

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4 April 2012

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)/ Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities)

S/1911/11 – Meldreth

Demolition of existing house and erection of 22 x 2,3 and 4 bedroom social houses and ancillary works, 15-17 Whitecroft Road for Jephson Homes Housing Association

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 4 January 2012

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination as the application is a major development for an exception site for affordable housing, where the Development Control Manager considers that the application should be presented to Committee for decision.

Major Development

Members will visit this site on 3 April 2012

Site and Proposal

1. The full application, as amended by drawings received on 15 March 2012, proposes the demolition of an existing two-storey house and the erection of 22 affordable dwellings, on a 0.7ha area of land at 15-17 Whitecroft Road, Meldreth.
2. The site comprises No 17 Whitecroft Road, a detached 19th Century house and its residential curtilage in the narrower front part of the site, with the land opening out into the wider and larger rear section, previously used as a smallholding.
3. To the north west is a detached house, No.19 Whitecroft Road, set back from the road. A tall leylandii hedge forms the boundary of this property and its associated land for the majority of the length of the application site. Planning consent exists for the erection of a new detached house to the rear of No.19. That consent is extant but has not been implemented.
4. To the south west is No.13 Whitecroft Road, a detached bungalow, the boundary with the application site being formed by a tall leylandii hedge. The remainder of the north east boundary of the site abuts the rear gardens of other properties in Whitecroft Road. To the south east the site are the rear of commercial units off Station Road. There is existing planting on the boundary.
5. Opposite the site in Whitecroft Road is a detached house and the entrance to Oakrits, a development of 28 properties served off Whitecroft Road. There is no public footpath on the south west side of Whitecroft Road in the vicinity of the application site.

6. To the rear of the site is former orchard land in the ownership of the applicant.
7. The proposal involves the demolition of the existing house and the erection of new two-storey dwelling fronting Whitecroft Road, but served off the new entrance roadway which is to form to its north west. The roadway continues along the north west boundary of the site, with two bungalows proposed adjacent the side boundary of No.13 Whitecroft Road, before turning across into the main body of the site to serve a further 19 two-storey units.
8. The development comprises 10 x 2-bedroom, 9 x three-bedroom and 3 x four bedroom properties. Two of the 2-bedroom properties, Plots 2 and 3 in the front part of the site, are bungalows. 18 properties are to be rent and 4 for shared ownership.
9. A 375m² area of public open space is provided against the south west boundary of the development, which will be overlooked by houses on Plots 13-16 and 17-19.
10. Materials proposed are brick and tile. An access way is provided to the land at the rear to the north west of the proposed area of public open space. A new section of footpath is proposed in the grass verge along Whitecroft Road, from point of the new access road serving the development, running south east across the frontage of No.13 Whitecroft Road, with a dropped kerbed and tactile paving crossing being provided to allow access to the footpath on the opposite side of Whitecroft Road.
11. The village framework boundary runs along the north east boundary of the application site with the rear of the gardens of Nos 7, 9 and 13 Whitecroft Road, and continues on the same line across the rear of the narrower section of the application site. No.17 Whitecroft Road and its garden are therefore within the village framework, whilst the remainder, and the majority of the site, is outside.
12. The density of the scheme is 31.4dph
13. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Housing Needs Statement, Archaeological Evaluation, Noise Survey Transport Statement and Speed Survey, Drainage Statement, Remedial Strategy (Contamination) and Bat Survey

Planning History

14. S/0985/04 – Extension – Approved
15. S/2055/02 – Bungalow – Approved
16. S/0942/83 – Mobile home (renewal) - Approved

Planning Policy

17. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document: ST/6 – Group Villages**
18. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies adopted July 2007: DP/1 Sustainable Development, DP/2 Design of New Development, DP/3 Development Criteria, DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments, DP/7 Development Frameworks, HG/1 Housing Density, HG/3 Affordable Housing, HG/5 Exceptions Sites for Affordable Housing, SF/10 – Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments, SF/11 – Open Space**

Standards, **NE/1** Energy Efficiency, **NE/3** Renewable Energy Technologies in New Developments, **NE/4** Landscape Character Areas, **NE/6** Biodiversity, **NE/9** – Water and Drainage Infrastructure, **NE/10** Foul Drainage – Alternative Drainage Systems, **NE/11** Flood Risk, **NE/12** Water Conservation, **NE/15** Noise Pollution, **NE/16** – Emissions, **CH/2** Archaeological Sites, **TR/2** Car and Cycle Parking Standards.

19. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)** - Open Space in New Developments - adopted January 2009, Public Art - adopted January 2009, Trees and Development Sites - adopted January 2009, Biodiversity - adopted July 2009, Landscape in New Developments - adopted March 2010, District Design Guide - adopted March 2010

Consultation

20. **Meldreth Parish Council** makes no recommendation with comments.

“The Parish Council is minded to approve, based on the need for the need for extra social houses as evidenced by the latest housing register which shows over 52 families with Meldreth connections in need of better housing and our own survey which shows over 75% of former social housing is now in private ownership, but has major concerns about certain issues.

The application is incomplete as the Surface Water Plan is missing (Jephson says it will be ready in 3 weeks)

The Parish Council would like to see a Foul Water report dealing with the capacity of the pumping station and the sewer in Whitecroft Road and whether it would be able to cope with the extra 22 houses.

A report by CCC Highways of the safety of the junction of Whitecroft Road with Station Road, as traffic coming from Melbourn direction does not slow to take the bend, making crossing from the proposed development to access the village facilities dangerous.

Will pedestrian safety be addressed and can a footway from the development to Station Road be provided?

What is the housing split between rental and equity share homes? The application states all rented but Jephson has informed the Parish Council that there would be 4 shared equity houses.

Existing landscaping to the site will be retained but some of the trees are dead or dying. The Parish Council would like a condition to provide full landscaping plan with tree survey to ensure that the neighbours' privacy is maintained.

The Parish Council would like to see an amended application with the Surface Water plan and the correct rented/shared equity split.

There is major concern over the traffic issues through this particular part of the village especially with the junction of Whitecroft and Station Road. At present this is seen to be a dangerous junction and the increase in vehicular and pedestrian movement is a real concern, along with the lack of a footway to access the railway bridge and local shops.”

In respect of the drainage statement provided by the applicant the Parish Council welcomes the strategy of absorbing water on site, rather than discharging to drains, ditches or watercourses and states that as far as it knows the site has contained the rain falling on it in the past. It comments that there appears to be an adequate number of soakaways and trenches for the roads and houses on the back of the site although experts will still need to confirm this, however soakaways appear to be missing from the 3 houses at the front of the site, although the road is catered for.

The drainage statement refers to "chalk being an appropriate medium for an infiltration based solution", however, the geotechnical investigation confirmed a Marley chalk, which to the understanding of the Parish Council does not absorb water as quickly as chalk. The Parish Council states that no doubt Building Control would require an infiltration test to confirm the suitability of the soakaways to absorb water quickly enough?

There is mention of using the proposed open space for temporary storage of storm water. The Bloor Homes site further along Whitecroft Road has used this approach and it is hoped that this will be considered to avoid flood risk in extreme weather.

21. The **Housing Development and Enabling Manager** comments that the proposed site in Meldreth sits outside the development envelope and is considered an exception site for the provision of affordable housing only. As such it must be demonstrated that there is a genuine need for affordable housing in the locality. The number of homes provided on a rural exception site should be no greater than the level of local need identified. The local need in Meldreth taken from the Housing Register in October 2011 is 52. Therefore the proposed 22 units do not exceed the total need and therefore this aspect of the scheme is acceptable.

