

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

10<sup>th</sup> January 2007

**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

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### **S/2105/06/F - LINTON**

**Very Sheltered Housing Scheme including 42 Flats, Communal Area and Car Parking  
Following Demolition of Existing Dwellings (17-33 Odd and 24-34 Even), Flaxfields  
For Hereward Housing Association**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval**

**Date for Determination: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007 (Major)**

#### **Notes:**

**This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because it involves Council owned land and the Parish Council's objection does not accord with the officer's recommendation.**

**Members will visit this site on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. The 0.42 ha site is currently occupied by 8 bungalows and 7 bedsits arranged around a central green. The properties are owned by South Cambridgeshire District Council and are unoccupied. There is a marked slope across the site dropping by between 3.5m and 3m from Back Road to the North to Symonds Lane to the south. Vehicular access is from Flaxfields, which has single storey dwellings adjoining the site. There is a small copse of conifers in the south eastern corner of the site, and a few small decorative trees planted on the open spaces.
2. The houses in Back Road have back gardens sloping down to the site, with a bank on the boundary line, surmounted by conifers and shrubs. Some gardens have access into the site via steps. From the site to the nearest point on the houses ranges from about 22-33m.
3. The houses in Symonds Lane are similarly separated from the site by long gardens sloping up to the site's boundary. These are in the range of 35-40m in length. There are conifers and other hedging along this boundary.
4. The south eastern boundary is abutted by rear gardens of two properties in Back Road and Symonds Lane and is marked by a deciduous hedge. The Symonds Lane property concerned (12) is also a Grade 2 Listed Building.
5. The north western boundary to Flaxfields encompasses one large tree planted in the existing verge and to the south of Flaxfields abuts a public footpath which links through to Symonds Lane. The footpath is screened by a trimmed 1.8m hedge from the adjoining bungalow to be retained. On the northern side of Flaxfields the site adjoins some recently erected bungalows owned by Hereward Housing Association, which replaced earlier bungalows.

6. The full application, received on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006, proposes the erection of a 42 Flat “very sheltered” housing scheme in lieu of the existing dwellings. Accompanying the application is a Design and Access Statement and a Habitat Survey.
7. Seven two bedroom and 35 one bedroom flats are proposed, all with kitchen and en-suite facilities.
8. Communal facilities include a dining room, kitchen, bar/servery, lounge and a double height entrance lobby with reception. There are additional bathrooms, laundry rooms, plant rooms, offices, a buggy store and lift access to all floors. The building is “H” shaped in plan form, with the accommodation in four wings. The northern blocks are two storey, the southern blocks three storey where the split level design utilises the fall in the site. The southern blocks will also be cut into the site to retain a compatible ridge height. The roofs are generally hipped with dormers, rooflights and solar panels. The overall ridge height is between 9-10.5m above the existing ground level. This is approximately 3-3.5m higher than the existing bungalows. Measured from the new level cut into the site, the ridge height of the southern blocks is 10.9-11.4m. Between the main residential blocks are north and south facing landscaped courtyards with balconies.
9. In order to minimise over-looking of neighbouring properties on the eastern and western elevations, projecting angled bays are shown which limit the angle of view.
10. The wall materials are a mixture of brick and render with thermowood cladding on some projecting bays and stairwells.
11. Onsite parking is provided for residents, visitors and staff, although it is unlikely the residents will drive. Two disabled spaces are situated by the main entrance and eighteen general use spaces. A cycle rack is included by the front entrance. A ramp is proposed to link the public footpath along the south-west boundary of the site with the main entrance, allowing access into the village centre.
12. The Environment Agency has been consulted and advised that although the site is in a low flood risk area, the surface water run-off from the site must be managed. A rainwater harvesting scheme is proposed, involving a percentage of the rainwater run-off from the roofs being stored in underground tanks before being pumped back into the building for use in the communal toilets and laundry. Water attenuation will also be installed under the car park for the remaining roof run-off.
13. Investigations have not revealed any existing site contamination.
14. Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations will be strictly adhered to in the design to ensure the building is sustainable. The flats will have passive ventilation through the open plan living/kitchen spaces. High levels of insulation will be employed to provide good thermal mass, and cutting the building into the ground will help in this respect. Glazing along the main corridor (north and south facing balconies) will also help improve thermal mass through solar gain. Within the double height entrance space rooflights have been positioned to maximise natural daylighting. Energy efficient lighting will be specified throughout and solar panels will contribute to the hot water supply (approximately 60% of the total demand). Dual/low flush toilets, spray taps and low water use showers will be utilised to save water and there is also a communal laundry. Water butts are proposed to enable irrigation of the landscaped gardens. All these measures are intended to achieve a “Very Good” Ecohouses rating.

15. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey concluded that the empty houses on site appeared to have suitable features for roosting bats, and a bat survey is recommended prior to demolition. Trees, hedges, scrub or areas of tall vegetation should not be removed during the bird nesting season.
16. The provision of affordable housing within the proposed scheme will be dictated by the availability of grant funding. Should grant funding become available the entire scheme of 42 units would provide affordable housing in a variety of tenures from rent to low cost homeownership models. If grant funding is not forthcoming the scheme will still proceed as mixed tenure which would include an element of outright sale. The proposed mix on this basis would include 16 units for outright sale.
17. The entire scheme at Linton will be for frail older people in housing need and requiring some level of care. An assessment process will be in place to ensure potential residents demonstrate sufficient housing and care need for the development. The scheme is being taken forward and developed in Partnership with the Council. It has also been identified by the County as their priority scheme for allocation of Supporting People funding. The extra care scheme consists of self-contained flats to promote independent living, and staff will be on site 24 hours a day to provide care and support.
18. Public art will be provided in communal areas within the building as well as possible sculptures for the external landscaped courtyards. This will be achieved through integration with local schools and/or community groups. It is intended to hold workshops to achieve this.
19. The overall density of the scheme equates to 100 dwellings per ha.

### **Planning History**

20. The existing dwellings were erected in the 1960's and are empty. There is no further relevant planning history.

### **Planning Policy**

The site is within the village framework and the following policies are relevant:

*Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:*

21. **Policy P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development) states development will be restricted where there could be damage to areas that should be retained for their biodiversity value.
22. **Policy P1/3** (Sustainable Design in Built Development) states a high standard of design and sustainability will be required for all new development.
23. **Policy P5/3** (Density) states densities of at least 40 dwellings per ha should be sought in locations close to a good range of existing services.
24. **Policy P7/2** (Biodiversity) states all developments will seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of areas which they effect.
25. **Policy P7/6** (Historic and Built Environment) states Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment

*The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:*

26. **Policy SE2** designates Linton a Rural Growth Settlement. Residential development will be permitted on unallocated land within the village framework provided.
- (a) The retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village.
  - (b) The development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours.
  - (c) The village has the necessary infrastructure capacity.
  - (d) Residential development would not conflict with other Plan policies.

Developments should provide an appropriate mix of dwellings in terms of size, type, affordability and should achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings per ha.

27. **Policy HG7** (Affordable Housing) states the Council will negotiate the provision of affordable housing of approximately 30% of the total for residential developments of more than 10 dwellings on land within the framework of any village of more than 3,000, such as Linton.
28. **Policy HG9** (Residential Care Homes) states new build within villages will be permitted where:
1. The quality of design is in keeping with surrounding properties and landscape in terms of scale, form, layout and materials;
  2. Boundary treatment provides privacy and a high standard of visual amenity;
  3. The privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties is protected;
  4. There is safe and convenient access for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians;
  5. Parking facilities are in accordance with District Council Standards; and
  6. There is access to an adequate level of services to meet the need of the development.
29. **Policy HG10** (Housing Mix and Design) states residential developments will be required to contain a mix of units providing accommodation in a range of types, sizes (including 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings) and affordability, making the best use of the site and promoting a sense of community which reflects local needs. The design and layout of schemes should be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape. Schemes should achieve high quality design and distinctiveness and promote energy efficiency.
30. **Policy HG22** (Energy Conservation) states the Council will look favourably upon residential schemes which include measures to conserve energy.
31. **Policy CS12** (Nursing and Convalescent Homes) states new buildings will only be permitted in the built-up framework of villages.

