

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee 7<sup>th</sup> December 2005  
**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/1581/05/F – Great Shelford**  
**Residential Development Through New Build Development and Residential Conversion of Livanos House (98 No. Units in Total to Include 29 Affordable Units), New Means of Access, New Internal Access Roads and Footways, Public Open Space, Hard and Soft Landscaping and Other Ancillary Elements at Livanos House/Abberley House, Granhams Road, for Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership and MPM Properties Ltd**

**Recommendation: Approval**  
**Date for determination: 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004 (Major Application)**

Members will visit this site on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

### **Site and Proposal**

1. This triangular shaped site, which extends to approximately 1.7 hectares/4.3 acres, is currently occupied by Abberley House, a 2-storey gault brick and large flat tile office building, Livanos House, a modern 2-storey buff brick and slate roof office building with accommodation in the roof, and a very shallow monopitch roof, buff brick single storey building previously used by Trading Standards. There are also a number of temporary buildings on the site. The southern part of the site is well-treed, particularly along the perimeters. The trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. Save for the existing access, there is a row of large trees along the site's Granhams Road frontage which, together with the trees on the opposite side of the road, create an avenue along this section of the road. The northern part of the site is rough grassland and more open than the southern part with little existing planting. The site is bounded by the Kings Cross and Liverpool Street railway lines to the northwest and northeast respectively, Granhams Road to the southeast, 5A Granhams Road to the south and properties in Granhams Close beyond an awarded watercourse to the west.
2. This full application, received on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2004 and amended by plans date stamped 12<sup>th</sup> August 2005 and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2005, proposes the conversion of Livanos House to 9 flats and the erection of a further 89 units (98 units in total including 29 affordable units). The proposed units are comprised of 9no. 3-bedroom dwellings, 24no. 2-bedroom houses, 26no. 2-bedroom flats, 30no. 1-bedroom flats and 9no. 1-bedroom studio flats. Five of the 3-bedroom dwellings are bungalows with accommodation in the roofspace measuring 5.7m to ridge. 27no. 2-storey detached, semi-detached and terrace houses measuring 7.7m high are proposed. The remaining 65 units are flats and are provided in 2no. 2-storey, 5no. 2½-storey and 3no. 3½-storey blocks ranging from 8.1m to 13.1m high. The density equates to approximately 58 dwellings to the hectare. Abberley House and the Trading Standards building would be demolished and the temporary buildings on the site would be removed.
3. A number of trees would be lost as a result of the proposal including 7 trees that form part of the belt of trees along the Granhams Road frontage for the access and

visibility splays. In order to adequately protect the occupiers of the units from railway noise, a 3 metre high fence is proposed along the northwest and northeast boundaries. A 5 metre wide approximately landscape strip is proposed on the outside of this fence line to be planted with trees in accordance with Network Rail's list of recommended species close to railways. A small number of new trees are also proposed within the development. Areas of open space, including a grassland area and an equipped area for play, are proposed within the site. These areas, together with the landscape strip on the outside of the boundary fence, are to be maintained by Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership.

4. The original application was accompanied by a Drainage Strategy, Geoenvironmental Assessment Report, an Ecological Walkover and Bat Survey Report, an archaeological report, a noise assessment, a Flood Risk Assessment, a Tree Survey, a Planning Statement and a Transportation Assessment. The amended plans were accompanied by a Revised Transportation Assessment, a Flood Risk Assessment Addendum, an Ecological Report, a Tree Survey Report and a Design Report.
5. The original scheme proposed to retain Abberley House for employment purposes and erect 93 units, up to 4-storeys high, on the remainder of the site. No formal open space or play space was proposed at that time. The scheme date stamped 12<sup>th</sup> August 2005 proposed the demolition of Abberley House and the erection of 106 units, up to 4-storeys high, on the whole site. A retained grassland area, children's play area and a proposed landscaped belt along the eastern edge of the development were introduced. The scheme date stamped 4<sup>th</sup> October 2005 still involves the demolition of Abberley House and the retained area of grassland, children's play area and landscaped belt along the eastern edge of the development but involves a reduction in the number of dwellings proposed from 106 to 98 by deleting the previously proposed 4-storey block at the southern end of the site (the highest buildings now being 3½-storeys) and reducing the block adjacent to the entrance from 3 to 2-storeys. This latest scheme also provides for more space between the central block and adjacent trees. All the schemes proposed 30% affordable housing.

