

REPORT TO PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

LAND AT BOOTHS PARK

Report Reference PL-25-04
Meeting Date 15th January 2025
Agenda Item 5
Prepared by Town Clerk



1.0 INTRODUCTION

In July, the committee considered three applications for development at Booths Hall. In December, amendments were submitted to two of the applications, which are presented for reconsideration.

- [25/1469/FUL](#) – new access road to serve housing site, including associated landscaping and sustainable drainage works
- [25/1468/OUT](#) – Outline application for up to 160 houses and apartments including 30% affordable homes, together with associated open space, sustainable drainage works and landscaping. All matters reserved apart from means of access.

When considered the original applications, the council raised no objections to the access road application, and supported the outline application. At a subsequent meeting, the council agreed additional comments in relation to s106 requests.

2.0 ACCESS ROAD APPLICATION

2.1 OVERVIEW

This application is a full planning application for the access road to the development site and the associated landscaping.

2.2 PREVIOUS COMMENT

The council raised no objections, but requested that the following conditions were applied:

- a) before the proposed car parking development commences a minimum of the equivalent existing car parking is removed
- b) the proposed vegetation screening be delivered to meet the minimum appropriate metric and is both native and suitably enhances Booths Mere and the parklands.

2.3 CHANGES

The major amendment to the application is the removal of the car park. The road follows the same alignment but leaves the land upon which the car park was proposed empty and identified as a

“possible future car park location”. Any future car park would be subject to a planning application.

Additionally, the landscaped bund which was previously proposed has been removed. It is stated that the changes present a higher BNG value (97.36% vs 83.67%) than the original application.

3.0 OUTLINE HOUSING APPLICATION

3.1 OVERVIEW

This application is an outline application with all matters reserved except for access.

3.2 PREVIOUS COMMENT

The council supported the application.

Additionally, the council requested the following s106 obligations:

1. A sum of £5,000 towards the development of burial capacity in Knutsford (see more below)
2. A requirement to set out an area for allotment gardens of c. 2,000 sqm of plots (providing 16 standard sized plots) including an area for parking and provision of water and fencing and that this site be transferred to the Town Council to manage alongside other sites within the town. This could be delivered off site on another part of Booths Hall. (see more below)
3. The provision of land for, and setting out of, two full-size rugby pitches and a training pitch, or a considerable contribution to sufficiently enhance the current provision to enable Knutsford Rugby Club to operate fully from the site. (see more below)
4. Securing that the new paths created are dedicated as public rights of way and are of a sufficient standard to enable them to be perpetually open to the public all year round.
5. Securing improvements in active travel through existing Public Right of Way improvements.
6. That in the interests of preserving the historic walkway, that Lime Walk not to be used as a the primary active travel route, nor a route for services (cables etc)

The council further endorsed the community requests (see Appendix A)

3.3 CHANGES

The primary changes to the scheme are:

- a) A minor reduction in the number of houses from 163 to 160
- b) Removal of a maximum height of three storeys to 2.5 storeys
- c) Removal of the proposed apartment building
- d) Amendment of the red line boundary to further back from the edge of Boothsmere and inclusion of an additional area for a new foul drainage connection for the site
- e) The foul drainage is now proposed to connect to the sewer north of Birch Grove (originally proposed via Delmar Road), reducing the vegetation removal previously proposed
- f) A “regulating plan” has replaced the “illustrative layout” and a spatial design code has been created.
- g) The establishment of a number of new public rights of way and permissive paths is shown
- h) The offsite provision of allotments is indicated

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY REQUESTS FOR MITIGATION FOR THE BOOTHS HALL APPLICATIONS

1. Location of Electricity Sub Station

Using greenbelt for infrastructure is only permissible if it can be demonstrated that there is a need and that no other location is suitable. Scottish Power should be contacted as a consultee on the application and to confirm that an options appraisal has taken place.

2. Interrelated Applications

An application and decision to approve the Housing application in FULL should be a condition of any permission on the road access and electricity substation. Without the housing there is no justification for a road or substation in greenbelt.

3. Outline restrictions – to prevent further encroachment into Greenbelt.

Land for housing development should be restricted to the safeguarded land as per the parameters plan.

Land for an access road should be restricted to the road design submitted in the full application. The 400 car parking spaces should not be approved at this stage as the justification prejudices and relies on a suggested future planning application for removing car parking to develop brownfield land.

4. Access

The application in full for the access road and substation is car dominant.