32. **Policy EN5** (The Landscaping of New Development) requires trees and hedges to be retained wherever possible in proposals for new development. Landscaping schemes will be required to accompany applications for development where it is appropriate to the character of the development.
33. **Policy EN13** (Protected Species) states permission will not be granted for development which could adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the habitats of animals protected by law, unless the need for the development clearly outweighs the importance of conserving the habitat.
34. **Policy EN28** (Development within the setting of a Listed Building) states the Council will refuse applications which:
  1. Dominate the Listed Building in scale, form, massing or appearance.
  2. Would damage the setting, well-being or attractiveness of a listed building.
35. **Policy EN44** (Renewable Energy) states the Council will support and encourage proposals for the use of renewable energy resources and water efficiency.
36. **(NB** With regard to **Policy SE2**, the Draft Local Development Framework Core Strategy designates Linton a Minor Rural Centre limiting a maximum scheme size to 25 dwellings.)

## Consultation

37. **Linton Parish Council** objects:

“This Council is concerned that insufficient detail is currently available to make an informed decision and therefore request that this application is not considered until the following information is made available to all consultees for a further 21 days

- a) Comments from Listed Building Officers;
- b) Comments from CC Highways locally regarding;
  - i) the most suitable route for building material access
  - ii) the effect on Flaxfields
  - iii) the effect on the junction with Back Road following completion of development
- c) Comments from the Fire Service regarding accessibility for the whole site and we request a copy of their critical incident policy;
- d) Comments from the EA regarding expected light pollution;
- e) Comments from Housing Department supporting need for 42 units.

This Council objects to the application for the following reasons

- a) The size of the development is not in keeping with the location. We request the current specification regarding density per hectare;
- b) The size of the development will not enhance the setting of the Listed Building situated at 12 Symonds Lane;
- c) There is insufficient detail to confirm that this development will not increase the risk of flooding to the south from field water run off as happened in the 2001

flood. We request that the Environment Agency supply proof of flooding in this area during the 2001 flood;

- d) There is no report attached with the application detailing, exactly, that the current demand in Linton is for this number of units.
- e) There are no details with this application relating to proposed building materials so we cannot assess the impact on the street scene;
- f) The car parking is insufficient and would therefore materially effect the neighbouring properties. We are aware that many carers may not live in the locality and as such would be travelling to work by car;
- g) Hereward Housing have confirmed that a development of 30 units would be a possible alternative
- h) Contravenes Policy HG9 regarding Care Homes.

This Council would request that Hereward Housing redesigns this development reducing the units to 30, reducing the overall height and footprint accordingly and positioning the development further away from the boundary to allow sufficient garden area around the development for residents to enjoy and gain exercise within.

### **Conditions**

Should this application be approved we would request the following conditions are attached to the approval:

- a) Approval is dependent on Listed Building Officers giving approval;
- b) Approval is dependent on Highways clearly stating that the expected increase in traffic would have no adverse effect on Flaxfields itself and would not create an unsafe situation at the junction with Back Road;
- c) Any damage to the Highway caused by building vehicles in Flaxfields and elsewhere in Linton is corrected on completion of the development by the developers to the satisfaction of Linton Parish Council;
- d) Linton Parish Council is consulted on materials to be used;
- e) The route for building vehicles to and from the site avoids the conservation area in Linton;
- f) Should the 'Rainwater Harvesting System' prove insufficient to cope with water run off creating an otherwise non-existing problem for residents south of the development the developers will rectify the situation at their expense within an acceptable time frame for all parties involved;
- g) The 'eco friendly' features of this development are not altered following approval;
- h) Residents must be elderly, ie. over 60 and/or disabled;
- i) Priority is given to Linton residents or those with Linton connections;
- j) An acceptable S106 is agreed;
- k) The link footpath from Flaxfields to Symonds Lane is upgraded;
- l) A further environmental wildlife assessment is made prior to demolition;
- m) Landscaping and choice of trees to be chosen with input from Parish Council and village Tree Warden;

n) Lighting conditioned to minimise light pollution.

