

<p><b>Reference:</b> 15/00579/FUL</p>	<p><b>Site:</b> Grays Gas Holder Station London Road Grays Essex RM17 5YB</p>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Grays Riverside</p>	<p><b>Proposal:</b> Full planning application for the redevelopment of the former Grays Gas Station site and associated land for 187 dwellings (comprising 66% houses and 34% apartments) with associated private amenity space, means of enclosure, car parking, vehicle and pedestrian access and drainage.</p>

<b>Plan Number(s):</b>		
Reference	Name	Received
PH-201_001	Site Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_002	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_003	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_004	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_005	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_006	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_007	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_008	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_009	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_010	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_011	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_012	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_013	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_014	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_015	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_016	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_017	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_018	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_019	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_020	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_021	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_022	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_023	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_024	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_025	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_026	Elevations	9th February 2016

PH-201_027	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_028	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_029	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_030	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_031	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_032	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_033	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_034	Elevations	9th February 2016
PH-201_035	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_036	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_037	Other	9th February 2016
PH-201_038	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_039	Floor Layout	9th February 2016
PH-201_040	Elevations	9th February 2016

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016 Members considered a report on the above proposal. The report recommended that planning permission be approved subject to conditions and a legal agreement.
- 1.2 A copy of the report presented to the 30<sup>th</sup> June meeting is attached.
- 1.3 During debate on the item the Committee indicated they were minded to refuse the proposal on the basis of 1) Access to the local road network 2) Deficiency in provision children at schools local to the site and 3) Affordable housing below the 35% required by the Core Strategy.
- 1.4 The Head of Planning and Growth stated that the reasons were tentative on planning grounds. In instances where the Committee's reasoning is deemed to be tentative, the constitution requires: *"that the application should be deferred to enable the Planning Officer to draft a further report, outlining the implications of making a decision contrary to the Planning Officer's recommendation"* before a formal decision can be made.

## 2.0 ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 As required by the Constitution, an outline of the implications of make a decision contrary to the Officer recommendations is provided below. The suggested reasons for refusal are outlined below and the implications are considered subsequently:
- 2.2 PROPOSED REASON 1 – HIGHWAYS ACCESS

*Access to the site would increase traffic congestion along London Road and surrounding roads.*

- 2.3 The application was accompanied by a Transport Assessment that concludes that the junction will operate well within capacity thresholds in the 2016 and 2020 base and development AM and PM peak assessment scenarios. The London Road/Wharf Road roundabout was also modelled for the assessment and it was found that there would be minimal impact at this location and the flow changes would be comparable with the day-to-day variation in flows at this location.
- 2.4 The Council's Highways Officer has agreed with the assessment made of the site and the resultant impact on the local highways network and raises no objection to the impact on the highways network at this point.
- 2.5 Accordingly, it is not considered to be reasonable to require the developer to carry out works to the roundabout or move the entrance to the site.
- 2.6 Notwithstanding the above, the developer was present at the last meeting and is mindful of Member's concerns in relation to London Road, in particular congestion concerns along London Road in proximity to the site.
- 2.7 To address Member's concerns the developer has proactively looked at the opportunity of relocating the existing bus stop (which is presently to the west of the site and the west of the junction on Meesons Lane) to a dedicated bus lay-by to be formed along the site frontage (to the east of the site entrance). This would provide space off the carriageway of London Road for buses to stop.
- 2.8 At present the bus stop adjacent to Meesons Lane is on the carriageway which results in buses holding up traffic, predominately running from west to east, when passengers are boarding or alighting. In addition, stationary buses cause visibility issues for vehicles wanting to enter or leave Meesons Lane. The provision of a bus stop to the front of the site would allow buses to stop off the main highway and would allow traffic to continue to flow along London Road when buses are picking up or dropping off passengers.
- 2.9 The Highways Officer has been involved in the discussion with the developer and advises that the proposed relocated bus stop would have highways safety benefits and would allow traffic to flow more freely past the site. He is therefore supportive of the proposal. The provision of such a bus stop would need to be covered in the Highways S278 Agreement and would be subject to a separate consultation as part of the works would be on the highway.
- 2.10 In conclusion under this heading, there is no technical objection to the proposals, either in terms of road capacity or safety. Consequently, it is not considered that an objection on the basis of highways access would be justifiable or defensible on appeal. Notwithstanding this position, the proposals set out in paragraphs 2.7 – 2.9 above would represent an enhancement of the scheme and would improve highways safety (subject to separate specific consultation).