### **Planning History**

6. There have been a significant number of applications for commercial development, including portable buildings, on the site. The following applications are worthy of particular note:
  - a) Planning permission for a new vehicular access onto Granhams Road in a similar position to the new access now proposed, albeit not requiring the removal of as many trees due to the more limited visibility required, was granted in 2001 (**S/0951/01/F**).
  - b) Planning permission for offices (Phase III) at Abberley House was refused in 1993 under reference **S/0604/93/O**. One of the reasons for refusal was that the removal of at least four mature sycamore trees on the Granhams Road frontage in order to provide a safe means of access would cause unacceptable visual harm to the locality and would adversely affect the rural and attractive character of the road.
  - c) Outline planning permission for an office building was refused in 1992 under reference **S/1490/91/O**. One of the reasons related to the safety and free flow of traffic on Granhams Road and on the Cambridge to Liverpool Street railway line, the removal of mature trees necessary for a safe means of access and, due to the position of the proposed access directly opposite properties in

Granhams Road, noise and disturbance to residents of the cottages close to and on the opposite side of Granhams Road resulting from the manoeuvring of the additional traffic generated by the proposal.

7. Outline permission was granted to use Abberley House for residential purposes and erect up to 8 dwellings in the grounds in 1980 under reference **S/0212/80/O**. An alternative scheme for the erection of 2 dwellings was approved in 1982 under reference **S/0052/82/O**.

## **Planning Policy**

### **Settlement policies, design, density and mix**

8. The site is within the village framework.
9. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/3** relates to sustainable design in built development and requires a high standard of design for all new development which responds to the local character of the built environment and creates a sense of place which, amongst other things, is integrated with adjoining landscapes; creates distinctive skylines, focal points and landmarks; includes variety within a unified design; includes streets, squares and other public spaces with a defined sense of enclosure; includes attractive green spaces and corridors for recreation and biodiversity; conserves important environmental assets of the site; and pays attention to the detail of forms, massing, textures, colours and landscaping.
10. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P5/3** states that Local Planning Authorities should seek to maximise the use of land by applying the highest density possible which is compatible with maintaining local character. It also states that, in setting density standards appropriate to their area, Local Planning Authorities should take into account the following guidelines: densities of at least 40 dwellings per hectare should be sought in locations close to a good range of existing and potential services and facilities and where there is, or there is the potential for, good public transport accessibility; and densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare will not be acceptable.
11. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE2** states that residential development will be permitted on unallocated land within Great Shelford provided that (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; and (d) residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly policy EM8 which relates to the loss of employment sites. It also states that development should provide an appropriate mix of dwellings in terms of size, type and affordability and should achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings to the hectare unless there are strong design grounds for not doing so.
12. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that there will be a general presumption in favour of residential development within village frameworks where this is also in accordance with, amongst others, policy SE2.
13. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE9** states that development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact of development on the countryside.

14. Local Plan 2004 **Policy HG7** states that the Council will negotiate with applicants to secure the provision of accommodation to meet some of the continuing need for affordable housing in the District before it determines any application for planning permission for residential development of more than 10 dwellings on land within the framework of any village of more than 3,000 population, which includes Great Shelford. Such affordable housing shall be limited to units of types and sizes required to provide accommodation for those revealed to be in 'housing need' by an up-to-date survey; be available for rent at affordable rent levels, for shared ownership leases (or other equity share arrangements approved by the District Council) at affordable shares and managed by registered social landlord(s), that are able to demonstrate their ability to fund the scheme, capacity to deliver, acceptability to the Housing Corporation (if grant funding required), and appropriate long-term management and maintenance arrangements or for purchase as low cost market housing at a discount of at least 25% below the normal market price; in settlements with a population of more than 3,000, represent approximately 30% of the total number of dwellings for which planning permission may be given, although higher or lower percentages may be agreed in the light of factors such as proximity to local services; access to public transport; the particular costs associated with the development; and whether or not the provision of affordable housing would prejudice other planning objectives warranting greater priority in the particular case; be occupied only by qualifying persons, subject to cascade provisions; and be secured in perpetuity as to the above provisions (or any agreed departure from them) by planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or an alternative form of equally effective provision.
15. Local Plan 2004 **Policy HG10** states that 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. It also states that the design and layout of schemes should be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape and landscape. Schemes should also achieve high quality design and distinctiveness, avoiding inflexible standards and promoting energy efficiency.