### **Supporting statements from Linton Parish Council:**

S/2105/06/F Very Sheltered Housing Scheme Including 42 Flats, Communal Areas and Car Parking following Demolition of Existing dwellings at 17-33 Odd and 24-34 Even Flaxfields

The Parish Council was very disappointed that no-one from the Planning Department or Housing Department at South Cambridgeshire District Council responded to the invitation to the Public Parish Meeting to discuss the application with residents. At the meeting which was attended by over 40 residents of the village considerable concern was expressed and it was felt that some information was not available that was required to make an informed decision on the application.

This council would request that Hereward Housing redesigns this development reducing the units to 30 which was the original specification, reducing the overall height and footprint accordingly and positioning the development further away from the boundary to allow sufficient garden area around the development for residents to enjoy and gain exercise within.

These statements support Linton Parish Council's response on the application.

### **Listed Buildings Act 1990 - 12 Symonds Lane**

Section 66 of the Listed Buildings Act 1990 states that 'in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting' - In the particular circumstances the Parish Council considers the setting to include at least the existing gardens of no. 12. The Council has serious concerns regarding the effect of this application on 12 Symonds Lane and its setting. Although the existing conifer planting could be retained in reality this is often time limited by the life of the trees and would not protect the building or its setting.

Linton Parish Council at the very least request that it is conditioned that the existing conifer planting on the SE corner of the site be retained since it will help to protect the setting of the listed building from the impact of such a large new building in such close proximity.

### **Highways**

We are concerned about the level of traffic that will be introduced into a quiet cul-de-sac and the delivery traffic that will be required to support a development such as this. We are also concerned about the inadequate car parking provision and the effect that this will have on nearby residences.

The access from Flaxfields onto Back Road is a present concern, the road narrows on a blind corner prior to the entrance and there is constant parking on one side of the road. The Back Road is currently taking much more traffic at peak times due to the introduction of traffic lights on the A1307 and Back Road leads onto a narrow C road that takes a large amount of 'rat run' traffic.

## **Route for building materials avoiding conservation area**

The section of High Street between Balsham Road and Symonds Lane remains a considerable concern and is totally unsuitable for use by Heavy Commercial Vehicles. In recent weeks it has been reported that the lead-lined electricity supply under the road is breaking up due to the amount of heavy traffic and also some areas where the present road appears to be subsiding and are currently being investigated.

The Parish Council is very concerned at how deliveries will be made to the site and request further information on this prior to planning decision.

## **Fire Service**

The Parish Council are concerned what would happen in a critical incident at the new development. There is no access to vehicular traffic around the side and rear of the development and only sufficient space for one fire engine at the front. We believe that there may be a major issue in the event of an incident at the centre.

## **Flood Risk**

The Parish Council is seriously concerned that the proposed significant reduction in grass/garden area in Flaxfields, as detailed in the current application, will exacerbate unacceptably the flood risk of properties in the immediate vicinity and to the South. At the time of Linton's flood, in October 2001, several Linton properties were effected by 'field water run off' flood damage, some of these being situated in Back Road and Flaxfields. Rivey Hill lies immediately behind Back Road and in October 2001 the water ran at speed off the land in to 42 and 40 Back Road and then straight across the road in to Flaxfields where it entered properties. The water then eventually found its way to Symonds Lane due to the natural land gradient. The current proposal removes a large area of existing grass/garden land that provides natural drainage. It is considered that the proposed rain water harvest system would not be able to provide an equivalent drainage system, as existing, in the event that Linton suffered, in the future, an equivalent rain fall as occurred in October 2001. This would result in an unacceptable increased risk of flooding in the properties close to the proposed development including those in Symonds Lane.