The application proposes 18 rented dwellings and 4 shared ownership dwellings. The tenure mix is in line with local need and is therefore acceptable. A total of 10 two-bedroom, 10 three-bedroom and 3 four-bedroom dwellings are proposed and this mix of dwelling size is in proportion with the local need, however, there is also a significant demand for one-bedroom dwellings in Meldreth, and so any amendments to include some of these units would be supported.

22. The **Local Highway Authority** has considered the proposal and the transport statement submitted by the applicant. Having sought revisions to the transport statement, including the application of modifiers to ensure that the figures in it are traffic neutral as the survey was not carried out in a traffic neutral month it has no objection to a roadway in the position proposed. It comments that the speed survey was carried out during times when there would be free flowing traffic, which is appropriate, and that the number of movements that this development will generate is unlikely to have significant impact on the adopted highway.

The traffic speed survey requires the provision of 2.4m x 43m visibility splays to Whitecroft Road. It supports the provision of the section of new footpath along Whitecroft Road. 2.0m x 2.0m visibility splays should be provided within the curtilage of each dwelling. The proposed access should be constructed such that its falls and levels are such that no private water from the site drains across or onto the adopted public highway.

It states that the level of parking within the site is for the Local Planning Authority to determine and it has no objection to the principle of visitor parking being within the adopted highway, however the bays originally shown would obstruct the accesses to private off-street spaces.

The use of a dropped kerb with tactile paving to allow residents of the new estate to cross Whitecroft Road to access the existing footway is acceptable, but thought should be given to avoid pedestrian conflicts with traffic entering and leaving Oakrits.

It is requested that permitted development rights should be removed from Plot 1 to prevent the possibility of a future access being opened onto Whitecroft Road.

23. The **Environment Agency** originally commented that the application states surface water drainage is to a sustainable drainage system, however there is no information regarding the proposed surface water drainage and how it will comply with PPS25, and therefore the application fails to demonstrate that it is viable as proposed.

In the absence of a surface water strategy the Environment Agency objects to the application as although the site lies with Flood Zone 1, the scale of development may present risks of flooding on-site and/or off-site if surface water run-off is not effectively managed.

Notwithstanding the above objection the Agency has further concerns regarding potential ground contamination for this site, which overlies a principal aquifer. The applicant should be aware that infiltration surface water drainage may not be permitted at this site dependant upon the level of contamination found.

Following the receipt of the Drainage Statement the Environment Agency has removed its objection and states that it is satisfied that the proposed development can be allowed in principle, although the applicant will need to provide further information relating to the proposals to an acceptable standard to ensure that the proposed development can go ahead without posing an unacceptable flood risk and/or risk of pollution to the water environment.

It therefore requests that conditions are included in any consent requiring the submission of a detailed surface water scheme based on sustainable drainage principles; a scheme for ground contamination investigation and remediation. It also requests that a number of informatives are included.

In respect of the Ground Investigation Report the Environment Agency has considered its findings and concludes that it is unlikely that the levels of total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) present in the groundwater would impact the surface water bodies and therefore accept the conclusion of the report that a risk assessment is not warranted.

24. **Anglian Water** comments that the foul drainage from the development is in the catchment area of Melbourn STW that at present has capacity for the proposed flows, and the sewerage system currently has capacity for these flows. The preferred method of surface water disposal would be to a sustainable drainage system (SUDS), with connection to the sewer as the last option. It recommends approval subject to a condition requiring submission of a scheme for a surface water strategy/flood risk assessment.

25. The **Ecology Officer** originally placed a holding objection on the application, expressing concern at the site clearance work that had previously taken place and that the application was not accompanied by ecological information. Concern was expressed about the potential impact on bats, and that local sources had advised that the site was important for butterflies, invertebrate species. The current application

provides an opportunity to seek habitat restoration so the planting of fruit trees within boundary planting should be an approach. There is a sizeable orchard/scrub area to the rear of the site, which if in the control of the applicant presents an excellent opportunity to seek enhancement and protection of this remaining old orchard. With adequate planning and funding it could make a very attractive community orchard with footpath links extending the local path network.

