

Forden Road / New Road proposal 20/2118/FUL

This proposal was considered by Montgomery Town Council Planning Committee at an open meeting on Friday March 5th following a virtual public consultation meeting with the developers on Thursday 4th of March that was attended by a large number of residents. The response was unanimously agreed by full Town Council on Monday 8th March 2021.

General Comments

In principle MTC welcomes the housing proposal although we consider there needs to be more detail provided and a thorough consideration given to highways issues before full planning consent could be granted for what is a major proposal for this small, historic town.

MTC considers the proposal would satisfactorily meet the housing needs of the town within the lifetime of the Powys LDP and, for a variety of reasons, this site is preferable to Verlon Fields and should replace it in the LDP at revision.

We have consulted with the community and share a number of material concerns outlined below:

Highways /Access arrangements

These arrangements and the overall increase in traffic are the major area of concern. The proposed access is far too close to the exit/entrance to New Road and Sarkly Lane and, due to the topography, offers extremely poor visibility sight lines onto the Forden Road. The size of the development means a potential for 50 - 60 additional vehicles accessing and exiting the site as well as trades and deliveries; a significant increase for the area.

Given the level of comment at Pre-Application stage, MTC are disappointed that these real concerns have not been addressed in the subsequent full application. The opportunity for a long overdue improvement to safety for all road users has not been taken. MTC urges Powys County Council to work with the developers of this site to maximise the opportunity to provide safe access and egress not only to this site, but to also remedy an existing dangerous junction.

It is critical that note is taken of local knowledge before there is an exacerbation of existing issues and the potential for serious incidents. In particular we would draw the following to the Planning Officer's attention:

- excessive speeds are common along this stretch of road (Go Safe data supports this public observation) and the road is used by vulnerable users (walkers, equestrians and cyclists) and the aim must be to increase, not deter, active travel. The proposed layout puts such users at considerable risk;
- the simple provision of 40/30 mph limit signs and road markings can be seen to have virtually zero impact on road speeds. In conjunction with a roundabout flashing signs showing the actual speed at which a vehicle is travelling are required in order to have the desired impact;
- given the blind summit there needs to be a reduction of speed to 30mph before the New Road junction not after;
- Montgomery residents are actively supporting the Welsh Government's proposals to introduce 20mph zones through towns and large villages and for the safety of all residents this would be the opportunity to replace existing 30mph with 20mph signs throughout Montgomery;
- existing dangers for traffic exiting New Road onto Forden Road due to extremely

- poor visibility, and
- vehicles leaving the new development and heading in the Chirbury Road direction using the proposed layout will be making two right hand turns across the carriageway in quick succession and proximate to a blind rise.

The only sensible, practicable solution is the construction of a roundabout at the Forden/Sarkly/New Road junction with the new development access road onto this roundabout. This would have the added advantage of slowing traffic which would then approach the dangerous 45 degree B4388/ B4385, junction and the town at a safer speed.

The entirety of traffic speed, volume and parking issues in Montgomery need to be taken into consideration in advance of any such significant new build in the town.

Mix of housing types

We appreciate the constraints of funding but it is abundantly clear from public comment and our own observations that the socio-demographic nature of the town suggests a requirement for affordable homes to buy outright as well as rental properties and rent to buy and trust the ultimate mix will reflect area requirements.

There is concern that the houses should be truly local needs and that there is a fair and transparent system in place to ensure priority to local applicants.

The Town Council is pleased that good provision has been made for those with limited mobility and that, as a result of MTC comment at Pre-Application stage, a pavement is to be provided along Forden Road although we would reiterate the need for a sufficient width to accommodate a wheelchair.

With potential for considerably increased pedestrian use, the existing footpath from the veterinary surgery up to the Forden Road junction also requires widening as it is currently dangerously narrow.

Design and layout

Overall MTC would wish to see far more detail regarding design of individual houses. We welcome the verbal comments made at the public meeting in this regard but these are not necessarily reflected in the application.

The proposed number of homes is considerable for both the site and local requirements. We have seen no evidence base for Montgomery to support such a high level of need and there are extremely limited employment opportunities in Montgomery and immediate area. There is scope to slightly reduce the number of houses allowing for a layout design more sympathetic to the site and rurality and the living environment of new residents.

This is an especially sensitive site in an Registered Historic Landscape rated Outstanding and on a main approach to Montgomery and its Conservation Area. It is within the setting of an important Scheduled Monument. It will be clearly seen from various vantage points on Castle Hill where presently little building is discernable. MTC is pleased to note the planned tree planting and a layout that sets houses back from the Forden and New Roads thus softening the impact of a densely build environment. MTC would object to the removal of the boundary hedgerow, especially if replaced with larch lap fencing. The essential rurality within the setting of the Castle Hill would be softened by maintaining the existing

hedgerow for the whole site and a layout that is as non-linear as possible.

For similar reasons MTC would expect attention to be given to the building materials employed and detail of design. The roofing material should be slate in line with other buildings in the townscape and brick should be mellow and of good quality. The town is typified by its old and characterful buildings and mix of styles and the new build requires elements to introduce character into individual properties. Recent construction in Newtown and Welshpool should not be used as a benchmark as the unique character of Montgomery diverges considerably from these towns. In size Montgomery is no larger than a village (some 1300 population) and it is important to retain the sense of place and character for all residents and the many visitors that support the economy of this old County town. Affordability should not be an excuse for poor design or inferior build quality. The aspect of all build facing the existing roads needs particular attention.

MTC would assume all homes will now be built to high energy efficiency standards for both environmental and economic reasons and that planning consent will be suitably conditioned. We will be interested to receive details of how such measures will be fully incorporated above and beyond minimum building regulations as exemplars of good practice.

The provision of off-road parking is to be commended although some of the shared car parking arrangements may be problematic particularly considering the need for electric charging points.

MTC concurs with the applicant regarding the preference for low level housing over the high rise design proposed for the care home. This offers an opportunity for a sympathetic approach to this site and we would share CADW's concerns regarding the handling of development here.

Drainage

There will need to be a comprehensive drainage plan for this site. MTC are aware of problems with drainage, particularly on the New Road side, and are also aware that other sites drain to this field.

Play provision

MTC would wish to see development of a play area on -site or a joint play area with the Mortimer's development (having an area originally identified for play as part of the s.106 agreement) connected by a pedestrian gate. If neither of these are feasible options a contribution to the planned new town play park on the recreation field would be welcome in lieu.

Provision of any play or community area or wildlife site on the new development will require a plan for on-going maintenance.

Other facilities

Given the size and limitations of facilities in Montgomery it is clear that a critical capacity will shortly be reached for town parking and an already overstretched medical practice, particularly as a number of houses are specifically designed with older or less able residents in mind.

Ecology

Local knowledge suggests the site is biodiverse and suitable mitigation and protective

measures need to be in place. Proposed tree planting and retention of the hedgerow corridor have the potential to enhance biodiversity and MTC commends the inclusion of wildlife corridors around the periphery of the site. We assume the pond is also a wildlife area and that appropriate provision will be made for safety of children with respect to the feature. We welcome the stated involvement of the Wildlife Trust to maximise on potential.

Employment

have the opportunity to benefit from construction and ground works.

Archaeology

MTC would expect an archaeological survey of the site prior to works commencing, given its historic nature, which is in close proximity to the site of the Civil War Battle of Montgomery.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed development. MTC would be pleased to provide any further information and would wish to be engaged with s.106 discussions at the earliest stage.