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**14/2945/MOUT**

**Development of up to 260 houses, commercial/retail uses, public open space including youth sports pitch, vehicular access and associated infrastructure (outline application with all matters reserved except access and accompanying Environmental Statement)  
Farlands London Road Whimble Exeter EX5 2PJ**

This is an outline planning application with all matters reserved except access and the accompanying environmental statement. The location is immediately to the east of the Ingrams Sports Centre.

As can be seen from the planning reference number, this application has been under consideration for some time. The Committee has commented on a number of occasions including March 2016, December 2019 and most recently in June 2023. The comments have followed a consistent theme and for ease of reading the most recent comment made in June 2023 is set out in full below.

***Comment Date: Tue 06 Jun 2023***

***The Committee resolved that whilst the Town Council did not object to the principle of developing the site, which was in accordance with the Cranbrook Plan, the Town Council objects to the application on the grounds that the proposed principal access on to the London Road is unacceptable as an uncontrolled junction. This would lead to increased pressure on adjoining parcels as residents seek alternative exit points which would result in 'rat runs' being developed through residential streets, frustration as queues would build (particularly with traffic heading west) and in collisions. The Committee also encouraged the local planning and highways authorities to develop and apply a holistic approach in their treatment of existing and future junctions off the B3174 and not continue to consider new proposed junctions in isolation.***

- In addition, the Town Council would seek assurances on the following:***
- the former Second World War radio station being recognised within the development.***
- adequate off-road parking being provided to at least minimal standards and that, where provided, garages would be of sufficient size to accommodate a vehicle and are conditioned against conversion to residential use.***
- power cables should be routed underground, and the redundant pylons be removed.***

Previous comments made in 2016 and 2019 are separately appended to this report for ease of reference should members wish to make reference to them.

Attached to this report are four documents extracted from the application. The detail of the application is available on the EDDC planning website. Attached are:

- Indicative sketch of the site layout;
- Preliminary highway layout (2 plans) - this layout is put forward as a temporary layout at this stage pending finalisation of the Cobdens development which is adjacent; and
- Ecological impact assessment.

To provide context, plans for the Cobdens access (to the east) and the Grange access (opposite) are also attached. These documents are NOT submitted as part of this application.

**Issues for consideration**

**The principle of development**

This has been established by the finding sound of the Cranbrook Plan. The principle of development of the site is therefore considered to be acceptable.

### Access

The Committee has been consistent in its objection to the proliferation of uncontrolled junctions connecting this part of Cranbrook to the London Road. The only controlled junction proposed to date is Cobdens with in excess of 1400 homes being served with a single traffic light controlled 'T' junction. Additionally in this locality, junctions directly opening on to the London Road include this application (260 homes), Ingrams (150+ homes) and Grange (180+ with a further 600+ at a later stage). These are in addition to the existing access to Ingrams Sports Centre as well as a number of smaller and private access points.

Given what we know about the difficulties at Station Road, Broadclyst and the fact that these developments are likely to each deliver more vehicle movements at peak times than Station Road does today - and the fact that the vast majority of rush hour traffic will seek to head west towards Exeter resulting in a majority of right turns across both traffic lanes, these proposals when considered together represent real concerns for motorist frustration, drivers seeking rat runs through residential parcels and collisions. The Planning and Highway authorities are already working on a scheme to divert Station Road traffic through the Bluehayes parcel and connect to London Road via a new roundabout, yet the thinking in this locality seeks to deliver something substantially worse. The whole scheme around this locality needs to be thought through collectively and at the very least major development connections with London Road should be light controlled or via one or more roundabouts.

In addition the routing of substantial housing developments on to London Road as proposed has the impact of making London Road an inner by-pass for Cranbrook. This seems completely opposite thinking to the proposed calming of London Road and its transition into a slower less used route.

The proximity of the proposed neighbourhood centre along London Road adds to these concerns, will result in highway difficulties with passing trade stopping along London Road to access the retail units and result in inappropriate and dangerous parking. Additionally there is no pedestrian crossing proposed, yet this application does include a pedestrian crossing over the adjacent cycle way. So pedestrian have to cross an uncontrolled highway but have the benefit of a pedestrian crossing to negotiate the few additional metres over the cycle way. This is flawed thinking - there should be safe pedestrian crossing facilities over BOTH the highway and cycle way.

### Ecological impact

The report flags up a range of ecological issues and the Committee anticipates how the developer will bring forward measures to deal with each issue in turn. It is assumed that these will be dealt with by condition as the report does not appear to flag up an issue that would justify an objection. It is noted that the developer is in discussion with the Planning Authority about the nature of open space including the quantum of mown areas against those left more as scrub. The latter would deliver less of an ecological impact than the former. This discussion needs to include the Town Council if the intention is for the Town Council to adopt and manage public open space. But there are concerns that irrespective of how green areas are treated there will be a net biodiversity loss of 15% or 30%. This is perhaps an indication that the proposals for 260 homes is overdevelopment.

### General layout, road design, protection of grass verges and parking

Whilst the parcel layout remains indicative, the number of homes proposed and the general proposals for terraces with parking directly in front of homes could lead to a dense urban streetscene which is less than appropriate for this part of the emerging town. It is more akin to a town centre style of development. The Committee has consistently raised the need to deliver a balanced community and there is an expectation that the focus on smaller properties in earlier phases would be balanced in these later phases.