The Ecology Officer has accepted the findings of the bat report, which concludes that the property has a very low risk of disturbance to bats should demolition take place in the near future.

The Ecology Office has been working with the applicant with a view to securing the land to the rear of the site, which is owned by the applicant, as a community orchard, with public access through the application site. The applicant is keen to take this forward and is working to with the Ecology Officer

26. **Cambridgeshire Archaeology** comments that the site should be the subject of an archaeological investigation, which can be secured through a negatively worded condition.
27. The **Trees and Landscapes Officer** has no objection and comments that the site has been cleared of vegetation and the only trees left are conifers on the boundaries. Consideration should be given to their suitability for retention within the proposed development as part of a landscape and boundary treatment scheme.
28. The **Landscapes Officer** wishes to see landscape and boundary conditions applied. A medium sized tree should be planted on the NW side of the entrance. Although the plan states that the existing hedge on the NW side of the entrance roadway is to be retained it contains a number of potentially large conifer trees and it may be more appropriate to carry out more appropriate planting as part of this development.
29. The **Corporate Manager – Health and Environmental Services** has studied the noise survey and assessment conducted by AT Solutions Ltd and is satisfied with its contents, and recommends that all noise mitigation measures to protect dwellings are implemented as outlined in Part 6: Discussion.

It is also suggested that conditions restricting the hours of operation of power operated machinery during the period of demolition and construction, requiring the submission and approval of a scheme for all external lighting (including street lighting), and covering the use of driven pile foundations, are included in any consent.

In addition informatives should be included in any consent regarding the use of bonfires and burning of waste on site during demolition and construction, and advising of the need to obtain a Demolition Notice from the Building Control Section, prior to demolition taking place.

It is also pointed out that a Health Impact Assessment should normally be submitted with this scale of application.

30. The **Environmental Health – Contaminated Land Officer** has confirmed that the Ground Investigation Report has been considered. The site overlies a Principal Aquifer and the Environment Agency should be consulted. The report indicates elevated levels of some contaminants and highlights the need for remediation works. It is recommended that no development take place until the works specified in the remediation strategy have been completed and a validation report submitted to and

approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. If during remediation works, any contamination is identified that has not been considered in the remediation method statement, then remediation proposals for this material should be submitted for approval.

31. The comments of the **Affordable Housing Panel** will be reported.

Representations

32. Letters of objection have been received from the occupiers of **Nos.4, 6, 9 12, 13, 18, 20, 29 Oakrits, Nos. 9, 10, 11, 19 Whitecroft Road, and No.31 Chiswick End.**

- Concern about the actual level of need for housing in Meldreth – the last housing needs survey was carried out in 1999 and is now out of date, and the only means of determining current social needs for Meldreth are the figures obtained from the 2010 Cambridgeshire ACRE survey and the current SCDC housing register figures. The register figure of 50 is misleading, as it does not indicate the immediate actual local housing need. Housing on such sites is only available to people who have expressed a need to stay in the village. The ACRE survey, as presented to the Parish Council indicated a need for an additional 14 dwellings. The Council at that time was not convinced of the need for further affordable housing in Meldreth and at that time reported there was difficulty in finding occupants for the existing affordable development in the village. There have been other recent affordable housing built at Burtons, Elin Way and 6 on the former Holland site in Whitecroft Road and there is no convincing case of housing need to justify this development as an exception site.
- What evidence can be offered to show that the development will not be filled with residents from the outside of the village who also do not come to work in the village?
- It is noted that there are 6 proposed housing sites being considered for Meldreth as part of the SCDC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the location of these would appear more suitable for housing and could contain a percentage of social housing.
- The development would access Whitecroft Road virtually opposite the exit of Oakrits. Whitecroft Road is a busy thoroughfare, especially at peak periods when it is used as a 'rat run' for vehicles travelling from the A1198 to the A10 to avoid Royston. Exiting Oakrits is already dangerous, and this is increased by cars parked on Whitecroft Road, restricted view to the north and the speed of traffic. Any new development will exacerbate this dangerous situation.
- There are no traffic calming measures when leaving Station Road from the Melbourn side and entering into Whitecroft Road. The shape of the road means that vehicles are able to negotiate the bend without any reduction in speed. Many drivers will enter this road having been driving on roads where higher speed limits apply and it is a well documented fact that drivers often fail to address quickly enough when moving into a 30mph area. Parked cars in Whitecroft Road can have a calming effect on traffic but if a visibility splay is introduced then vehicles travelling north west on Whitecroft Road will have a clearer path encouraging higher speeds. Vehicles which currently park this side will probably then use the east side, and parking will be more closely populated. As such, vehicles travelling south along Whitecroft Road will be pushed onto the opposite side of the road for longer, which will create a very clear danger compared to the current norm i.e. vehicles travelling faster in one direction towards oncoming vehicles forced onto the wrong side of the road by parked cars. There is already enough danger when leaving the T-junction at Oakrits with poor visibility in a

