

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

---

**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

14 August 2019

**AUTHOR/S:** Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

---

**Application Number:** S/3063/18/FL

**Parish(es):** Balsham

**Proposal:** External wall insulation

**Site address:** 16 Princes Close, Balsham, Cambridgeshire, CB21 4EE

**Applicant(s):** South Cambridgeshire District Council

**Recommendation:** Approval subject to conditions

**Key material considerations:** Impact to Heritage Assets

**Committee Site Visit:** 9 July 2019

**Departure Application:** No

**Presenting Officer:** Aaron Sands, Senior Planning Officer

**Application brought to Committee because:** The application is made by South Cambridgeshire District Council and objections have been received

**Date by which decision due:** 16 August 2019

### Executive Summary

1. This application is for the provision of external wall insulation to a non-designated heritage asset. The proposal has been amended since submission to alter the external facing to mirror the existing cladding on the building. On balance, it is considered that the proposed development would safeguard the special characteristics of the dwellings and would provide a benefit to their sustainability and capacity to remain as accommodation in the long term. It is therefore recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

### Planning History

2. None relevant to application site.

Neighbouring Site No. 15 Princes Close

3. S/3072/18/FL – External wall insulation. Pending Decision.

### Site Constraints

4. The site comprises one half of a semi-detached 1½ storey dwellings located on the edge, but within, the Development Framework of Balsham. The properties are located at the end of Princes Close, fronting onto a turning head within the Cul-de-sac. The dwellings are what is known as 'Swedish Houses', a post WWII import 'pre-fab' building, and are non-designated heritage assets (NDHA).

### **Proposal**

5. The application proposes to apply external wall insulation (EWI) to the dwellings, resulting in a projection from the existing external face of the wall of approximately 140mm in depth. Following amendments, the dwellings are proposed to be faced in a timber cladding that seeks to replicates the existing arrangement.

### **Relevant Policy**

6. **National Guidance**  
National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)  
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
7. **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018**  
S/1 Vision  
S/2 Objectives of the Local Plan  
S//3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
S/7 Development Frameworks  
S/10 Group Villages  
CC/6 Construction Methods  
HQ/1 Design Principles  
NH/14 Heritage Assets  
NH/15 Heritage Assets and Adapting to Climate Change  
TI/8 Infrastructure and New Developments
8. **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)**  
District Design Guide SPD – Adopted 2010

### **Consultees**

9. **Parish Council** – The Parish Council would prefer a brick exterior to be in keeping with other properties.
10. **Historic Buildings Officer** – Objection. The proposal will result in harm to the significance of the Swedish Houses as NDHAs and will be of detriment to South Cambridgeshire's historic environment. If the application is approved, it must be fore insulation with the external appearance proposed to match the existing, which has the potential to mitigate the harm. *(Officer note; a full copy of the comments of the Historic Buildings Officer are included in Appendix A)*
11. **Historic England** – No comments. The proposal falls below the threshold where comments would be provided.

The following comments were originally received in respect of applications S/3071/18/FL & S/3076/18/FL in Impington, which are applications proposing the same form of development. Given the material similarity in the schemes, officers consider they represent a material consideration in this application and have therefore been taken into account, where relevant to this application, in this report, and in reaching the recommendation set out below. Officers would note the 20<sup>th</sup>

Century Society has not specifically commented on this application, either originally or as part of the re-consultation following the amendments.

12. **20<sup>th</sup> Century Society** – Objection. Concerned that the development would have a substantial and harmful impact on the appearance and significance of the dwellings, which are largely untouched. Recommend alternative insulation options are explored, such as internal insulation or the injection of insulation into the internal void between timber panels. Alternative methods of external cladding are available that could replace the external material with something similar in appearance and would be more sympathetic to the character of the dwelling.

### **Representations**

13. 1no. representation made including the following summarised points;
- The PC comments that brick would be more in keeping are unfounded as the dwellings are clad in wood and already not in keeping. Render would be appropriate, and the surrounding area has examples of both brick and rendered properties.

### **Assessment**

14. The key considerations in this application are;
- Impacts to Non-Designated Heritage Assets
  - Character Impacts
  - Other Matters

#### *Impacts to Non-Designated Heritage Assets*

15. The 'Swedish House' was a post WWII import from Sweden and was an early type of 'flat-pack' housing intended to be installed onsite by the owners, though within Britain they were erected by prisoner of war labour to combat the housing shortage. Approximately 2444 were erected across the country, and many have now been demolished or altered such that their original fabric is lost. It is noteworthy that there is a pair in Doncaster (nos. 9 & 11 Ellers Lane, Auckley) that were listed as a significant physical record of the social and economic history of the country. It is of note these were listed despite UPVc windows. In light of this, officers consider the Swedish House represents a non-designated heritage asset.
16. The dwelling is of particular heritage significance as a physical representation of the social and economic history of Britain, and because of its architectural features, such as the vertical cladding, detailing around verges and bargeboards, and the fenestration surrounds. While the existing buildings do have UPVC windows officers do not consider this detracts from the overall level of significance that should be attributed to them. On the whole, it is considered the Swedish Houses have an architectural and social value that contributes to their significance.
17. Para. 197 of the NPPF states that, where a development impacts a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be required, having regard to the scale of the harm and significance of the asset. This should be weighed against the positive public benefit of the scheme.
18. This dwelling is one half of a pair that sit by themselves, with no other similar properties in the immediate surroundings. There is an application on the attached dwelling (ref. S/3072/18/FL) for the same works as proposed here. It would be more noticeable, and more harmful, if EWI was not applied to both properties together, as

the difference in profiles would be clearly apparent and attention would be drawn to the different profile. Officers have reached the recommendation set out below on the basis that both dwellings would be insulated together, and a condition is necessary to ensure that would be the case, in order to reduce the impact to their significance.