At first reserved matters an active travel assessment as per Active Travel England guidelines should be submitted and used to inform the conditions and design and layout for access.

The PROW 17 footpath should be upgraded to permit cycle and horse access perhaps as a bridleway.

The PROW 17 requires a diversion as a result of the proposed substation ideally a permanent one not just during construction.

Within the housing suggested design and layout the 4 pedestrian routes across swales into the Lime Walk tree line to access the permissive path is unsuitable. An additional separate PROW on land within the housing site should be constructed for pedestrian, cycle and other wheeled users. This is to protect the trees and ecology habitat from increased use and to make sure that the route is not subject to closures for tree maintenance or path surface being unusable.

Site allocation LPS 41 mentioned concern for increased pedestrian traffic impacting sensitive habitat. The footpath outside the site to the closest shop (The Lambing Shed) and community facility (Cricket Clubhouse bar and function room) should be improved.

A bus stop should be situated within the commercial area much closer to the housing residents than the suggested new stop on Chelford Road.

A bus stop is useless without a high frequency bus service and contributions to improving the services should be sought. Highways in consultation with Knutsford Town Council regarding an around Town service to key community destinations.

5. Flood Risk (Properties & Booths Mere)

The design of the surface water drainage should take account of the secondary B aquifer across the site and the overflow impact of Booths Mere. At risk areas on site are Lime Walk (trees and path) and new housing especially that proposed near the Mere shoreline. At risk off site are existing residential properties in the corner abutting Delmar Road and Carrwood. Booths Mere currently drains and overflows off site onto North Downs playing field and Higher Downs roads. Booths Mere overflow may affect Birch Grove properties.

A specific flood risk assessment for the Booths Mere body of water should be undertaken by the Local Flood Risk Authority.

6. Utilities connections – surface water, sewerage, electricity

The applicant has suggested that surface water and sewer connection is only possible via a connection to existing facilities in Delmar Road. As this is a utilities congested area with a narrow strip of land available it will be challenging so at first reserved matters a detailed design should be submitted to United Utilities in line with their already submitted suggested conditions. Ideally a plan B for connection should be explored.

The applicant has suggested that the existing overhead power line on site will be put underground and maybe boosted by a new substation or relocating and upgrading the existing one. The arboricultural report considered the route going near or through the woodland habitat. At first reserved matters a design for electricity connection should be submitted to Scottish Power for approval. Ideally renewable power options and energy saving buildings should be designed. Ecological damage should be avoided.

7. Ecology

In the site allocation LPS 41 it was noted that increased pedestrian traffic may affect sensitive habitats.

Lime Walk, 3 areas of woodland habitat and Booths Mere Local Wildlife site are within this application site. Adverse impacts should be avoided to these areas and as part of the biodiversity improvement for the site should be enhanced. It may be that the woodland clumps could be extended and connected. Evergreen planting would have a positive impact. In particular improvements for hedgehogs should be sought. A Management plan will be required.

The current use of the land is for cattle grazing. This loss requires mitigation.

8. Amenity

The application relies on the Lime Walk and Woodland area trees protecting visual amenity for both existing and new residents. It should be noted that the trees drop leaves so it is not an all year round screening. Also there are two clear gap areas next to Lynton / Fox Close and Ash Grove where the properties are bungalows.

Looking at the illustrative design and layout it should be noted that properties along the Mere shore line should be set further away from Ash Grove and Lynton/Fox Grove to allow enhanced planting of the woodlands and/or new trees to improve visual amenity but also to improve their privacy and avoid an overbearing aspect.

The placement of street lighting could adversely impact residents and habitat.

The application suggests that the woodland areas could be counted as amenity space and available for public use. This would adversely affect the habitats as cautioned against in the LPS 41 statement that pedestrian use may impact sensitive habitats. It may also affect the privacy and security of existing residents. A Designing Out Crime assessment should be sought from the Police.

9. Character and Appearance

Apartment blocks have been suggested in the corner by Delmar and on top of the ridge across from Delmar and Lynton. It is unclear what height they may be but it is suggested that they will adversely impact not only existing residents but also the new residents around them.

10. Car Parking

Should be above the minimum policy requirements.

11. Housing Number

The housing number of up to 163 looks ambitious especially with the layout showing 2 apartment blocks, some house positions maybe requiring moving and utilities connections to be detailed. The original site allocation of 150 would seem more appropriate to avoid unacceptable design and layout compromise at reserved matters.