north westerly direction and with drivers speeding when driving in a NW direction. However, if another junction is placed on the NW side of Whitecroft Road, opposite Oakrits, this will offer many more hazards with increased traffic loads and therefore increase potential of a serious accident at the staggered junction of Oakrits and the new estate.

- Has consideration been given to traffic calming measures when entering into Whitecroft Road from Station Road? Lit-up speeding signs are not enough on this very busy, fast road – have chicanes been considered here?
- There is no reference to improvement of existing road junctions in the application.
- Exiting the new development by car would also be dangerous as it is on the inside of bend, with limited visibility.
- Reduced visibility to the south east provided which will further reduce safety.
- The junction of Whitecroft Road, Station Road and High Street is often dangerous, particular for pedestrians, and is made worse as footpaths are narrow, and there is no footpath on the south side of Whitecroft Road.
- Exiting the development on foot would be extremely hazardous, as a pedestrian would have to cross Whitecroft Road to access the footpath, and would be particularly dangerous for children. There would be a temptation to walk towards Station Road on the verge. Has a proper crossing point for the residents of Nos 7, 9, 11 and 13 Whitecroft Road been considered?
- Will any footpaths or crossing points at all be built in the approaches and exits to this proposed development?
- Double yellow lines are proposed in High Street, outside the station, which will result in more cars parking in Whitecroft Road. Parking is already a problem since parking charges were introduced at the station.
- A speed survey was carried out, but not at peak or varying times of the day. There is a speed sign opposite which regularly flashes indicating that a number of vehicles travel in excess of 30mph. With other recent new developments that have been permitted in the Whitecroft Road area there could be a total of 45 additional dwellings, which could amount to 90 new cars frequenting the stretch of road. The impact of the development already permitted should be assessed before any more is granted.
- Concern that space does not exist at the village school to cater for the new development, where class sizes are already high. Traffic will increase if children have to travel out of the village for school. No provision in the application for a contribution to education facilities. Can it be guaranteed that Government funding will be available for the additional spaces that will be required?
- The surface water drainage system in Meldreth is fragile and struggles to cope in times of high rainfall. Chiswick End often floods with the public highway at the corner of Whitecroft Road and Station Road is often under water after only light rain. There is concern that the developer may not be able to find a satisfactory solution to the drainage issue.