### **Loss of Employment Sites**

16. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EM8** states that the re-development of existing employment sites to non-employment uses within village frameworks will be resisted unless the existing use is generating environmental problems such as noise, pollution or unacceptable levels of traffic or where it is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand. The supporting text states that applications for changes of use of premises in or last occupied for employment use will need to be accompanied by documentary evidence that the sites are not suitable or capable of being made suitable for continued employment use, including evidence that the property has been adequately marketed for a period of not less than 12 months on terms that reflect the lawful use and condition of the premises.

### **Sustainable Travel**

17. Local Plan 2004 **Policy TP1** states that the Council will seek, through its decisions on planning applications, to promote more sustainable transport choices and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, by amongst other things restricting car parking to a maximum of an average of 1½ spaces plus ¼ space for visitors per dwelling.

18. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P8/2** states that new development will be expected to make provision for integrated and improved transport infrastructure to increase the ability to move by cycle, public transport and on foot.
19. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P8/8** states that the capacity, quality and safety of walking and cycling networks will be increased to promote their use, minimise motorised travel and to realise health improvements. It also states that all new developments must provide safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle environments.

### **Education Contributions**

20. Local Plan 2004 **Policy CS10** states that, where permission is granted for residential development of 4 or more dwellings, financial contributions will be sought towards the provision of additional permanent or temporary education accommodation in those cases where the new development would cause the planning capacity of permanent buildings at the local primary or secondary schools to be exceeded during the 5 years following the date of the application.

### **Open Space**

21. Local Plan 2004 **Policy RT2** states that in areas where adequate nearby provision does not already exist, new residential developments of 21 dwellings or more shall make a contribution towards local achievement of the minimum NPFA standard of 2.4ha per 1,000 people. For these purposes an appropriate contribution shall be considered as 60sq.m per dwelling. Sheltered dwellings and residential homes do not need to contribute to this requirement. As an integral part of any provision required, space shall be provided for formal and informal children's play space at a ratio of roughly 50:50 and at a standard of 15sq.m for every dwelling with 2 or more bedrooms. Formal play areas shall be equipped with hard 'safety' playing surfaces and fixed play equipment. All such play spaces (both formal and informal) shall be located in such a way as to minimise potential for nuisance to neighbours.

### **Trees and Landscaping**

22. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN5** states that: the District Council will require trees 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, its landscape setting and the biodiversity of the locality; and conditions will be imposed on planning permissions to ensure the implementation of these schemes.

### **Biodiversity/Nature Conservation**

23. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P7/2** states that all development will seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the areas which they affect, landscape features of major importance to wild fauna and flora will be retained, managed and enhanced and, where damage is unavoidable, agreements will be sought to re-create features on or off-site.
24. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN12** states that the Council will, wherever possible, seek to retain features and habitat types of nature conservation value where these occur on sites not specifically identified in the plan. Planning permission will only be permitted where the reasons for development clearly outweigh the need to retain the feature or habitat type and in such cases developers will be expected to provide appropriate mitigation measures. Appropriate management of features and habitat types will be

sought by the imposition of conditions, by the use of planning obligations, and by concluding management agreements with landowners and developers.

### **Noise from Railways**

25. Local Plan 2004 **Policy ES8** states that the District Council will seek, by means of appropriate planning conditions, to minimise the impact of noise from railways on noise-sensitive development. The District Council's Adopted Standards for Protection Against Railway Noise and Vibration are set out in **Appendix 11/3** of the Local Plan.

### **Village Design Statement**

26. The Great Shelford Village Design Statement, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in February 2004, provides guidance and sets out principles and guidelines.

### **Consultations**

27. **Great Shelford Parish Council** recommends refusal of the scheme as amended by plans date stamped 12<sup>th</sup> August 2005 stating "A year ago an application was submitted for 93 units on this site with the retention of Abberley House. At the time the Parish Council objected to the high density and the design and layout necessary to achieve it, the adverse effect on trees on the site, the adverse impact of the high buildings and fencing adjacent to the railway line, the design and materials of the buildings, the lack of public open space and the impact of additional traffic on Granham's Road. We hoped the plans would be amended to overcome these objections.
28. "A year later we still feel our original comments apply and that insufficient changes have been made. The draft South Cambridgeshire Design Guide reinforces many of the recommendations made in the Great Shelford V.D.S. (Village Design Statement) which relate to this site. It is to be hoped that consideration will be given to lowering the density, to creating a more imaginative layout which respects the landscape characteristics of the site, its sensitive position on the edge of the village and the largely domestic scale of buildings in the village."
29. Any further comments received in relation to the latest scheme date stamped 4<sup>th</sup> November 2005 will be reported verbally.
30. **Great Shelford Village Design Group** objected to the original scheme on the grounds of; density; cars and traffic; design of buildings (need for more variety, local materials and domestic scale); the 3 and 4-storey buildings are too high; layout (the proposed regimented environment with extensive hard surfacing with no natural or country ambience); loss of trees and inadequate replacements; inadequate open space provision (the open space to be provided as part of the golf course development reflects the existing lack of spaces and its acquisition is not certain); loss of wildlife habitats; inappropriate village edge/gateway; and noise of trains.
31. It states that the amended scheme addresses few if any of these concerns and is worse in some respects. In relation to the amended plans it refers to: the visual damage that would be done to the village approach from Granhams Road; the need to reduce the height of the buildings and the need for the planting of large trees within the development to screen the buildings; the Village Design Statement states that 'When seen from the crest of Granhams Road, Great Shelford is largely hidden by trees. It is this view that makes us conscious of the place of the village in the