## 2.11 PROPOSED REASON 2 – LACK OF PROVISION AT LOCAL SCHOOLS

*School places within the area are limited; would the Council be able to meet the demand of additional children?*

2.12 The Council's Education Officer was present at the meeting and involved in discussions with Members in relation to school places. Following the meeting the Officer has reviewed the 'Pupil Place Plan 2016 – 2020'.

2.13 The Officer advises that the number of children forecasted from this development were included in the *Pupil Place Plan* and advises that the S106 contributions could be used towards the new Harris Mayflower Academy School which is under construction in Chafford Hundred or the Thameside School in Little Thurrock (both of which are in the identified schools planning area). The Education Officer advises that the contribution would be most appropriately added to the new Harris Mayflower Academy.

2.14 The closest school, Belmont Academy, is unlikely to be expanded due to highways issues with regards to congestion on Parker Road.

2.15 The proposed pupil numbers arising from this development have therefore been built in to Council forecasts for education provision and can be accommodated in schools within relative proximity to the site.

2.16 Accordingly, given there is planned growth and the development proposes funding to support this growth it is not considered that an objection on the basis of education provision could be substantiated or defended on appeal.

## 2.17 PROPOSED REASON 3 – PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

*The percentage of affordable housing was felt to be too low.*

2.18 Core Strategy Policy CSTP2 (The Provision of Affordable Housing) seeks the provision of 35% of the total number of units to be provided as affordable housing.

Part 2 of this policy states:

*The Council will seek Affordable Housing to meet local needs on qualifying sites subject to:*

*i its suitability for on-site provision*

*ii the economics of providing affordable housing*

*iii the extent to which the provision of affordable housing would prejudice other planning objectives to be met from the development of the site; and*

*iv. the mix of units necessary to meet local needs and achieve a successful sustainable socially inclusive development*

Further, the wording of the policy identifies that the majority of the land identified in the Local Plan for housing is Previously Developed Land which is often subject to a variety of constraints and that the ability of a site to deliver Affordable Housing that can be supported financially will be determined by open book economic viability assessments.

- 2.19 The application is accompanied by such an assessment, which initially indicated that the site could deliver only 10% of the properties as affordable housing. The Council's independent viability assessor considered that the properties on the site may achieve a greater value than the original assumptions and accordingly the amount of affordable housing offered was increased to 16% via negotiation on the basis of the tenure requirements and mix as put forward by the Council's Housing Officer (this mix was 70% affordable rented and 30% intermediate tenure).
- 2.20 The approved mix comprised 20 affordable rented units and 9 intermediate dwellings comprising 3 x 1 bed flats, 8 x 2 bed flats, 15 x 2 bed houses and 3 x 3 bed houses.
- 2.21 Following Members' discussions at Committee the applicant has looked at the mix of units and has indicated that by changing the mix of units and varying the tenure type (to 60% affordable rented and 40% intermediate tenure) they can increase the number of units by 3, to a total of 32 units (17%).
- 2.22 The proposed mix would therefore be 3 x 1 bed flats, 8 x 2 bed flats, 17 x 2 bed houses and 4 x 3 bed houses.
- 2.23 The costs of providing affordable rented units is higher than intermediate units and accordingly, additional units can be provided where less rented units are provided. The Housing Officer has reviewed the offer and raises no objections to the change in number of units of mix provided.
- 2.24 Although the proposed development cannot support a full policy compliant affordable housing offer the applicant, has listened to Members concerns and increased the level of units to be provided across the site.
- 2.25 Given that requiring the scheme to provide a full complement of affordable housing would render it unviable and undevelopable, it is not considered that a reason for refusal on these grounds could be justified or defended on appeal.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 In light of the above, the application remains recommended for approval as detailed in the attached report, subject to amended wording in the Section 106 Agreement requiring the submission of details for the creation of a lay-by on the London Road frontage, subject to such proposal being agreed through the Highways Section 278 process.