- Development is too cramped and out of keeping with the prevailing low-density character of the western side of Whitecroft Road, and despite boundary planting it will appear as an estate when viewed from surrounding properties and land will be overbearing. The occasional new development to the rear of existing properties has been sited and designed so as to have minimal impact on views from the public realm and upon the amenity of adjacent properties. They are accessed by way of small private drives, unlike the scar of a large adopted estate road as is now proposed.
- The proposed housing designs are bland.
- Facilities for youngsters in the village are limited and will require investment – where will this come from.
- Concern about overlooking of the rear garden of 9 Whitecroft Road from the 2-bedroom units, which are only 8m from the boundary. The houses on Plots 17-20, 22 and 4-11 have small gardens and are sited too close to site boundaries and will be overbearing when viewed from neighbouring land and properties. Plot 22 is a 3-bedroom detached house and views from the front first floor bedroom window would overlook the dwelling approved to the rear of 19 Whitecroft Road. This dwelling is not shown on the application drawings and therefore the potential impact on its future occupiers, as a result of the proximity of the new development, cannot be fully appreciated
- There is only a small area of open space for the number of dwellings proposed.
- Job opportunities in Meldreth are limited and housing should be built where there are more opportunities for jobs and the support infrastructure is in place. There is no need to overdevelop villages like Meldreth, destroying their character.
- It breached the village envelope and appears to allow for the potential development of further land to the rear. Why is development to be allowed outside the village framework? There are two separate parts to the proposal – land within and land outside of the framework.
- Why are there 29 parking spaces for 22 dwellings?
- Previous social housing has been on the fringes of villages and not as ‘infill’
- What is the contaminated land referred to and will its removal be carried out in a manner which does not affect surrounding properties and their occupants?
- It is assumed that the disused orchard at the rear will be unaffected by the development as it may be a refuse for small animals, birds and insects, and should be protected at all costs.
- It appears that the existing house has been deliberately allowed to fall into disrepair to promote its eventual demolition. Recent precedents have been set at neighbouring properties. No 19 and 21 Whitecroft Road have been granted permission for one additional house in their rear gardens, with a pending application at No.7 – these will each access via existing driveways and are unseen from Whitecroft Road. Garden grabbing should be strictly controlled in line with PPS3 and the proposed development is a gross over-development of this site, which would be incongruous and ruin the character of this part of the village.

- There are other more suitable sites for perhaps 6/8 dwellings, 22 here is too many.
- Would set a precedent for further backland development and will a covenant be put in place to prevent this happening? The design of the layout allows for the potential to add further development top the rear and therefore this could easily turn into a massive housing estate, and give the area a disproportionately high density of affordable/rental housing.
- Additional demand on services e.g. primary school, police and refuse collection – will there be funds available to improve these?
- What retrospective actions are open to the Council when issues arise of the development is approved. This is a major concern. Local residents will have their lives impacted upon as road safety is reduced to dangerous levels and local resources are stretched.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

33. The key issues for Members to consider in this case is whether the proposal accords with Policy HG/5, residential amenity, highway safety, drainage, ecology.

Policy HG/5

34. Policy HG/5 accepts that, as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Development Plan, schemes of 100% affordable housing which are designed to meet identified local housing needs on small sites within or adjoining villages can be granted so long as five criteria are met.
35. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager has confirmed that the local need in Meldreth taken from the Housing Register in October 2011 was 52, and therefore the proposed 22 units do not exceed the total need for the village. Officers have asked for this figure to be updated however it is not expected that it will differ significantly and accept that the level of development proposed is in accord with the identified local need.
36. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager has confirmed that the mix of housing proposed and housing tenure (18 of the 22 units are to be for rent) is in line with the identified local need and officers are therefore of the view that the first two criteria of Policy HG/5 are satisfied.
37. The third of the criteria requires the site to be well located to the built-up area of the village, and the scale of the scheme to be appropriate to the size and character of the village. Meldreth is classified as a group village and although there is no definition of what a 'small site' should comprise, schemes for 100% affordable housing in such villages are normally restricted to no more than 20 units, however proposals of this scale have been permitted elsewhere in group villages. The scheme involves the demolition of an existing dwelling and therefore the net gain of housing units is 21. The front part of the site, containing Plots 1-3 is within the village framework, with 19 houses being constructed on land which is outside the framework. The development of Oakrits on the opposite side of Whitcroft Road comprises 28 dwellings. The density of development at 31.4 dph, will be considerably higher than that of the existing development on this side of Whitcroft Road, however officers are of the view that the site is developed in a manner which does not represent an overdevelopment of the land available and makes best use of the site.

