

DEVELOPER'S BRIEFING NOTE

Application for Residential Development at the EGCC Practice Ground, Newcourt:

Briefing Note for Planning Committee Members

It was clear from the debate at Planning Committee on 26th June, that members were not aware of all the circumstances which have led up to the application before them.

This note is therefore to explain the background to this application and give Members a clear understanding and details of the circumstances which must exist in order for this site to be brought forward for development in the foreseeable future.

It is important to note that the site forms part of the Strategic Allocation at Newcourt, allocated as a sustainable urban extension under policy CP19 of the adopted Core Strategy and as such forms a key part of the Council's spatial strategy set out under policies CP1-CP3. It also contributes to delivery of the City's objectively assessed housing needs and plays a significant part in terms of delivering an adequate supply of housing land, currently well below the required 5 year supply.

Exeter Golf and Country Club (EGCC) have support from its membership to bring this site forward for development as part of the Newcourt Strategic Allocation. However, Club members were very clear with the Board that this would only be acceptable if the existing Practice Ground was first re-provided with enhanced facilities including a driving range, made available prior to the loss of the existing facility. Further, the loss of the existing driving range would only be considered acceptable if the proceeds released by the sale of the land were sufficient to purchase a site for the new facility, provide all associated infrastructure and facilities and pay for the Club's associated financial commitments including all Tax and Capital Gains costs arising from the sale of the land. Failure to do so would mean that the proposals for re-provision would not be viable.

EGCC having identified the merits of an alternative use for the Newcourt Practice Ground engaged in negotiations with Persimmon and Heritage Homes as developers active in Newcourt. The negotiations with Persimmon were immediately blighted by the aggressive leverage Persimmon sought to extract from their retained ownership of Admiral Way and the excessive value they sought for access over the ransom strip. Seeking to impose :

- a) an exclusivity clause in favour to Persimmon and
- b) the application of a Ransom Payment of up to 40% of the site value.

Such demands rendered any access onto Admiral Way completely unviable for the Club and the alternative access solution with Heritage Homes was pursued.

A further requirement of the EGCC board was for Heritage to secure a suitable alternative Practice Ground for Newcourt which needed to be near to the Club on which to relocate the existing Practice Ground and create a new Driving Range Facility.

Heritage was successful in securing an option on the only suitable alternative site that exists close enough to satisfy the Club's requirements. This site is located off Exeter Road, Topsham. Members will recall that planning permission for the replacement driving range has already been granted thus facilitating the re-provision in planning terms and enabling the existing site to be released for development

Notwithstanding the identification of this alternative site, re-provision must take place before the extant permission and the option agreed for the purchase lapses as under the land acquisition terms, it cannot be renewed. Further, as described above, without this re-provision the existing Practice Ground cannot be released for development either now or in the foreseeable future. Further, without approval of the current residential application neither the opportunity nor the necessary funds to acquire the alternative replacement site will be forthcoming. As a consequence, it will not be possible for the site of the existing practice ground to be released for residential development with consequential implications for the worsening housing land supply, not to mention the missed opportunity to provide enhanced recreational facilities within the City.

The recent reconfiguration of the golf course was necessitated by the proximity of new Persimmon houses immediately adjacent to the boundary of the course and the need for nets. EGCC were forced to redesign the course and change the direction of play causing significant disruption to the Club. It also resulted in a reduction of the area which is available to be released for development due to the need to retain the land for what is now the 10th hole. This has significantly reduced the financial value of the development site and put considerable pressure on the viability of the whole scheme by reducing the available funds to re-provide and enhance the practice facilities even without any further Ransom Payment being required.

Over the last 18 months Heritage Homes has worked at great length with the Club, it's Golf Architects, Planning Officers and DCC Highway Officers to design a scheme which is financially viable, does not impact on the playability of the course, can deliver the agreed amount of affordable housing, and has suitably designed access arrangements and adjoining highways connections which meet all DCC Highway's requirements and all national traffic and pedestrian safety requirements. The design of the scheme is deemed to be acceptable in every respect by DCC Highway Safety Officers given its location and the surrounding road network.

Access Design

The approval from DCC Highways was sought and received at a very early stage in the design process so as to ensure there were no barriers to development of the site with access through Holland Park phases 1 & 2. Virtually none of the dwellings in Holland Park Phase 1 are actually affected by the access proposals as they are set back into the development and do not face the access route. Nevertheless, the proposal to provide a link road along the western edge of Holland Park phase 1 using the same connection point to Old Rydon Lane, together with the strategic cycle path link, and connecting loop to the end of Newcourt Drive, in Holland Park phase 2, was made clear to all purchasers of Holland Park phase 1 and 2 before they bought a house on the development. The proposed connection route from Holland Park phase 1 was shown on plans and discussed openly with all buyers who were interested before they bought and it is disingenuous of residents of Holland Park (either Phase 1 or 2) to now claim they knew nothing about it.

