

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

12th May 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/2491/03/RM – OAKINGTON ERECTION OF 43 DWELLINGS (INCLUDING 11 AFFORDABLE UNITS) TOGETHER WITH PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND ACCESS, LAND OFF COLES LANE FOR TAYLOR WOODROW

Recommendation: Approval

Adjoining Conservation Area

Site and Proposal

1. The 1.3 ha site is accessed via a grass strip between 2 bungalows, and consists of undulating pastureland. The northern and western boundaries are marked by established deciduous hedging varying from 2-7 metres in height, with fields beyond. To the east and south is residential development in High Street and Coles Lane. The Coles Lane properties are predominantly bungalows, their rear gardens largely screened from the site by coniferous and deciduous hedges. The eastern boundary, which is also the Conservation Area boundary, to High Street is more open. Ditches follows the line of the boundary on 3 sides.
2. A public footpath runs from Coles Lane along the route of the proposed vehicular access and crosses the site north-south.
3. The reserved matter application, received on the 12th December 2003 and amended on the 16th February and the 16th March 2004, proposes the erection of 43 dwellings, including 11 affordable units, grouped around a central public open space. The existing right of way is to be extinguished and realigned along the internal estate road. A separate application has been made to the Council for this.
4. The housing is a mixture of 2 and 2¹/₂ storey types arranged in detached, semi-detached and terraced configurations. Of the market housing, ten 2 bed, sixteen 3 bed and six 4 bed houses are proposed. Eleven affordable houses consist of seven 2 bed and four 3 bed.
5. The proposal equates to a density of 33 dwellings per ha.
6. Also submitted with the application is a design statement, an archaeological and an ecological report.
7. The design statement says the proposal has been drawn from good vernacular architecture in terms of layout, scale, mass, form and the local character of Oakington. The boundary landscaping will be retained to provide a strong enclosure of the site. Existing gaps will be supplemented with new planting.
8. The public open space has been located in the heart of the site to provide a major core for the development. Dwellings have been orientated fronting onto this area to

enforce and secure its importance. The badger habitat zone has been shown adjacent to the northern boundary and forms part of the public open space. The layout incorporates good villagescape planning such as sensitive enclosure of space between dwellings, “pinch” points and the transition of a variety of external spaces. Car parking has been located to minimise visual intrusion. Parking courts are located to the rear and side of dwellings and in some areas are accessed beneath “fly over” building forms. The mix of house types is in accordance with local and national advice. 2 and 2¹/₂ Storey Houses dwellings will provide continuous built frontages with interesting roofscapes. The 2¹/₂ storey dwellings have been sited away from the eastern and southern site boundaries in the centre of the site. Detailing of windows and brickwork have been carefully chosen to improve character and provide interest. Materials will be chosen from a palette of local materials.

Planning History

9. Outline Planning Permission was granted for residential development in 2000 and renewed in 2003. A Section 106 Legal Agreement was attached to both permissions and required the provision of 11 affordable dwellings, an education contribution, and 0.2ha of public open space with play equipment etc.

Planning Policy

10. Oakington is selected as a “group” village in the 2004 Local Plan. The site is within the village framework, adjacent to the Village Conservation Area, and the following policies apply:

11. County Structure Plan 2003:

Policy P1/2 – Environmental Restrictions on Development

Policy P1/3 – Sustainable Design in Built Development

Policy P5/3 – Density

Policy P5/4 – Meeting Locally Identified Housing Needs

Policy P6/4 – Drainage

Policy P7/2 – Biodiversity

Policy P7/6 – Historic Built Environment

Policy P8/9 – Provision of Public Rights of Way

12. South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:

Policy “Oakington 1” allocates the site of 1.3ha for residential development.

Policy SE4 List of Group Villages

Policy SE9 Village Edges

Policy HG7 – Affordable Housing

Policy HG10 – Housing Mix and Design

Appendix 7/1 – Standards for Car Parking Provision

Policy CS5 – Flood Protection

Policy RT2 – The Provision of Public Open Space in New Development

Policy EN5 – Landscaping of New Development

Policy EN13 – Protected Species

Policy EN15 – Development affecting archaeological sites

Policy EN30 – Development affecting setting of Conservation Area

Consultation (amended plans)