landscape'. Whilst the proposal quotes this part of the Village Design Guide, there seems to be a complete lack of understanding as it envisages tall buildings among smaller trees in one of the most sensitive approaches to the village; need to retain more trees and grassland; and, whilst the move towards more sympathetic building materials and finishes are welcomed, the development is too uniform in style with little variety, and the loss of Abberley House and its replacement in the view from Granhams Road by a massive blocks of flats seems to typify the lack of sensitivity still prevalent in the proposal.

32. **SCDC Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends conditions relating to a scheme for protecting the proposed dwellings from noise from the railway, times during the construction period during which no power operated machinery shall be operated and driven pile foundations are attached to any permission.
33. **SCDC Trees & Landscape Officer** states that the proposed access will involve the removal of seven mature sycamore trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order. He states that, whilst two of these trees are in a poor condition, the loss of the others will constitute the removal of a legally protected feature that makes a very significant visual contribution to the treed character of Granhams Road. He also states that the two car parking spaces adjacent to 5A Granhams Road should be omitted as, even with no dig construction, their use could compromise the adjacent beech trees canopy.
34. **SCDC Landscape Design Officer** acknowledged that the proposed landscaping scheme purports to have been prepared following Network Rail's standards for lineside planting but requested that it is formally submitted to Network Rail for confirmation that it does not object to the planting of trees close to the railway. She is also concerned about the lack of space to the rear of Block C and D and the future pressure for trees to be removed for light. **Network Rail** was subsequently consulted and has confirmed that the proposed landscaping scheme is acceptable.
35. **SCDC Drainage Manager** objected to the original scheme on the grounds that that scheme involved development within the 5m maintenance strip on the site side of the awarded watercourse along the southwestern side of the site.
36. **SCDC Environment Operations Manager** commented on the scheme as amended by plans date stamped 12<sup>th</sup> August 2005 and sought confirmation that all roads will be adoptable standard to withstand 26 tonne gross vehicle weight 6x4 vehicle and sought confirmation of the width of roads. He also made the following comments: there are insufficient hammerheads of the appropriate size to turn RCVs and the reversing distance is too excessive; details are needed of the proposed areas to be provided for the storage of containers for each individual dwelling, and especially for the terraced properties; the clearance of any arch or bridge should be 4m to allow for the RCV should access be required between H21 and H22; and details of communal bin stores for all the blocks are required and the locations of bin stores is not as per Council policy.
37. In response, it has been confirmed that all roads can be designed to withstand 26 tonne gross vehicle weight 6x4 vehicles, RCV access should not be required between H21 and H22 and plans have been submitted seeking to demonstrate that refuse vehicles would be able turn within the site. This information has been forwarded to the Environment Operations Manager for comment. Any further comments received will be reported verbally.