38. The site abuts the village framework on its south east boundary and is well related to the built-up area of the village. Officers are therefore of the view that the location of the site and scale of the scheme is appropriate in respect of Policy HG/5.
39. Local representations have pointed out that a number of sites have been put forward for development under the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and that these might be more appropriate for development. These sites are being considered for their suitability for allocations for housing development in the review of the LDF and are not currently being presented as alternative sites for affordable housing. The current application should therefore be considered on its merits.
40. The fourth of the criteria requires the site to be well related to facilities and services within the village. The site is within 800m walking distance of the railway station, primary school, village shop, village hall and recreation ground and officers are therefore of the view that the location of the site satisfies the requirements of Policy HG/5.
41. The final of the criteria in HG/5 requires that the development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape. The proposal will result in the loss of some existing planting along the Whitecroft Road frontage and will see the creation of a new entrance and roadway, which will have an impact on the existing street scene. Whilst development in depth on this side of Whitecroft Road tends to be restricted to single dwellings, as evidenced by extant consent on land to the rear of 19 Whitecroft Road, there is development in depth to the south west of the site in the form of the commercial buildings. Officers are of the view that with appropriate layout and landscaping the new development will not damage the wider character of the village or the rural landscape. Some residents have expressed concern that the proposed development will be bland, however officers are of the view that house types are relatively simple and appropriate, given the existing mix of architectural styles in the area. The impact in respect of the latter will be further reduced if the retention of the orchard land to the rear can be secured as suggested by the Ecology Officer.
42. Officers are therefore of the view that the principle of development of this site, by 22 affordable housing units, satisfies the various criteria in Policy HG/5.

Highway Safety

43. The majority of the representations received express strong concerns regarding the highway implications of the proposal, including the speed of traffic along Whitecroft Road, its volume and nature, the ability to provide adequate visibility splays, current lack of a footway along the south west side of Whitecroft Road, and the relationship of the proposed access road to junction of Oakrits on the opposite side of the road.
44. In addition to the information originally submitted with the application the Highway Authority requested that the applicant submit a Traffic Statement to that the implications of the proposal could be fully assessed.
45. Having considered this information, and local representations the Highway Authority is of the view that the proposed access is acceptable and complies with the requirements of Manual for Streets 2. It has considered the 85%ile vehicle speed figures, which support the provision of 2.4m x 43m visibility splays. These splays can be provided by the development in each direction. It comments that the speed survey was carried out at appropriate times to ensure that traffic was free-flowing, rather than at peak times when traffic speed might be slower. It comments that visibility splay

requirements cannot be increased because the speed survey indicates that some drivers are exceeding the 30mph speed limit.

46. The revised scheme includes the provision of a new section of footway within the grass verge to the south east of the proposed entrance for a distance of some 25 metres and incorporating a dropped kerbs and tactile paving on either side of Whitecroft Road to allow for pedestrians to cross from the new development to the existing footpath on the south east side of Whitecroft Road. The Highway Authority considers that this provision, which can be required by condition, will satisfactorily address concerns regarding pedestrian safety.
47. The Highway Authority has not suggested that traffic calming measures in Whitecroft Road are required as a result of the additional traffic that is likely to be generated by this development, and considers that the spacing of the junction of the new development, with that of Oakrits opposite, to be compliant with the advice in Manual for Streets 2.