Oakington Parish Council objects

13. "The Parish Council is pleased that our earlier objections in respect of new planting around the Play Area and the surfacing material of the shared surfaces have been satisfactorily addressed. We also take it that implicit in the term "adoptable" being applied to the shared surfaces means that street lighting will be provided.
14. We also note that reference is now being made to a bridlepath, whereas previously it was correctly referred to as a public footpath. We are very strongly in favour of its existing status being retained, because this kind of use is compatible with a dense housing estate of this nature. We have a riding school and many other private horse riders in our village and so strings of horses are common place on our village roads at frequent intervals on Saturdays, Sundays and School holiday times, and we would not want to encourage them into this estate. Where there are horses there are horse droppings and so it is not a good idea to encourage them on to roads that are block paved!
15. All our previous objections still stand. These are:
16. We are particularly concerned about the totally inadequate car parking provision and have no doubt that the political objectives on which this is based are badly flawed and that the local community will end up with a major problem extending way beyond the stie and into Coles Lane, which will have to contend with all of the traffic movements generated by this development plus a significant number from the one being proposed for the SCDC depot, in the form of visits to and from the shop, post office and pub.
17. Our dealings in connection with the Section 106 agreement have focused on the open space being primarily a play area for children under 11 years old, and that is the way we intend to go forward. Implicit in this is a reasonably flat, even surface. As far as we are concerned, a public open space can take numerous other forms and serve other purposes, many of which are not compatible with a children's play area. e.g. the exercising of dogs is wholly unacceptable.
18. The significance of the dotted semi circle at the northern edge of the open space needs to be clarified. We think it might indicate the drainage attenuation that is referred on the form but not supported with any detail elsewhere. If this is the case, then it needs to be empty at all times, save when there is heavy rainfall. Otherwise it would not serve a useful purpose in terms of flood protection, a subject very close to our hearts in this flood prone village of ours. On this basis there would be no amenity value to be gained in terms of aquatic or plant life, instead there would be great potential for it to become a piece of boggy wasteland of the worst possible kind, which in turn would encourage illegal dumping, not to mention the adverse safety implications associated with the use of the children's play area and the ongoing maintenance costs of cleaning it out. That being the case, the Parish Council would not undertake responsibility for it in any shape or form.
19. We are also concerned about the badger's habitat being close to the children's play area, on the grounds of public health on the one hand and the best interests of the badgers on the other hand. It needs to be securely screened off with a brick wall to satisfy both of these interests.
20. In our view, street lighting needs to be provided for all of the roadways and footways for the whole of the site, in the interests of public safety. Again, our dealings regarding the Section 106 agreement agreed that the children's play area needs to be lit to normal street lighting level. If that is provided by adjoining street lighting that is

maintained by SCDC/CCC then that is OK, otherwise additional Section 106 funding will be called for.

21. The status, ownership, and maintenance responsibilities for the pieces of land on both sides of the entrance road need to be established beyond doubt. Again, our dealings concerning the Section 106 agreement made it clear that we would only accept responsibility for a single parcel of land, and so we would not undertake any responsibility for this land.
22. We need to establish that no piece(s) of land are left without an identifiable owner, who will have responsibility for upkeep and maintenance. The 2 metre wide diverted public footpath being a prime example. Presently there is a public right of way (on foot) over a length of this privately owned land and that is the way it needs to stay, otherwise there is the prospect of neglect, dumping and the costly remedial work. In this context, the public footpath is one that has been unusable beyond this site since it was cut off decades ago to facilitate construction of the old airfield. It will still be unusable, but we need to keep it so that it can be integrated with any new public footpaths that we are successful in obtaining when the old airfield site is eventually sorted out.
23. The diversion of the public footpath raises further issues. Firstly, we believe that there is a ditch along the western boundary of this site, but it has not been cleaned out for decades and we believe that it needs to be properly scoured and then properly maintained in order to serve a much needed drainage facility for this site. If this is done, then the authority to divert the public footpath should be conditional upon a Section 106 agreement to construct a fenced footbridge across it. It is also important that the owners of the adjoining land unreservedly accept the new access point of the public footpath onto their property. Within the site, from the proposed footway to the site boundary the public footpath needs to be constructed to the same standard as the rest of the footways, which we presume will be tarmac edged with a concrete block.
24. This site is prone to flooding due to its make up, rather than the ditch that serves it. The riparian ownership and responsibility for the existing ditch(es) needs to be established beyond doubt and, if appropriate, assigned to the individual new properties. In this context, we need to avoid the situation that arose with Cherry Orchard and The Drift where the ditch was piped by various people at different times, using different sized pipes at different levels, with no regard for the possible effects on the ditch's ability to do its job. The role of the Cherry Orchard ditch is not significant, but there are serious problem with the one at the Drift and as this one does perform a significant function it is very important to secure its long term future as an effective drainage system.
25. Once again, there is insufficient space for wheelie bins.”
26. **The Local Highways Authority** has no objections providing the off-site footway works are completed prior to the occupation of any of the new dwellings.
27. **The Countyside Services Team** has the following comments:
28. The knee-rail is too low at 400mm and should be 600mm in order to be more visible to motorists reversing into the parking area. The application of reflective strips would help prevent it being knocked down. In due course the responsibility for the maintenance of the fence needs to be established as it is not considered highway furniture.