38. **SCDC Cultural Services Manager** makes the following comments: I would expect a proper equipped play area to meet SCDC standards within a development of this size- despite the high number of 2 bed properties; there is no provision for formal sport/outdoor play space which should be provided at 45sqm per house. I suggest that this should come in the form of an off-site capital contribution based on the cost of formal sports pitches per square metre; and, in addition, due to the number of homes proposed, there needs to be adequate green space on site for informal kick about.
39. **SCDC Ecology Officer** makes the following comments having read the Ecological Report, Aug 05:
40. "I feel that the application has made a very good attempt to integrate an area of semi-natural grassland within a relatively high density housing site. I accept that the area of grassland retained contains the majority of species found elsewhere within the site, additionally it retains the sites for the uncommon adders tongue ferns.
41. There are a few species, such as the harebell and marjoram that do not occur within the retained grassland. It would be very desirable to transfer a limited number of plants in order to retain the diversity of species retained.
42. I would also wish to explore the opportunity to "salvage" some plants from the area of grassland to be lost for possible inclusion within a wildlife area that is proposed to be established in another part of Gt Shelford in the very near future.
43. Turning to the management of the grass area. Large ant hills are present and represent an interesting feature of the grassland. Normal mowing could destroy these features, thus grass cutting should be undertaken by strimmer with the cutting raked up. The grass cuttings should be piled in locations where they can be beneficial for basking lizards.
44. The correct cutting frequency of the site will be important to maintain the species and should be the subject of further discussions, conditions and back-up by a S106 funding. The cutting and general management of the site (i.e. who will undertake it?) has not yet been clarified to my knowledge.
45. The grassland area should be protected from vehicles by a low level fence. I would not wish to see a footpath across it as it detracts from its natural state, and will encourage further erosion of the site. It would be desirable to erect discrete information boards explaining why the habitat has been retained.
46. I do not object to the planting of a limited number of holly trees around the grassland's periphery but would object to any significant planting that might result in heavy leaf fall upon the grassland.
47. I welcome the retention of an undeveloped strip adjacent to the watercourse as a wildlife corridor. Could it be planted with some attractive marginal plants (a clump of two of iris, marsh marigold and purple loosestrife?). The boundary planting will also provide habitats.
48. The discovery of a colony of ~68 pip.bats is locally significant. A full bat mitigation strategy should be presented as a requirement of a condition (could repeat and build upon the current eco report).
49. A reptile mitigation strategy should be required as a matter of condition (could repeat and build upon the current eco report).



50. A condition should be imposed preventing the removal of vegetation during the bird breeding season (15 Feb to 15 July inc. for this site) unless otherwise agreed in writing.
51. Overall, good progress has been made on this application over the last year.”
52. **Wildlife Trust** supports the Ecology Officer’s comments.
53. **Local Highway Authority** originally stated that 2.4m x 70m visibility splays are required but now states that a 4.5m x 70m splay is required to the southwest and 4.5m x the maximum visibility splay that can be achieved without encroaching on third party land is required to the northeast. It also requests a fully dimensioned layout plan showing 1.8m footways on both sides of the carriageway, 5m long parking spaces and a shared surface beyond the front of plots 19-21. It states that the street lighting on the frontage may need to be upgraded and comments on the location of cycle parking and bin stores. It requests amended plans addressing these points.
54. It also states that this stretch of road has been defined as an accident cluster site and, if permission is granted, the development should pay a £50,000 contribution towards the accident remedial scheme, which will include making the Cambridge Road/High Green junction much safer for cyclists and thereby encourage residents of the site to cycle or walk to local facilities, being worked up for this area. It also states that, if permission is granted, the development should make a £100,000 contribution towards the scheme to provide a cycle link between Addenbrookes and communities to the south of the City and the other cycle networks in this area.
55. **County Archaeology** recommends a (PPG16, para.30) condition requiring a scheme of investigation is attached to any approval.
56. **Environment Agency** raises no objections stating that, whilst the submitted Flood Risk Assessment is satisfactory in principle, final details must be satisfactorily addressed prior to the commencement of development. It therefore recommends that conditions relating to surface water drainage, and ground contamination investigation, assessment and remediation are attached to any permission and makes advisory comments for the applicants.
57. **County Education** seeks a £77,000 contribution towards the cost of providing 11 primary school spaces.
58. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** made the following comments in relation to the plans date stamped 12<sup>th</sup> August 2005: the pedestrian access linking the parking courts across the front of Blocks C and D provides anonymity sought by offenders and additional access and escape routes and the same can be said in relation to the ability for pedestrians to get access around Blocks A, G, H, J and K and the associated parking area; any communal parking should be in small courts serving a maximum of 6, and in some cases 8, dwellings where spaces are close to and within the natural surveillance of the dwellings served or the highway; the parking court to the rear of Block J serves 23 dwelling many of which are out of view of the dwelling served; the car park to the rear of Block E serves 26 dwellings and Blocks C and D in particular have little or no natural surveillance of the parking area; as these two parking courts are linked through the private drive which provides parking for an additional 17 dwellings, with parking for A9 rather remote, the potential for crime, most notably associated with vehicles, is increased; care should be taken to ensure that planting around the children’s play area does not impede natural surveillance; and the road, drives, parking courts and footpaths should be provided with column

mounted lighting. In relation to the latest set of amended plans, date stamped the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2005, he states that the amendments do little to address these concerns. The basic layout remains the same so that there is excessive permeability through the site which is worsened by the size of the two main car parks which are still too large and unnecessarily interconnected.

