

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2 August 2017

AUTHOR/S: Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development

Application Number: S/3064/16/OL

Parish(es): Hardwick

Proposal: Outline planning permission for the erection of up to 155 dwellings following the demolition of 2 existing dwellings, areas of landscaping and public open space and associated infrastructure works, with all matters reserved except for access

Site address: Land south of 279 St. Neots Road, Hardwick

Applicant(s): Circle Housing Group

Recommendation: Delegated approval (to complete section 106 agreement)

Key material considerations: Five year supply of housing land, Principle of development, Density of development and affordable housing, Character of the village edge and surrounding landscape, Highway safety, Residential amenity of neighbouring properties, Surface water and foul water drainage, Trees, Ecology, Provision of formal and informal open space, Section 106 Contributions

All of these matters were considered in the report presented to Planning Committee in March 2017, when Members resolved to grant planning permission. This report focusses on the implications of the Supreme Court judgement relating to the extent of Local Plan policies which are considered to affect the supply of housing.

Committee Site Visit: Undertaken on 09 May 2017

Departure Application: Yes (advertised 13 December 2016)

Presenting Officer: David Thompson, Principal Planning Officer

Application brought to Committee because: To consider the implications of the *Hopkins Homes* Supreme Court judgement relating to the extent of Local Plan policies which are considered to affect the supply of housing.

Date by which decision due: 31 August 2017 (Extension of time agreed)

Introduction

1. This application was considered at the 10 May 2017 meeting of the Planning Committee. The Committee resolved to approve the application subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement and conditions (as detailed in the previous committee report and the attached appendix.) The application remains undetermined pending the completion of the section 106 agreement. A copy of that report is appended to this report.
2. On 10 May 2017, the Supreme Court gave judgment in *Suffolk Coastal DC v Hopkins Homes Limited* and in the conjoined matter of *Richborough Estates Partnership LLP v Cheshire East BC* [2017] UKSC 37.
3. The Supreme Court Judgement narrows the range of development plan policies which can be considered as 'relevant policies for the supply of housing'. Those policies are now not to be considered out of date, even when a five-year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated.
4. In respect of South Cambridgeshire this means that the Local Development Framework Policies that were listed as being out of date at the time when this application was considered are no longer held to be out of date.
5. On 30 June 2017, the Court of Appeal issues a further judgement in *Barwood Strategic Land v East Staffordshire Borough Council*. The Court held that the "presumption of sustainable development" within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) falls to be determined in accordance with paragraph 14 and there was not any wider concept of a presumption of sustainable development beyond that set out in and through the operation of, paragraph 14. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF has been applied in this supplementary report with the approach of the Supreme Court in *Suffolk Coastal* and it is not considered that the *Barwood Land* decision requires any further changes to the advice set out above.
6. The overriding issue however is not whether the policies are out of date but whether, in light of the continuing lack of a five year housing land supply, it can be shown that the "adverse impacts ... would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole". That is the test required by paragraph 14 of the NPPF, regardless of whether policies are 'out of date' or not. This test should be given considerable weight in the decision making process even though the definition of policies affecting the supply of housing has been narrowed by the Supreme Court judgement. Given the need to boost the supply of housing, the contribution of the proposal to the supply of housing (including affordable housing) is considered to outweigh the conflict with the policies of the LDF.
7. This report considers the officer advice given to Members at the 10 May 2017 meeting in relation to the policies relating to the supply of housing and the extent to which this has changed as a result of the Supreme Court decision.

Planning Assessment

8. The Council accepts that it cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing land supply in the district as required by the NPPF, having a 4.1 year supply using the methodology identified by the Inspector in the Waterbeach appeals

in 2014. This shortfall is based on an objectively assessed housing need of 19,500 homes for the period 2011 to 2031 (as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2013 and updated by the latest update undertaken for the Council in November 2015 as part of the evidence responding to the Local Plan Inspectors' preliminary conclusions) and latest assessment of housing delivery (in the housing trajectory March 2017). In these circumstances any adopted or emerging policy which can be considered to restrict the supply of housing land is considered 'out of date' in respect of paragraph 49 of the NPPF.