29. There is concern that vehicles will unofficially park and block the start of the bridleway link, in the South-West corner of the hammer head end of the access road. This would be an unlawful obstruction of the bridleway. Could yellow hatching be provided to the road surface at this point?
30. The applicant has agreed to fund an additional bridleway sign.
31. **The Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** request the provision of hydrants.
32. **The Principal County Council Archaeologist** has received an evaluation report from the applicant's consultant. The report indicates significant archaeological remains relating to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods survive on the site. These remains would be severely damaged or destroyed by the proposed development.
33. The site should therefore be subject to a programme of archaeological mitigation, required by Condition. It is standard practice for the County Archaeological Office to produce a design brief for this mitigation. The applicant should be advised such investigations are likely to involve some financial outlay.
34. **The Environment Agency** comments the application makes no specific reference to surface water drainage other than to propose "via attenuation system to watercourse". Full details must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of works.
35. **Anglian Water** has not commented.
36. **The Conservation Manager** has no objections.
37. **The Council's Ecologist** has no objections. Subject to conditions concerning the submission of "Badger Mitigation Scheme" and no disturbance to boundary vegetation between February/July to protect breeding birds.
38. **English Nature** points out the protection afforded to badger setts.
39. **The Ramblers Association** notes that Public Footpath No 7 at Oakington crosses the site. The footpath terminates at the boundary of the former Oakington Airfield, the right of way having been truncated when the airfield was built. Once the airfield is returned to civilian use, public access should be restored. Therefore it is important that the present rights of way should be safeguarded. The comments of the **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** will be reported.

Representations

40. Nine letters of objection were received to the original application, summarised as follows:
 - Not necessary to develop the site now that Northstowe to be developed on the former airfield.
 - The site has historically been subject to flooding.
 - Ownership/maintenance of boundary ditches needs to be clarified.

- The outlet from neighbouring properties will be spoilt.
 - Archaeological and Ecological interest will be lost; the badgers need protecting.
 - The scheme is too dense with inadequate car parking.
 - Will there be adequate street lighting?
 - Insufficient space for wheelie bins.
41. Five further objections have been received from other neighbouring residents making the following additional points:
- The existing boundary hedges should be protected.
 - Overlooking from the first floor windows on Plots 2, 3, 4 will reduce the privacy of 31 Coles Lane. The proposed 2 storey dwellings should be bungalows.

Planning Comments

42. Key Issues
- The impact of the proposal on the character of the area and the adjoining Conservation Area.
 - The affect upon the amenity of adjoining residents properties.
 - Due consideration given to the need to relocate the public right of way across the site.
 - The need to ensure the adjacent badger sett is not disturbed.
43. Members are reminded this is a reserved matters application in pursuance with an outline permission originally granted in 2000 and renewed in 2003. The Legal Agreement attached to that permission specified the area of public open space and the number of affordable houses, forming the basis for this reserved matters application.
44. Extensive pre and post application discussions have taken place to achieve a satisfactory layout, with the public open space as the focal point and an attractive grouping of houses of differing designs and with varying ridge heights around it. Some house types have been amended to make them more compatible with the character of the village. Shared surface access roads have been utilized where possible to reduce the visual impact of the road layout, and provision made for the relocation of the existing public right of way across the site.
45. Attention has been given to the placement of the houses around the periphery of the site to reduce overlooking to a minimum. Blank gables have been utilized where the proposed houses come close to the boundaries. One neighbour (31 Coles Lane) is concerned about overlooking, but there is a high conifer hedge on the boundary, a 25m back to back separation and the proposed houses are set at an angle to the owners property giving more oblique views.

