

Marton Moss. Indeed it is hoped that it would afford the opportunity for some older residents in larger homes in the locality to be able to downsize [or 'right size' as property analysts have now called it, and thus bringing forward the opportunity for some larger family homes to be brought back into occupation for family groups or individuals and thereby negating some of the need for new family housing to be built in the locality. We have tried to engage with the Chairman of the Marton Moss Neighbourhood Forum but it is noted that the views on the agenda paper are those of individuals and not that of the Forum, which is unfortunate.

Most people over 65 are still of an age where they see care homes as the final option for them in respect of housing and ultimately care. Therefore it is not surprising that studies undertaken by YouGov and property experts Knight Frank identify that one third of people in the over 65 retirement age bracket [approximately 3.5 million] would like to consider the opportunity to 'right size' into specialist retirement housing, and at either side of that choice is to stay put in an existing family home or await to eventually enter a care home if there is a supply of places. But there is not the ready available supply of retirement housing and of the right quality and nature. Many in making the choice to 'right size' in living in their own dwellings and having the income to be able to make that move wish their 'right' move to be to be able to still own their own front door and pleasant grounds to live in. They would also prefer to purchase properties as this has been the way of living for the older sector in regards to security of tenure, but opportunities are limited with renting easily outnumbering purchase in terms of supply, where there is such a supply. Since the turn of the century the older population has continued to grow yet as few as 5,500 retirement developments have been built - a considerable reduction since its peak of the late 1980's thirty years ago. There is nothing specifically in the current National Planning Policy Framework 2019 to specifically support the provision of older persons housing, but neither is there anything against it. This sector therefore faces very limited options in securing development designed and built for them but proactive Council's, and hopefully Blackpool can be included here, can seize the day by supporting an initiative of this nature. The crux of the current national housing crisis is that insufficient homes have been built nationally across the whole housing market, but insufficient credence has been given to the opportunities presented by 'right-sizing' in being able to release family homes back into the market and by building more smaller homes for the older sector at greater densities on available under-utilised sites, and that is what the proposed redevelopment of the site of Brentwood House offers.

With regard to the reasons of refusal put forward, and some of the text in the officers' report, the following comments are offered:

Firstly upon the strategic policy argument AND visual impact in reason 1, the Marton Moss Neighbourhood Plan has not been adopted and its current status is limited and can carry no weight. Policy NE2, 'Countryside Areas', is considered to be out of date. Policy CS2 supports specific housing needs and accepts windfall sites coming forward where there is no such housing allocation. GOAL 1 is similarly proactive and would support new residences for older people coming forward. There are already a number of buildings on the site in a fragmented form & little harm would accrue from what is proposed. The hedgerow loss referred to is the least dense hedgerow area along the Midgeland Road frontage and has been a domestic hedge rather than field hedge. A new mature hedge would be planted at a splay at the back of the visibility splay. There would only be one single access to the site, with the Kitty Lane access closed other than as an emergency access.

Upon reason 2, it is not considered the site proposals represent over-intensive development. The site would be well landscaped and would offer opportunities and sitting in a pleasant environment either upon seated areas amidst the grassed portions of the site or in the formal squares, while the level of parking at 150% should more than adequately meet the needs of persons downsizing in having no more than one vehicle per person or per couple.

Upon reason 3, why would a single storey development set behind established natural screen boundaries impact upon the street scene to Midgeland Road. As stated, 'design' is a reserved matter and can adequately address the requirements of the conservation area. The Neighbourhood Forum appear to accept development of what is an under-utilised site will come forward and the comments that have come forward appear to suggest starter homes or 'large houses with large gardens' would be more appropriate to the site - but surely not visually which is what the officers are concerned about with this proposal.

Upon reason 4, it is contended that this is not justified and that appropriate submissions have already been made to rule out any ecological harm from the undertaking of the development. The inclusion of this reason is unfortunate.

Finally the officers stress the lack of a level of sustainability in locating an older persons housing development on Marton Moss in a countryside area. Clearly though the locality is well populated already and particularly so within the area lying directly to the south in Fylde where a considerable amount of new homes have been or are being built - which is still relevant as much of that was formerly countryside area. The proposed development would not represent an isolated one in an otherwise largely undeveloped rural setting. There was until fairly recently a bus terminus at the corner of Midgeland Road / School Lane and this was there providing a local service that was lost through rationalisation & not because of a sustainability issue. In the case of the proposed development it has been shown that there is an opportunity to redevelop an existing residential site for the purposes of bringing forward housing for an age group of the community which would have a greater beneficial asset than a negative one purely by being located within a countryside area. Most people in the over 65 age group are not away from home all the time or coming and going - indeed to the contrary they have retired and will generally shop for convenience foods once weekly which can be undertaken at Morrisons or Tesco OR alternatively would have shopping delivered via online ordering. The need to live in the hub of an urban area is less critical to this sector of the population and the rural fringe of the Borough would be equally appealing to the residents of the site for walking.

The cleared site as a single planning unit would represent a brownfield, or previously developed, site that is currently under-utilised, and which is capable of delivering the nature of the development proposed without adverse impact upon the local environment. Indeed it is incumbent upon local authorities to refuse planning permission where the development does not make an efficient use of land - clearly that is not the case here. The opportunity to achieve a positive outcome for over 65's housing in the area ought not to be allowed to go begging here.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these points before making your decision.

Nigel Robinson