Residential Amenity

48. There are a number of residential properties which have gardens abutting the application site where the impact of the proposed development on the amenity of the occupiers of this properties need to be considered.
49. The proposed site layout, as amended, allows for a minimum distance of 15m from the rear elevations of the proposed new dwellings on the north east side of the development from the boundaries of properties in Whitecroft Road. This distance accords with the minimum distance suggested as being acceptable within the District Design Guide SPD. The proposed dwelling on Plot 4 is positioned so that it is gable end to the gardens of properties in Whitecroft Road, and a condition can be included in any consent preventing future openings in this elevation. There is existing planting on the boundary of the site with these properties, which should either be retained or replaced as part of an approved landscaping scheme.
50. The proposed dwellings on Plots 2 and 3 are single storey dwellings and I am therefore of the view that the relationship to properties either side is acceptable. The occupier of 13 Whitecroft Road, to the south east, has requested that the applicant removes the existing tall conifer screen on the boundary with the application site, and this has been incorporated in the revised scheme, along with other boundary changes which have come about as a result of discussions with neighbours.
51. The owner of 19 Whitecroft Road has expressed concern about the impact of dwellings on proposed plots 17-22 on the existing property and the new dwelling permitted, but not yet constructed, to the rear. Officers are of the view that with suitable boundary treatment the amenity of the occupiers of 19 Whitecroft Road can be adequately protected, and that although the proposed houses on Plots 17-20 are within 12m of the boundary, they are at a point in the site where unreasonable overlooking of the rear garden of the approved dwelling at the rear of 19 Whitecroft Road is likely to occur. Any windows in the front elevation of the proposed dwelling on Plot 22 will be sufficient distance to prevent unreasonable overlooking in the direction of the approved dwelling. A condition can be included to prevent future openings in the north west elevation of Plot 22.

Drainage Matters

52. Considerable concern has been expressed locally about the existing drainage problems in the area and that the proposed development will add to these. The site is within Flood Zone I, as identified by the Environment Agency, and therefore a flood risk assessment is not required, however the applicant has submitted a drainage statement. Having considered this statement the Agency has withdrawn an original holding objection and accepts the proposal in principal subject to detailed schemes being submitted. The applicant is aware that surface water from the development will have to be dealt within site so that existing run-off rates from the site are not increased.
52. Anglian Water has not raised any objection however I have asked it to comment on concerns raised locally that the size of existing sewer piping might not be adequate to cope with the additional loads as a result of the development. I will report its comments.

Ecology

53. The Ecology Officer is in discussion with the applicant with a view to securing the use of the orchard land to the south west of the site, which is owned by the applicant for use as a community orchard. Such a project will enable the conservation of significant traditional orchard delivering significant benefit for residents in the new development and village as a whole and well as helping achieve Biodiversity Action Plan targets. Public access to the orchard will need to be secure through agreement and discussions will need to take place involving the Parish Council regarding the details of any arrangements.

Other matters

54. An area of land is provided within the development for use as public open space, of the size required by the development. Officers are of the view that it is appropriately located within the site, with surveillance by overlooking from new houses, and at a point on the south west boundary where it would form a visual link through to the possible community orchard beyond.
55. A contribution from the scheme towards the provision of community infrastructure facilities is required however I am of the view that in this case such contribution may best be directed to the setting up of the community orchard and this matter will need to be the subject of further discussion with the applicant and Parish Council and local member.
56. Officers note the local concerns about capacity at the local primary school and figures produced by Cambridgeshire County Council as Education Authority confirm that there may be a need to provide additional places as a result of further new development, however it confirms its position that it does not seek contributions towards the provision of education facilities from schemes providing 100% affordable housing on exception sites.
57. The scheme will achieve Level 3 for sustainable homes
58. Following discussions between the applicant and the Council's Public Health Specialist it has been confirmed that a Health Impact Assessment is not required in this case.

59. The details submitted in the Contamination report have been accepted by the Environment Agency and Environmental Health sections and can be dealt with by condition.
60. The requirement for an archaeological investigation can be secure by condition

Recommendation

61. That the application be approved subject to safeguarding conditions and the securing of the community orchard.
62. Detailed suggested conditions will be included as part of the update report, but will include conditions covering the following:

Time limit
Approved plans
Environment Agency conditions
Highway conditions
Landscaping
Control of construction works
Lighting
Ecology and Biodiversity
Affordable Housing
Archaeology
Open space
Restriction of additional openings
Contamination

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (adopted July 2007)
- Planning File Ref: S/1911/11

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