

MOULTON PARISH COUNCIL

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31 January 2013

Dear Mr Leonard

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE: 12/05668/OUT
PROPOSAL: Outline Planning Permission for up to 148 residential dwellings, open space and access off Barnside Way (off Summerfield Drive)
LOCATION: off Barnside Way, Moulton

Your letter dated 11 January 2013 refers.

The Parish Council wishes to register its' objections to the above Application.

Planning Policy and Land Aspects

The Application is contrary to 2006 Vale Royal Local Plan (Section NE12) which states – “Development in the past has led to the villages of Davenham and Moulton almost coalescing. In order that the identity and integrity of the two villages are maintained it is essential that the gap between the settlements is protected”. Our view is that this development, if allowed, would further erode that gap along a long stretch of the Parish border. In the Applicants own words (Landscape Appraisal p2) “The site lies within an Area of Significant Local Environmental Value”.

The Application is also contrary to both the Moulton Parish Plan (2004) and the Moulton Village Design Statement (2009 - an Adopted Supplementary Planning Document).

The embryonic Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan appears, at first consultation stage, to consider Moulton as a rural location separate from the larger conurbations of Northwich and Winsford. These two larger communities are earmarked for wide scale residential development on the back of plentiful brown field sites and the desire to improve town centre infrastructure. We therefore feel that the size of development put forward by the Applicant is more in keeping with a town location than a small rural village.

The Parish Council, and most villagers, accepts the need for some building in Moulton in the coming years. However, to be asked to take on what would represent a 15% increase in housing stock in one hit appears unreasonable.

The development is being openly canvassed by the Applicant as “a village within a village”. This highlights the largely unworkable nature of the “village add on” aspect and pays no regard whatsoever to the much cherished community feel that Moulton is justifiably proud of. Our feeling is that the creation of a “New Moulton” would serve no purpose to anyone.

We note that there is no specific reference within the Application Papers to the provision of play/recreation facilities on the site. Clearly there is a reliance on the existing play facilities in the nearby Playing Field – use of this Field is restricted, via Covenant, to children only. Moulton Playing Field Trust, which administers the Playing Field, has not been approached by the Applicant regarding the use of the existing facilities.

At no point in the process to date have we seen any evidence for the need to build an estate of this size, in this location.

Notwithstanding the Outline aspect of the Application, no reference is made to the provision of “green” building features such as heat recovery, permeability of hard standing areas, grey water recycling, solar energy, heat recovery and ground source heat pumps.

Given the earlier comments regarding brown field site availability within a 5 mile radius, we see no justification for established agricultural land to be used for residential development, particularly in a rural area with limited infrastructure (see later comments).

Checks of HM Land Registry records suggest that some of the land earmarked for development – to the north of Brown Leaves and Tall Trees (off Beehive Lane) – may not be owned by the Vendor (Mr Young). We feel that this issue needs checking as a matter of priority.

Drainage and Sewerage Issues/Gas Supply

The fields in question are notoriously wet and easily prone to flooding. The residents of Brown Leaves and Tall Trees both confirm that they have had to put in place contingency measures to ensure that water is effectively drained away after prolonged/heavy rain.

The Applicants Supporting Paperwork does, in our view, raise more questions than it answers. In short, we feel that the extent of the problem is not fully understood.

The Applicant has claimed that the land is flat, yet it rises to the North West corner of the site. They appear to believe that the existing problems arise due only to accumulated surface water. Whilst this is a factor, they appear blind to the fact that two existing streams enter the ditch next to which they are planning to build. These extra water volumes are sufficient to cause regular, widespread flooding.

The planned use of Swales and Water Channels to help with surface draining is, whilst imaginative, a cause for real concern. They are clearly regarded as a major aid in dispensing with surface water, but there is little clarity in determining how any excess water will be piped away. This is a major factor with clear implications for the rest of Moulton and, potentially, Davenham. Furthermore, we have concerns over health and safety aspects of the planned Swales – how deep; how fenced off; will the water become contaminated; proven in other locations etc...

The Applicants plans for the removal of foul/waste water also cause concern. United Utilities should be fully consulted on the feasibility of the plans put forward. This has been a longstanding issue within Moulton and (up to) 148 new homes can only exacerbate matters if not properly planned.

To look to route the Gas Supply down Beehive Lane is, at best, questionable. This narrow lane will also form the only construction traffic entry point (see later comments) and is the main access thoroughfare for two houses. The disruption caused whilst the pipe is being laid will be considerable.

Traffic Issues

This aspect of the Application needs assessing from two different perspectives.