## **Demand**

The village of Linton has considerable provision for the elderly with properties in the sheltered scheme in Chalklands, Crabtree Croft, Tower View, Dovehouse Close and placements within Symonds House. We have requested information on how another 42 units can be justified within the community of Linton.

## **Loss of Privacy**

We understand from Hereward Housing that adjustments have been made to the fenestration to minimise the degree of overlooking from the complex into private gardens. The Parish Council believes that the loss of privacy to the residents in Symonds Lane is unacceptable. One section of the three storey building is just 3 metres from the gardens of Symonds Lane.

## **Proposed Materials**

The Parish Council is surprised to learn that the building materials have not been detailed at this stage. We have been told the walls will consist of brick, wood and



rendered area and if this achieves the effect of breaking up the bulk of the building it would be welcome.

The computer graphics indicated some sort of bright coloured aluminium cladding which is not acceptable to surrounding residents, neither are light-coloured pre-formed roofing sections. The visible roofs should be non-reflecting, preferable tiles in order to conform with other buildings near by and to minimise the impact of this roof when seen from above the area of best landscape to the north of the development and from the A1307. Balcony and canopy construction should be of a design sympathetic to the use of traditional building materials such as those the architects told us they intend to specify.

## **Landscaping**

There seems little point in insisting that planting material should be restricted to native species when the site is entirely surrounded by gardens and has no links with the wider countryside. The environmental audit has revealed little of note and it is in the interests of all concerned that the landscaping should be generous and aim to soften the impact of this large development on all those who will over-look it.

Whilst the landlords many not agree to climbing plants there is a wide variety of self-supporting evergreen trees and shrubs which could be planted around the building providing nesting sites and winter berries for birds (all reaching 10-12ft).

i.e.

Azara microphylla  
Ceanothus sps  
Cotoneaster sps (tall varieties)  
Eleagnus ebbingei  
Garrya elliptica  
X Osmarea burkwoodii  
Viburnum burkwoodii  
Vib rhytidophyllum  
Vib tinus  
Pyracantha sps

Deciduous summer flowering shrubs will attract butterflies:-

Buddleia sps  
Dentzia sps  
Exochorda racemosa  
Philadelphus sps  
Weigela floribunda

Trees would be appropriate on the east side to provide some shade in the car park area and to soften the appearance of the building on the approach and where ever possible on the periphery.

## **HG9 Care Homes**

Policy HG9: The development of residential care homes through conversion or extension of existing facilities within or outside villages; or new build within villages where:

- 1) The quality of design is in keeping with surrounding properties and landscape in terms of scale, form, layout and materials.

The Parish Council believes that the introduction of a 3 storey building in a bungalow area is not in keeping in terms of scale and form. Without further information on materials we can not comment on whether it complies in terms of materials

- 2) Boundary treatment provides privacy and a high standard of visual amenity

The Parish Council believes that the boundary treatment does not provide privacy or a high standard of visual amenity and will also affect the street scene in Symonds Lane.

- 3) The privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties is protected

The Parish Council believes that the privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties has not been protected.

- 4) There is safe and convenient access for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians.

The link footpath between the development and Flaxfields and Symonds Lane is not in a condition suitable for pedestrians of mobility vehicles and considerable work would have to be undertaken.

It is perceived that the facilities and grounds of Symonds House Residential Home, situated in Symonds Lane, are not currently being used to their full potential. The Parish Council believes that Hereward Housing and Symonds House should develop a symbiotic relationship with respect to delivering care to the elderly of Linton. The full potential of the site at Symonds House should be explored at this stage to ensure unnecessary costly duplication is not undertaken which could in the long-term effect viability of both services. The Parish Council feels that it is the role of the District Council to encourage these two organisations to liaise together.

The Parish Council request that this matter is decided by the Planning Committee at South Cambridgeshire District Council and that a site visit is made by that Planning Committee – residents have advised that they are happy to provide access to their properties so that the full effect of the development can be seen.”

