours sincerely

Colin Pool
Clerk to the Council