9. The effect of the Supreme Court's judgement is that policies DP/1(a), DP/7 and ST/6 are no longer to be considered as "relevant policies for the supply of housing". They are therefore not "out of date" by reason of paragraph 49 of the NPPF. None of these adopted policies are "housing supply policies" nor are they policies by which "acceptable housing sites are to be identified". Rather, together, these policies seek to direct development to sustainable locations. The various dimensions of sustainable development are set out in the NPPF at para 7. It is considered that policies DP/1(a), DP/7 and ST/6 and their objectives, both individually and collectively, to secure a sustainable level of development, accord with and further the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and therefore accord with the Framework.
10. Any conflict with adopted policies DP/1(a), DP/7 and ST/6 is still capable of giving rise to an adverse effect which significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefit in terms of housing delivery of the proposed development in terms of a residential-led development cannot simply be put to one side. Nonetheless, the NPPF places very considerable weight on the need to boost the supply of housing, including affordable housing, particularly in the absence of a five year housing land supply. As such, although any conflict with adopted policies DP/1(a), DP/7 and ST/6 is still capable, in principle, of giving rise to an adverse effect which significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefit of the proposed development, any such conflict needs to be weighed against the importance of increasing the delivery of housing, particularly in the absence currently of a five year housing land supply.
11. A balancing exercise therefore needs to be carried out. It is only when the conflict with other development plan policies – including where engaged policies DP/1(a), DP/7 and ST/6 which seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations – is so great in the context of a particular application such as to significantly and demonstrably outweigh" the benefit in terms of the delivery of new homes that planning permission should be refused.
12. Although this proposal is located outside the development framework of a group village, accessibility to public transport from the site is considered to be a significant benefit of the location. In addition, the scheme would further improve the community facilities within the village, enhancing social sustainability of the scheme and the overall sustainability of Hardwick. Access to services and facilities within the village is also considered to be adequate. The weight that can therefore be attached to the conflict with policies DP/1(a) and DP/7 which are intended to ensure that development is directed to the most sustainable locations in the district is limited.

13. It is considered that the scheme includes positive elements which demonstrate that as a whole the scheme achieves the definition of sustainable development. These include:
- the contribution of up to 155 dwellings towards the housing land supply in the district based on the objectively assessed need for 19,500 dwellings and the method of calculation and buffer identified by the Waterbeach Inspector
 - the provision of 62 affordable dwellings on site, making a significant contribution to the identified need in Hardwick (currently 44 people within the village currently on the Housing Register) and the wider District
 - significant public open space, including a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) on the site and a commuted sum towards the provision of additional equipped play space elsewhere in Hardwick, a village which currently has a significant under provision in this regard.
 - the provision of a self contained, purpose built community centre building (adding to the funding already secured as part of the Grace Crescent scheme) which would address the fact that the existing provision is considered to be below the required standard.
 - the provision of a contribution towards the maintenance of the community vehicle secured as part of the Grace Crescent scheme, to be operated by the Parish Council, providing an alternative to single occupancy car journey, alongside the regular bus service operating within close proximity of the site.
 - the provision of upgrades to bus stops on St. Neots Road, the provision of 10 cycle stands at the east bounds stop on that road and improvements to the footpath network along St. Neots Road. These improvements would all enhance the environmental sustainability of the scheme.
 - the potential to result in an increase in the use of local services and facilities

Conclusion

14. Officers consider that notwithstanding the conflict with policies DP/1(a), DP/7 and ST/6, this conflict can only be given “limited” weight. The previously identified impact on landscape character and loss of agricultural land still results in limited harm.
15. The provision of up to 155 dwellings, including up to 62 affordable dwellings can be given significant weight. The contributions towards the provision infrastructure in relation to public open space, community facilities and local transport all carry weight in favour of the proposals. Employment during construction to benefit the local economy and the potential for an increase in the use of local services can also be given some limited weight.
16. None of the disbenefits arising from the proposals are considered to result in significant and demonstrable harm when balanced against the positive elements and therefore, it is considered that the proposal achieves the definition of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

Recommendation

17. Officers recommend that the Committee again resolves to grant planning permission subject to the conditions and section 106 agreement as before.

18. The following items are appended to this report:

- a. Appendix 1 – report presented to committee in May 2017
- b. Appendix 2 – Section 106 matrix appended to March committee report

Background Papers:

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission 2014
- Planning File Reference: S/3064/16/OL

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