59. **Cambs Fire & Rescue Service** asks that adequate provision is made for fire hydrants by way of Section 106 Agreement or planning condition.
60. **HM Railway Inspectorate** states that any development of this size will create an increase in road traffic and vehicles turning into the development must not cause traffic to block back onto the crossing therefore preventing or delaying the crossing being closed to road traffic and delaying rail traffic. It states that Network Rail must be consulted but has no further comment. **Network Rail** was consulted but no response has been received in relation to the railway crossing.

### **Representations**

61. In relation to the amended scheme, objection letters have been received from the occupiers of 5, 5A, 16, 18A and 26 Granhams Road and 91 Cambridge Road. A further letter of objection (signed by occupiers of 3, 5, 5A, 6, 8, 12, 16, 18 and 18A Granhams Road, 28 Granhams Close and 1, 5 and 7 De Freville Road) has also been received. The grounds of objection are:
  - a. Height of flats and proximity to Granhams Road being overbearing and out of keeping with the rural character of the neighbourhood and resulting in overlooking of cottages on opposite side of Granhams Road;
  - b. Loss of trees along frontage which form an avenue and contribute greatly to the landscape of Granhams Road and loss of trees within site;
  - c. Intrusion into the open space forming the 'gateway' to the village from Granhams Road approach, with 3-storey blocks still located on this edge of the development;
  - d. The retention of Abberley House, a significant but relatively low 2-storey Victorian building, as part of the original scheme at least gave an appropriate 'mixed character' to the development;
  - e. Lower density with more visitor parking areas and green areas needed;
  - f. The development infringes nos, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 18 of the Great Shelford Village Design Statements conclusions, including no.6 which states that future development should mirror the domestic scale and diversity of style;
  - g. Traffic problems, including further back ups over the level crossing;
  - h. The submitted Transportation Assessment does not take account of the regular (every 8 minutes at peak times) closure of the level crossing;
  - i. An independent transport assessment should be obtained;
  - j. Inadequate parking provision;
  - k. Building along the railway would reflect noise and make things worse for those already within earshot;
  - l. The plan should include a community centre;
  - m. The proposal does not take account of how people live their lives or what they need for a reasonable life;
  - n. No thought is given to what the development might do to the balance of the existing community;
  - o. The proposed 2.3m high close boarded fence along the boundary with 5A Granhams Road needs to have concrete posts and base;
  - p. Damage to the copper beech tree within the garden of 5A Granhams Road and noise and disturbance due to the proposed new road and parking being

right up to the boundary. The road should be moved further away from this boundary.

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

62. There are a number of important issues to be considered in relation to this application but the key issues are:
- a) The loss of this employment site;
  - b) Whether the benefits of the scheme outweigh the harm of the loss of mature trees along the Granhams Road frontage;
  - c) Whether the form and scale of development proposed is acceptable on this edge of village site; and
  - d) Highway matters, including whether the proposed visibility splays are acceptable and impact on railway crossing.

### **Loss of Employment Site and Principle of Residential Development of the Site**

63. The site is within the village framework. Local Plan 2004 Policies SE2(d) and EM8 state that the re-development of existing employment sites to non-employment uses within village frameworks will be resisted unless the existing use is generating environmental problems or where it is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand. There is no evidence that the existing use is generating environmental problems.
64. With regard to market demand, the site has not been formally marketed but the agent contends that the site is an under-utilised, low-density employment site in a Rural Growth Settlement that has reasonable alternative employment provision, such as Mill Court. It states that the site is not a preferred employment location in Cambridge City terms, nor in Great Shelford terms and the benefits of developing the site as proposed outweigh any technical objection that might arise in terms of Policy EM8. It also reports that its Commercial Agency Department states that “Shelford is well located on the favoured south side of the City but is not well known or established as an office/business park location. Demand for the south side of the City has been increasingly taken up by developments such as Capital Park at Fulbourn, Granta Park, Chesterford, Pampisford Park and other such locations. Such demand as exists in Shelford is more than catered for by the developments at Station Court and Mill Court where over 75,000 sq ft of office space has been provided in units ranging from a few 100 sq ft to 10,000 sq ft plus. It is normal that there would be space available within either or both of these developments and this would illustrate that supply exceeds demand. By way of anecdotal evidence, as at 5 August 2005 there was some 20,810 sq ft available in 5 buildings in these two schemes. A number of suites within these buildings are known to have been vacant for some considerable time, which indicated that demand is presently relatively weak in this location. We would not expect demand to be any stronger if the commercial buildings on the Livanos House/Abberley House site were offered for re-letting.” According to the agents, only half of Abberley House and 3 rooms in Livanos House are currently occupied and the Alzheimer’s Trust, who currently occupy Livanos House, are to relocate and the tenant of Abberley House has served notice and will be vacating the site by the end of the year.
65. Mindful of these comments and vacant premises at Mill Court/Station Court (which are more centrally located within the village), I consider that the loss of the employment buildings on the site would not be reason to refuse a well-conceived residential scheme which made the best use of the site.