38. **The Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** raises no objections.
39. **The Council’s Housing Strategy Team** confirms that the proposal conforms to the previous scheme discussed and supports it.
40. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** has no objections subject to conditions concerning the hours of operation of power operated machinery during construction and driven pile foundations and informatives concerning bonfires and the requirement for a Demolition Notice.
41. **The Trees and Landscape Officer** comments that the mature cherry growing on the grass verge adjacent to the footpath at the entrance to the site is the only significant mature tree on the site, and it should be retained. Details of the construction of proposed surrounding car park and tree protection measures will be required.

42. The comments of the **Local Highway Authority**, the **Environment Agency**, **Anglian Water**, **Social Services**, **Ecology**, **Conservation Manager** and **Waste Management** will be reported verbally.

### **Representations**

43. Letters of objection have been received from 15 local residents.

The comments can be summarised as follows:

1. The proposal is contrary to Government Planning Guidance in respect of its density, design and impact on the surrounding area.
2. The building is too high with a dominant roofscape and out of keeping with the adjoining buildings in Flaxfields which are bungalows. Part of the building will be 3 storey which is out of keeping with a village location. The height will cut winter sunlight to the rear gardens of Back Road properties.
3. The building does not reflect the local vernacular and has the appearance of a large hotel. The style looks dated and will be visually unattractive. An architect neighbour has suggested an alternative flat green roofed design to reduce the visual impact of the building.
4. There is a lack of parking provided. Off-site parking would cause problems for emergency vehicles servicing the development and Symonds House - a nearby residential home. There should be 1 parking space per flat. Parking could be provided under the building.
5. Houses in Back Road and Symonds Lane would be overlooked from 1<sup>st</sup> floor windows and sitting areas and suffer a loss of privacy.
6. The building will be overbearing for houses and gardens in Back Road and Symonds Lane. The houses in Symonds Lane are built 5m lower than the site. Digging the building into the ground will not ameliorate the problem because the Flaxfields site sits at a higher level.
7. There is no local requirement for a 42 unit scheme. No justification has been provided for this number. There are unoccupied units in the village suitable for the independent elderly.
8. Living conditions created for the elderly will be devoid of daylight and have restricted views in some instances.
9. There is a lack of appropriate landscaping because of the buildings footprint. Tree and hedge roots will be damaged by further excavation into the site.
10. The existing grassed open space will be lost.
11. The building will adversely affect the setting and privacy of 12 Symonds Lane (the former Pest House), a Grade 2 Listed Building. Alterations to the scheme to meet the requirements of the owners do not go far enough. The existing leylandii trees to the south and east of 32 Flaxfields should be retained for screening and as a wildlife habitat.
12. Lights in the building may be on continuously for safety reasons and will add to the general disturbance.
13. Existing problems with surface water run-off in the area. Properties in Symonds Lane were flooded in 2001. The permeable surfaces proposed for hard areas could increase the risk of flooding.

14. Insufficient details have been provided for the rainwater harvesting system, particularly where the tanks are to be positioned. There is no guarantee these will not be deleted on cost grounds in the future. There is no space for alternative means of disposal e.g. soakaways, on the site.
15. Can the existing foul water system accommodate the increased discharge?
16. The building will be highly visible from the A1307 when approaching from Cambridge, also from local footpaths to the north west of the village and from other vantage points within the village.
17. The development will put a strain on the local health centre. There is an existing shortage of carers in the area.
18. The site is too remote from the nearest bus stop - 350m.
19. Why are bicycle racks being provided for elderly occupants?
20. The problem of rat infestation in the area will be intensified.
21. The development will generate unacceptable levels of traffic in the area, particularly in the High Street where construction vehicles may damage historic properties.
22. Who will pay for repair to Flaxfields because of the wear and tear of building work?
23. No objection in principle because there is a need for this type of housing - a less dense, lower design should be considered.