Conclusion

DCC Highway Officers have made it clear that they have no objection to the proposed application on highways safety grounds, that they fully support the access arrangements that are proposed and that they comply fully with all traffic safety requirements for the number of proposed dwellings. Given that Persimmon Homes demanded an unreasonable ransom which effectively prevents any access to or from Admiral Way, the only opportunity for this site to be released for development either now or for the foreseeable future is via the access arrangements set out within this application, via Old Rydon Lane. EGCC wish to make it clear that without such approval, the site will not be available for residential development at all for the foreseeable future and the opportunity to re-provide, alternative, enhanced driving range facilities will be lost, together with a Strategic Cycle Route and 82 homes that will be lost from the dwindling 5 year land supply numbers.

Additional Improvements and Enhancements Proposed

Notwithstanding all of the above, the fact that DCC Highways have clearly confirmed that the proposed scheme is fully acceptable in highways and access terms and that they have stated that there is no reason for refusal on highways grounds, Heritage have nevertheless been working with Officers to enhance the proposals to advance the ability of DCC Highways to bring forward, immediately, some very significant long term strategic improvements to the traffic and cycle provisions in the locality including the introduction of the R9 Cycle route which is ECC Adopted Policy.

Far from making matters worse, approval of this application will facilitate significant strategic improvements, both immediately and later, which would not be possible without approval of this application and a road link through the proposed site connecting phases 1, 2 & 3 of Holland Park.

In addition to provision of part of the R9 Strategic Cycle Route from Old Rydon Lane to Admiral Way, Heritage have agreed to extend the proposed Adopted Highway and provide an additional turning head right up to the southern boundary of the site with Admiral Way. **This puts Devon County Council in full control of an Adopted Highway, right up to the southern boundary of the site** adjoining the strip presently ransomed by Persimmon. Once the development has been approved it will enable DCC at their own discretion to negotiate or CPO a highway connection to Admiral Way without any ransom value as part of the wider strategic improvements to the road and cycle connections in the locality.

Immediate proposals are that DCC makes the exit from Holland Park Phase 2 and Newcourt Drive right turn only which will mean all the traffic from 34 houses and all the 80+ Parking Spaces within the NHS Offices exiting Newcourt Drive would be directed out on to the by-pass or around to the Admiral Way distributor road instead of turning back up Old Rydon Lane. **This will make Old Rydon Lane immediately safer for cyclists and pedestrians and will be necessary in any event in order to bring forward the R9 Cycle Route.**

It will mitigate a very large proportion of any additional vehicle movements through Old Rydon Lane caused in the short term by the proposed development and allow the **immediate introduction** of a **Dedicated Cycle Lane** running all the way along Old Rydon Lane from Newcourt Drive up to the entrance to Holland Park Phase 1 and connect it with the new Strategic Cycle route running south which is to be built as part of this proposed development.

It has also been agreed that the Strategic Cycle Link through the proposed development from Old Rydon Lane to Admiral Way is widened to a full 3.0m wide.

These major additional improvements are **deliverable immediately** over and above the fact that this proposed development has already been deemed acceptable on highways grounds.

Once the proposed development is approved, the highway connection through Holland Park Phase 1 and Phase 3 to the Southern boundary will allow Devon County Council, at a time of their choosing, the option of negotiating or issuing a CPO to open up the access onto Admiral Way, without any ransom value, in accordance with NPPF Guidance, which will then facilitate the further extension of the new Strategic Dedicated Cycle Lane along the rest of Old Rydon Lane to complete the R9 Cycle Route. This will allow drivers to exit onto Admiral Way and return to Topsham Road as an alternative to travelling East down Old Rydon Lane. This will remove ALL West bound traffic from Old Rydon Lane altogether.

Without approval of this application with the access as proposed, **the Practice ground cannot be relocated and this site cannot be released for development at all!** It means it would not be possible to make these strategic improvements for cyclists and pedestrians in the foreseeable future. It will mean no Strategic Cycle Link from Old Rydon Lane to Admiral Way at all, No R9 dedicated Cycle Lane along the length of Old Rydon Lane, No affordable housing including new rented homes to Exeter City Council for £1.00, the loss of a new Driving Range Sporting Facility for the residents of Exeter, as well as the loss of 82 new homes from the existing Exeter Newcourt Strategic Allocation numbers and the dwindling 5 year land supply.

Approval of this amended scheme therefore not only meets with **full approval from DCC Highways, it also will immediately facilitate significant strategic enhancements for cyclists and pedestrians in Old Rydon Lane in accordance with the Adopted Local Plan**, immediate delivery of 82 new homes and affordable rented homes for ECC as well as a new Driving Range Sporting Facility. Furthermore it will secure the long term financial future of the Golf Club and it's other sporting facilities, as well as allow Devon County Council to bring forward, sooner, major strategic improvements for cyclists in accordance with the Local Plan

Therefore, with the full support of DCC Highways, it is respectfully asked that members approve this application as proposed.