## **Layout, Form, Scale and Design of Proposed Development**

66. The Design Report submitted as part of the application acknowledges the need to keep the dwellings to a lower scale at the northern part of the site to allow the flow of open agricultural landscape and the height of the proposed development consequently rises from bungalows with accommodation in the roofspace at the northern end, through 2-storey and 2½-storey development to some 3½-storey development at the Granhams Road end of the site. The Design Report also states that the particular character of the flats alongside the railway is similar to some of the 'railway' buildings seen in our region, the proposed arches over main openings used throughout the development unifies and simplifies the elevations and, together with the use of local brickwork, render, pantile roofs for the dwellings, slate roofs for the flats, and stained boarding, seeks to recreate a simple agricultural form and reinforce the palette of colour and texture of our region. It also states that the flats are an important part of the scheme to provide some one and two bedroom homes economically and have been sited at the southern end of the site where they are related to large trees, open spaces, the retained Livanos House and the main body of the site and relate to traditional East Anglian mill buildings including The Kings Mill in the village rather than 'just another block of flats'.
67. The proposed buildings will be conspicuous when viewed from the approach to the village along Granhams Road, although they will be seen in the context of the overhead railway lines and, at the southern end of the site, the existing trees (being up to 20m high as compared to the proposed buildings up to approximately 13m high) will remain the dominant features in the skyline. The 3m high acoustic fence and the buildings will be screened to a degree by the 5m wide strip with planting on a bank along the eastern boundary. I understand the concerns of the Parish Council, Village Design Group and local residents, but mindful of the overhead lines, existing trees, and proposed planting, provided a number of the trees along the Granhams Road frontage could be retained (see comments below) and in order to provide smaller units of accommodation and make the best use of the site, I consider the form and scale of development to be acceptable. I also consider the design of the proposed buildings to be acceptable.

## **Density and Mix**

68. The proposed density equates to approximately 58 dwellings to the hectare, significantly higher than the 30 stipulated as a minimum in Local Plan Policy SE2 and also well above the minimum of 40 dwellings per hectare advocated in the Structure Plan for locations close to a good range of existing and potential services and facilities and where there is good public transport accessibility. This crude figure of 58 is skewed by the preponderance of small units proposed and, provided the scheme is considered to be acceptable in all other respects, this density would ensure that the proposed scheme makes good use of the site.
69. The preponderance of small units is also welcomed. If anything, in some instances, I might have liked to see a greater proportion of larger units in order to encourage a more mixed community.

## **Loss of Trees Along Granhams Road Frontage, Access and Parking**

70. The existing trees on both sides of Granhams Road create a pleasing avenue at the entrance to the village. If the site is to be developed, the removal of a number of these trees is necessary for access and visibility splays. As Members will see from

the planning history section of this report, there is an extant planning permission for a new vehicular access onto Granhams Road in a similar position to the new access now proposed, albeit not requiring the removal of as many trees due to the more limited development it would serve and therefore the more limited visibility requirements.