The scheme proposed includes 42 one bedroom flats, 34 two bedroom flats and 2 two bedroom flats over garages. A total of 78 units where the residents will have no outside space. This is considered to be an unacceptable level. In addition the housing mix tends towards predominantly smaller properties with 57 two bed houses, 71 three bed, 36 three storey four bed (most probably terraced) and just 15 two storey four bed homes. Where the Town Council has sought the delivery of more larger family homes to attract professional families, these proposals deliver just over 5% of the total proposed.

Whilst the general layout is indicative the Town Council would seek early conversations about design measures to protect grass areas from damage by inappropriate parking. The sketch plan shows a number of small grassed areas on corners which have little or no amenity value yet can quickly become an eyesore.

#### Proposed direct links to Ingrams sports centre

Off road access to Ingrams Sports Centre is acceptable in principle but there needs to be a conversation with the Town Council as to how that can be achieved given the existing boundary treatment on the east of Ingrams. Equally whilst a consent will obligate the developer to deliver a link to the boundary, any legal agreement must include how the connection is made from the boundary to the remainder of the site with appropriate paths linking to those in the site.

#### Proposed junior football pitch

The provision of facilities is welcome but there is a real need for an all weather facility on the Ingrams site. The area proposed suffers from poor drainage and as such may well be less than suitable for a grass pitch. The Committee presses the Local Planning Authority to consider the delivery of an all weather pitch on the site that can be managed as part of the overall Ingrams site.

#### Arrangements for management of public open space, drainage basins etc

Whilst the Town Council is in contract with the current Consortium (New Community Partners), that contract does not include this applicant and early discussions need to be held about how public open space will be managed.

#### Former second world war radio station

The Committee has previously raised the significance of this site and has sought to ensure that it is recognised within any final proposals.

#### Recommendation

**Whilst the principle of development of the site is acceptable as it is in accordance with the Cranbrook Plan, the Committee OBJECTS to the application on the following grounds:**

##### **1. Access and highway layout**

The Committee objects to the proliferation of uncontrolled junctions connecting this part of Cranbrook to the London Road. The only controlled junction proposed to date is Cobdens with in excess of 1400 homes being served with a single traffic light controlled 'T' junction. Additionally in this locality, junctions directly opening on to the London Road include this application (260 homes), Ingrams (150+ homes) and Grange (180+ with a further 600+ at a later stage). These are in addition to the existing access to Ingrams Sports Centre as well as a number of smaller development and private access points.

Given what is known about the difficulties at Station Road, Broadclyst and the fact that these developments are likely to each deliver more vehicle movements at peak times than Station Road does today - and the fact that the vast majority of rush hour traffic will seek to head west towards Exeter resulting in a majority of right turns across both traffic lanes, these proposals when considered together represent real concerns for motorist frustration, drivers seeking rat runs through residential parcels and collisions. Given that the Planning and Highway authorities are already working on a scheme to divert Station Road traffic through the Bluehayes parcel and connect to London Road via a new roundabout, the thinking in this locality seeks to deliver something substantially worse. The whole scheme around this locality needs to be thought

through collectively and at the very least major development connections with London Road should be light controlled or via one or more roundabouts.

In addition, the routing of substantial housing developments on to London Road as proposed has the impact of making London Road an inner by-pass for Cranbrook. This seems completely opposite thinking to the proposed calming of London Road and its transition into a slower less used route.

The proximity of the proposed neighbourhood centre along London Road will result in passing trade stopping along London Road to access the retail units and result in inappropriate and dangerous parking. Couple this with the traffic levels highlighted above.

There is no pedestrian crossing over London Road proposed, yet this application does include a pedestrian crossing over the adjacent cycle way. Pedestrians are expected to cross an uncontrolled highway but have the benefit of a pedestrian crossing to negotiate the few additional metres over the cycle way. This is flawed thinking - there should be safe pedestrian crossing facilities over BOTH the highway and cycle way.

## **2. Ecological Impact**

The application lacks clarity as to how biodiversity net loss will be managed. This coupled with the fact that, at best, there is a 15% net loss, indicates that the proposals for 260 homes within the parcel is overdevelopment.

## **3. Other Matters**

Whilst these matters are reserved, the Committee wishes to raise the following:

- The indicative layout, overall housing numbers, high number of flats with no outside space, streetscene with terraces with parking in front of homes and the very low percentage of larger family homes is not supported as this will lead to an unattractive urban landscape and exacerbate the already unbalanced community that is Cranbrook today. The indicative proposals are more akin to town centre development and the Committee did anticipate a more balanced delivery in this locality;
- The Council would seek early conversations about the layout of public green areas in order to ensure that they are protected from damage by inconsiderate parking and provide genuine and usable areas of public open space. The indicative areas of grass on corners as shown on the sketch plan are both vulnerable to damage and afford no amenity value;
- The Council seeks clarity on the future management of public open space as the developer is outside the contract between the Town Council and New Community Partners;
- Clarity is sought on the proposed links to Ingrams Sports Centre including both how the access will cross the existing eastern boundary hedge and ditch and also the responsibility for delivering the continuation of pathways within Ingrams to connect to the remainder of the site;
- The proposed youth pitch is located in a wet area of the Farlands site and will, no doubt, be affected by periods of not being playable. The Ingrams facility has considerable need for an all weather surface and the Council would ask the Planning Authority and Developer to consider making provision for an all weather surface in this locality;
- The final proposals should, in some measure, recognise the history of the second world war radio station that was located within Farlands and it is recommended that there is wider engagement as to how this is best achieved.