46. An Ecological report was commissioned to inform the layout in the vicinity of the badgers sett on the northern boundary of the site, and the Council's Ecologist is satisfied with the clearance allowed subject to a "badger mitigation scheme" being required to be approved before development commences.
47. The Parish Council has raised a large number of points, some of which are amplified by neighbours. Car parking provision is seen as inadequate, but more than meets the Council's standards of an average of 1.5 spaces per dwelling. Obviously the development will lead to a considerable increase in traffic movements in Coles Lane but these are currently at a very low level and there is no highway safety issue that can be substantiated.
48. Flooding is seen as a problem, the site having been under water in the past. Surface Water disposal is not part of this reserved matters submission, and will be the subject of a subsequent submission. It is likely some form of on-site attenuation will be required. A condition of the outline planning permission required a scheme of surface and foul water drainage to be submitted, approved and implemented.
49. The Parish Council considers the right of way across the site should be kept as a public footpath only, but there is an opportunity to provide a bridleway which will hopefully link up with the future Northstowe bridleway network.
50. Wheelie Bin storage is queried by the Parish Council. Most of the houses will have rear access but a further plan can be conditioned to make sure this issue is not overlooked.
51. I had asked for a landscape scheme to be submitted with the amended scheme but at the time of writing this had not been received. If not received, this will have to be the subject of a separate reserved matters application.

Recommendations

52. Approve details of reserved matters for the siting, design and means of access for the erection of 43 dwellings, together with public open space, at Land off Coles Lane, Oakington.

In accordance with your application dated the 30th November 2003 (as amended by plans franked the 16th February and 16th March 2004) and the plans, drawings and documents which form part of the application and in accordance with outline planning permission dated the 1st June 2000 (ref S/2007/94/O) and full planning permission dated the 28th May 2003 (ref S/0721/03/F) extending that permission.

All of the conditions, including condition 1 contained in the above mentioned full permission, continue to apply so far as the same are capable of taking effect but subject to the additional conditions set out below.

Additional Conditions

1. No development shall commence until details of:
 - The materials to be used for the external walls and roofs of the dwellings and garages.
 - The materials to be used for free standing walls
 - The materials to be used for roads, driveways and the bridleway.
 - The treatment of windows, including means of opening, and doors.

- The provision for wheelie bin storage. have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. (Reason – RC5a)ii)
2. Before development commences, a “badger mitigation scheme” shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be fully implemented. (Reason – To minimise disturbance to the badgers, a protected species.)
 3. The off-site footway works shall be completed prior to the occupation of any of the new dwellings. (Reason – In the interests of highway safety.)

Informatives

1. The Countryside Services Team has the following comments:
 - The knee rail is too low at 400mm and should be raised to 600mm in order to be more visible to motorists reversing in the parking area. The application of reflective strips at points along the fence would also help prevent it being knocked down. The fence is not considered highway furniture and its future maintenance needs to be established.
 - Concern that vehicles may park unofficially at the start of the bridleway link, in the South-Western corner of the hammerhead end of the access road. This would be an unlawful obstruction of the bridleway. Thought needs to be given as to how this can be prevented and further discussions will be necessary.
2. The Council’s Ecologist points out the boundary hedges offer much potential for breeding birds. No disturbance or destruction of the vegetation should take place during the period 15th February to 15th July (inclusive) without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. It is noted the hedges are shown as retained on the approved plans.

Reasons for Approval

1. The approved development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:

(a) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

Policy P1/2 – Environmental Restrictions on Development

Policy P1/3 – Sustainable Design in Built Development

Policy P5/3 – Density

Policy P5/4 – Meeting Locally Identified Housing Needs

Policy P6/4 – Drainage

Policy P7/2 – Biodiversity

Policy P7/6 – Historic Built Environment

Policy P8/9 – Provision of Public Rights of Way

(b) South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: Policy “Oakington 1”

Policy SE4 List of Group Villages

Policy SE9 Village Edges

Policy HG7 – Affordable Housing
Policy HG10 – Housing Mix and Design
Appendix 7/1 – Standards for Car Parking Provision
Policy CS5 – Flood Protection
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Policy EN30 – Development affecting setting of Conservation Area

2. The reserved matters conditionally approved are not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - The character of the area and the adjoining Conservation Area
 - The amenity of adjoining residential properties
 - The relocation of the public right of way
 - The protection of the badger sett

3. All material considerations have been taken into account. None is of such significance as to outweigh the reason for the decision to approve the planning application.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- County Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning Application File S/2491/03/RM

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