71. The proposed access and visibility splays would involve the loss of seven mature trees. Whilst the Local Highway Authority (LHA) originally stated that the proposed 2.4m x 70m visibility splays would be acceptable, it now states that a 4.5m x 70m splay is required to the southwest and 4.5m x the maximum visibility splay that can be achieved without encroaching on third party land is required to the northeast. The application fails to demonstrate that the required splay to the southwest, which cuts across the front gardens of Nos. 5 and 5A Granhams Road, can be achieved. 4.5m splays also likely to involve the loss of a further two mature trees.
72. Whilst the loss of some of the trees along the Granhams Road frontage coupled with replacement planting (which, over time, would begin to compensate for those removed) would be considered acceptable if it enabled the best use to be made of the site, the loss of up to nine protected trees for the required visibility splays and the resulting detrimental impact on the character of this part of Granhams Road is considered to be unacceptable.
73. The LHA has requested a fully dimensioned layout plan showing 1.8m footways on both sides of the carriageway, 5m long parking spaces and a shared surface beyond the front of plots 19-21. It also states that the street lighting on the frontage may need to be upgraded and comments on the location of cycle parking and bin stores. Whilst I have my doubts that 1.8m footways are required on both sides of the carriageway, if Members are minded to approve the application, a delegated approval would be appropriate to enable a further layout plan to be sought.
74. Parking provision is generally provided at a level of one space per dwelling plus visitor parking, although many of the houses would have two spaces. This is considered appropriate given that the dwellings are predominantly one or two bedroom.

### **Open Space and Nature Conservation**

75. The amended scheme retains an area of grassland within the site as open space. Whilst not formally designated, the ecological survey report and the Ecology Officer's observations highlight the presence of 15 species on the northern part of the site indicative of locally high value semi-natural grasslands. The retention of this area overcomes the Wildlife Trust's and Ecology Officer's objections to the original scheme. The retention and careful management of this grassland area, the provision of an equipped children's play area, public access to the other areas indicated as open space on the plan and a financial contribution based on the cost of formal sports pitches to make up the shortfall in relation to the requirements of Local Plan Policy RT2, as suggested by the Cultural Services Manager, is considered to be acceptable in this instance.

### **Proximity to Railway Crossing**

76. Network Rail has not commented on the application and the Health & Safety Executive has not itself objected to the application. Although the proposed access is likely to be used by more vehicles than the existing access, it is located approximately 15 metres (approximately 52m rather than approximately 37m) further

from the crossing than the existing access, which is to be blocked-up as part of the scheme. Provided a hatched area on Granhams Road like the one adjacent to the existing access is provided to ensure that vehicles entering the village from the northeast are not prevented from turning into the development by stationary vehicles waiting on the approach to the railway crossing from High Green, and in the absence of an objection from any consultees, the position and use of the proposed access relative to the railway crossing is not considered to be reason for refusal.

### **Impact on neighbours**

77. The part of the scheme adjacent to 5A Granhams Road has been revised to reduce the impact on the occupiers of that property and, at their request, a 2.3m high fence is proposed along the boundary between 5A and the site.

Due to the existing and proposed planting, and the distance involved, the proposal is not considered to unduly affect the amenity of the occupiers of properties on the opposite side of Granhams Road. The amended scheme is not considered to unduly affect the amenity of any neighbours.

### **Other Matters**

78. The amended scheme provides for the necessary 5m byelaw distance alongside the awarded watercourse running along the western boundary of the site.
79. It is considered the future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be adequately protected from noise from the railway provided the proposed 3m high acoustic fence is erected and an agreed scheme for protecting the proposed dwellings from railway noise is implemented.

### **Conclusion**

80. Whilst the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in other respects, refusal is recommended as the application fails to demonstrate that the vehicle to vehicle visibility splays required can be provided and, even if the required splays could be achieved, the development would result in an unacceptable loss of protected trees along the Granhams Road frontage.

### **Recommendation**

81. Refusal (as amended by plans date stamped the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2005 and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2005)

The proposed access to the site is inadequate and below the standard required by reason of inadequate vehicle to vehicle visibility. Even if it could be demonstrated that the necessary splays could be achieved, the resulting loss of up to nine protected trees and the consequential opening up of views of the development from Granhams Road would have a serious detrimental impact on the character of this part of Granhams Road.

The proposal is therefore contrary to: Structure Plan 2003 Policy P1/3 which requires all new development to conserve important environmental assets of the site; South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy SE2 which states that residential development will only be permitted on unallocated land within Great Shelford where the development would be sensitive to the character of the village and local features of landscape importance; the aims of South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy

EN5 which seeks to ensure the retention of trees; and the Great Shelford Village Design Statement 2004 which seeks to preserve mature trees that mark 'gateways' to the village and identifies the mature trees on the west side of the railway crossing on Granhams Road as one such 'gateway'.

**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

Great Shelford Village Design Statement 2004

Planning file Refs: S/1581/04/F, S/0951/01/F, S/0604/93/O, S/1490/91/O, S/0052/82/O and S/0212/80/O.

**Contact Officer:** Andrew Moffat – Area Planning Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713169