## **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

### ***Background***

44. In October 2004 Cabinet agreed to dispose of 15 sheltered housing units and communal facilities at Flaxfields to Hereward Housing Association to enable them to provide a new facility of affordable extra care sheltered units, the subject of this application. This would provide a new resource in line with the requirements of future generations of older people, it would contribute to meeting the targets established in the County Wide Best Value Review of Sheltered Housing, and it would replace older sheltered bedsits which have proved difficult to let. South Cambridgeshire shows the sharpest rise in its over-65 population in the County, especially between 2006 and 2016 and has the highest proportion of its over-65 population in the over-85 age group. In terms of geography Linton was considered to offer a suitable location to meet the needs of its own population of older people and that of surrounding villages in a part of the district that has no current extra care provision. It would also compensate for the “loss” of traditional sheltered housing following the decommissioning of the low demand sheltered bedsits.

### ***Key Issues***

45. The key issues to consider in determination of this application are:
  1. *The density and scale of the proposed development and its likely impact on the character of the area.*
  2. *The effect of the proposed building and its use on the amenities of neighbouring properties.*

## **1. Density and Scale/Character of Area**

46. The proposed accommodation is arranged in an “H” shaped plan form with two internal courtyards, which help break up the footprint of the building. The density is high at about 100 units per ha, but this is specialist accommodation with communal facilities which enables a higher density to be achieved without overdevelopment of the site.
47. In terms of height, the ridge line ranges from between 9-10.5m above the current site level, but by cutting the two southern blocks into the existing slope by 1-2m an additional level of accommodation is proposed in the roof space. At 9-10.5m above current levels the building will have an equivalent height to a large, modern house and will not appear unduly out of scale with neighbouring properties. The roofs will be plain tiled and hipped on the northern and southern elevations which will help reduce the bulk of the building. It is also set off the site boundaries by an average of 3-5m, which, coupled with the existing landscaping in neighbouring gardens, will further aid its assimilation.
48. The character of the site is currently residential, albeit at a low density. The proposal is for a higher density scheme of increased scale, but the site is surrounded by housing on all sides and although there will be a change of view the essential residential character of the area will not change.

## **2. The effect on the amenities of neighbouring properties**

49. Prior to the submission of the application neighbours were invited to an exhibition of the proposals and amendments were made to the design in an attempt to address comments made. Meetings were also held with officers and suggestions to ameliorate overlooking incorporated into the final scheme.
50. The two most sensitive elevations are those facing the back gardens of dwellings in Back Road and Symonds Lane. The houses in Back Road will look down onto the site, which is already cut into the slope by 1-2m, and have relatively long gardens ranging from 22-33m on average, with some trees and hedges along the common boundary with the site which will help filter views of the new building. The exception is 55 Back Road, which is a new house set further back from the road, and has a much longer rear garden (c.65m) which runs along the eastern boundary of the site. A number of first floor bedroom windows will overlook the bottom half of the garden, but principally because of the overall length of the garden and also the degree of separation of the proposed building from the garden boundary, I do not consider the extent of loss of privacy to warrant a refusal of the application. The living rooms associated with the flats in question have been designed with projecting angled bays to restrict the angle of vision for occupants and prevent what would have been an unacceptable loss of privacy for neighbouring residents.
51. The impact of the proposal on Symonds Lane residents is slightly greater because the application site is approximately 3m higher than their houses, but this is partly offset by the length of their rear gardens (35-40m) and existing landscaping along the rear boundaries. The two facing blocks of accommodation are set off the boundary and staggered, with a courtyard between them which will help break up the bulk of the building when viewed from Symonds Lane. The new building is also to the north and will not affect sunlight to the Symonds Lane properties. As with the Back Road properties there will be a marked change of view but there are no windows to habitable rooms in the two blocks closest to the boundary and loss of privacy should not be an issue.