Firstly, the proposed access to the estate off Barnside Way is considered implausible. Barnside Way is a narrow road (effectively built to service 17 homes) and incapable of carrying the extra traffic that up to 148 new dwellings will create. Additional to that is the effect that greatly increased traffic volumes will have on the junctions of Barnside Way/Summerfield Drive; Summerfield Drive/Main Road. Traffic queues are inevitable at peak times. There will also be a knock on effect seen at the junction of Main Road and Jack Lane (a narrow mini-roundabout with poor visibility); the junction of Jack Lane and the A533 (Moulton/Davenham By-Pass) and the junction of Jack Lane and London Road, Davenham. Given human nature it is not difficult to see northbound traffic leaving the estate and proceeding through Davenham Village (as opposed to linking up with the by-pass at the end of Jack Lane). This will negate the effects of having had the by-pass built.

Secondly, the centre of Moulton is acknowledged as being a regular traffic trouble spot. In simple terms the road network, which dates back to the early 20th century, struggles to

cope with current traffic volumes. A further increase would create more unwelcome pressure.

The figures used in the Applicants' traffic assessment are, we believe, open to serious question. Given the nature of the properties outlined – predominantly large family homes – it is not difficult to see at least 300 vehicles potentially moving on or off the estate each day. Even one movement on and one movement off per day, per household would generate 300 additional traffic movements, many at peak times on roads already struggling to cope with current volumes.

In summary, the proposed development puts undue, increased and unacceptable levels of traffic on existing estate roads and local highways within both Moulton and Davenham.

Education Issues

During the current academic year 5 children who reside within Moulton were unable to attend their local Primary School. This fact alone confirms the lack of adequate local provision for school places as things currently stand.

The potential increase in demand as a result of 148 new homes being built can only magnify the problem. Our understanding is that Davenham Primary School is also fully subscribed. This would leave parents having to place their Children at either the (potentially) enlarged Kingsmead Primary School, or within Winsford/Northwich. Naturally, there are linked traffic issues if this is the only viable option for numerous parents to take.

The School Enlargement Plan put to the School Governors by the Applicant was turned aside on practical grounds – the proposed additional classrooms were too few in number. Additionally, expansion of the School, at its' current location, would create further traffic issues in the centre of the village.

We fully concur with the objections expressed by the Governors of Moulton Primary School.

Sustainability Issues

At present public facilities within Moulton consists of 4 x Pubs/Clubs, 1 Post Office, 1 Mini Store, 1 Take-Away, 1 Church, 1 Chapel and 1 Village Meeting Place. This largely meets demand, although with most of the facilities being in the centre of the village traffic problems are a knock on effect.

A population increase of up to 20% would undoubtedly create further pressures.

In reality most people will probably shop outside of the village, thus further increasing traffic movements in and out.

We would also point out that there is no Health Centre Facility in the village (or Davenham). The nearest such facilities are over 3 miles away in either Northwich or Winsford. Not ideal for an increasing population.

Turning to environmental issues, the village is currently surrounded by open countryside that is popular with all ages (in line with Vale Royal Local Plan, Section NE12). We have no desire to see this valuable feature of village life eroded away.

Construction Traffic

Whilst the logic behind routing all construction down Beehive Lane is clear to see, we strongly feel that the plan is based around “making the only available option work, come what may”.

Firstly, the entrance into the lane is very tight with no significant scope for widening. Long vehicles, such as those delivering building materials, will only be able to access “straight on”, i.e. from the Moulton side of Jack Lane (albeit across the wrong side of a mini-roundabout). To try from any other approach will undoubtedly result in traffic delays as vehicles manoeuvre to fit what is a tight opening.

The Traffic Management Plan in place in Davenham does not lend itself to access from the North via the A556/London Road. Therefore the only realistic route onto the site for HGV's is via the Moulton end of Jack Lane off the A533 (Davenham and Moulton By-Pass), turning off at a notoriously congested/dangerous junction.

The lane itself is narrow in many places with the proposed widening programme difficult, if not impossible, to envisage. A large number of Trees, many of which are noted as being of significant value, will have to be cut back to allow HGV access – a number of these Trees have TPO's (Individual and Block) in place. We are also concerned that greater use of the Lane will damage tree roots, thus causing further tree loss in the future.

Beehive Lane forms part of Footpath 3, a well used route by local walkers. The day to day presence of Construction Traffic will, in the eyes of many, render the Footpath unsuitable for use. This would, over a possible 5 year period, be an immense loss to the village.

Our research shows the path as belonging to the Vendor, Mr Young, but with easement rights granted to the Occupants of Brown Leaves and Tall Trees. There is a danger of both sets of residents being unable to get to/from their properties in reasonable time given the number of construction vehicles in operation. On a similar theme, we feel that Emergency Vehicles could also be delayed, possibly with serious repercussions.

Yours faithfully,

PHIL SANDERS
Parish Clerk