52. 12 Symonds Lane is a Grade 2 Listed Building (known as the Pest House) surrounded by more modern development. The owners are concerned that the proposal will impact on the setting of the listed building, but given the degree of separation between their house and the proposed building (c.49m) this is thought to be unlikely. A further site inspection will be carried out and a verbal report made. The owners are also seeking the retention of a group of Leylandii in the south east corner of the application site but the Trees Officer has no objection to their removal. On a practical level their retention would severely cut light to the proposed accommodation in that area, particularly as the trees continue to grow.
53. The proposed western elevation of the building adjacent to the existing public footpath and the small terraced bungalow beyond has been designed with similar angled projecting windows to protect the privacy of that property. A large cherry tree in the verge at the front of the bungalow will be retained - this is the only significant tree on the site.

#### ***Other Parish Council Objections***

54. The Council has requested a delay in considering the application until further information is available (see Parish Council comments). Some of the information is available, other is not, but I am satisfied sufficient material information is available to enable Members to grant a delegated approval of the application. This will allow further information to be sought if necessary.
55. The comments of the Environment Agency are awaited, but the applicants have discussed their scheme with the Agency and subject to details of the proposed surface water drainage system being finalised, it is understood there is unlikely to be an objection. A standard surface water drainage condition should be imposed on any permission.
56. The Parish is seeking more information on the demand for this specialised type of accommodation in Linton itself and requesting the applicants to consider a smaller, 30 unit scheme. There is no requirement that the scheme should solely be available to Linton residents, it is intended to serve a wider catchment. A verbal report will be made on the feasibility of a 30 unit scheme.
57. Concern is expressed about the inadequacy of the car parking proposed. The Council's maximum standard for residential care homes is 1 space for 3 bedspaces and 1 space per residential staff. Resident parking equates to 14 spaces in this scheme, which would leave 4 spaces for staff. There are also 2 disabled spaces provided. Although the proposed use of the building is not strictly speaking as a residential care home, the accommodation will be "very sheltered" and the assumption is that the majority of residents will not have cars. I consider the 20 spaces proposed, together with cycle parking for staff, is appropriate for this scheme.
58. Precise materials can be made subject to a Condition of any permission.
59. The routing of construction vehicles would not be an appropriate subject for a Condition but concerns can be brought to the applicant's attention.

#### ***Neighbours concern about light pollution***

60. Neighbours have expressed concern about the possibility of 24 hour light pollution from the building because of the nature of its use. I have discussed this matter with

the Architects and it is likely that the escape routes from the building will have to be lit during the hours of darkness.

61. Amended plans have been requested addressing window placement in critical areas such as stairwells.

### **Recommendation**

62. Delegated approval, subject to amended plans concerning the deletion of windows on boundary elevations subject to night time illumination. Conditions to include:

1. The requirement for a S106 legal agreement securing affordable housing within the scheme, the exact number to be subject to funding availability.
2. Details of materials - building and hard surfaces.
3. Landscaping/implementation of landscaping.
4. Tree Protection/details of car park construction.
5. Restriction of the use of power operated machinery during the period of demolition and construction.
6. Bat survey prior to demolition.
7. No trees or hedges to be removed during the bird nesting season (March-August)

+ any conditions required by the Local Highway Authority and the Environment Agency.

### **Informatives**

1. Informatives required by Environmental Health, the Environment Agency and the Local Highways Authority.

### **Reasons for Approval**

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

- **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
  - P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development)
  - P1/3** (Sustainable design in built development)
  - P5/3** (Density)
  - P7/2** (Biodiversity)
  - P7/6** (Historic and Built Environment)
- **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
  - SE2** (Designates Linton a Rural Growth Settlement)
  - HG7** (Affordable Housing)
  - HG9** (Residential Care Homes)
  - HG10** (Housing Mix and Design)
  - HG22** (Energy Conservation)
  - CS12** (Nursing and Convalescent Homes)
  - EN5** (The Landscaping of New Development)
  - EN13** (Protected Species)
  - EN28** (Development within the setting of a Listed Building)
  - EN44** (Renewable Energy)

2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:

- The density and scale of the proposed development.
- The effect of the proposed building and its use on the amenities of neighbouring properties

+ letter re routing of construction vehicles.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Ref: S/2105/06/F
- Local Development Framework Core Strategy (Submission Draft) Jan 2006

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