19. The development would remove the external cladding of the building and proposes to replace this with a replica of that facing material on top of the EWI. This would result in a projection from the existing wall surface just short of 140mm, including around the fenestration, under eaves and verges etc and would result in the loss of historic fabric.
20. Officers are aware of such developments where the application of EWI has resulted in significant change to the architectural character of buildings, where eaves overhangs are lost, reveals become deep in the context of the architectural style of the buildings, and architectural features of buildings are lost. This has occurred to other Swedish Houses in the district prior to the receipt of the comments of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society. That said, officers consider it is possible a suitable form of insulation could be achieved that would maintain the architectural details of the dwellings. This could be dealt with by condition, to require large scale elevations and sections of the eaves and verges, bargeboards, fenestration surrounds and other architectural details of the dwelling. The architectural features that contribute to the asset's significance would therefore be retained such that the development would mitigate some level of harm from the application of EWI.
21. Officers consider there is a more limited harm to the social significance of the NDHA from the propose development. The dwellings themselves would remain in place, and in light of the condition suggested above, would retain their architectural features. This would ensure they could continue to be recognisable representations of the social and economic history of Britain.
22. On the whole, officers consider the harm to the significance of the NDHA in this instance would be of a lower level, given the use of an external facing material that retains important historic architectural feature, having regard to conditions. That said, there is harm in the loss of the historic fabric, and officers consider it is likely the EWI will be noticeable on some level, particularly around the fenestration and the eaves, through the alteration of the wall profile. In accordance with para. 197 and policy NH/14, the identified harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
23. The development would improve the efficiency of the building, through better heat retention, and the need for less energy usage to maintain a comfortable environment in terms of temperature. This would contribute to their longer term sustainability and usability of the building and make them cheaper to run. There would be some benefit in the insulation to extending the useable life of the building as habitable accommodation, maintaining the historic use associated with the building and the reason for their erection at the outset, in response to the housing shortage in post-war Britain.
24. On balance, officers consider that, while the proposal does represent some harm, the historic significance of the buildings is substantially maintained through the proposal, subject to conditions, and the remaining limited harm is outweighed by the positive benefits of the scheme in terms of improving the energy efficiency of the dwelling and the living conditions of occupants. The proposal would therefore accord with policies NH/14 and NH/15, in line with para. 197 of the NPPF.

### *Character Impacts*

25. In terms of more general character impacts to the surroundings, noting the proposal would retain the general form and appearance of the existing dwelling, particularly as the existing dwellings are something of a departure from the prevailing character of dwellings in the area, officers do not consider the development would result in any significant material change to the character of the area. It would therefore accord with policy HQ/1.

### *Other Matters*

26. Given the nature of the proposal it is not considered the development would materially alter the relationship with surrounding residences such that it would impact neighbouring residential amenity and would therefore accord with policy HQ/1.
27. As set out by the Historic Buildings Officer, it does not appear that other forms of energy efficient technology have been considered. For the avoidance of doubt, officers would wish to clarify that this is not a material planning consideration, and the application must be assessed on its own merits.

### **Recommendation**

28. Officers recommend that the Planning Committee **Approves** the application subject to the conditions set out below and with any variations to be agreed with the Chair and Vice-chair prior to the issue of any decision.

### **Conditions:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.  
(Reason - To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development, which have not been acted upon).
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:  
Location and Block Plans  
Structural Details – Drawing no. 2805/J&L  
(Reason - To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).
3. Prior to the development hereby permitted first commencing, large scale elevations and sections (at a scale of not less than 1:20) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority detailing how the cladding will replicate the existing fenestration surrounds, eaves, verges, bargeboards, cladding overlaps, flashing, rainwater goods and any other details. The development shall not be carried out except in accordance with these details.  
(Reason – To safeguard the important architectural detailing the contributes to the significance of the non-designated heritage assets, in accordance with policies NH/14 and NH/15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.)
4. Prior to the commencement of development, a timescale shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority demonstrating how this proposal shall be carried out alongside application ref. S/3072/18/FL, including estimated

completion and commencement timescales. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved timescale.

(Reason – To ensure this development is carried out alongside application S/3072/18/FL, as the two dwellings make a material contribution to each other's significance and to only implement a single permission would result in an adverse detriment to the heritage value of the clad property. This condition is therefore required to protect the significance of the non-designated heritage assets, in accordance with policies NH/14 and NH/15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.)

### **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 Plan 2018](#)
- [Planning Application File Ref S/3036/18/FL](#)
- Documents referred to in the report including appendices on the website only and reports to previous meetings

**Report Author:**

Aaron Sands

Senior Planning Officer

Telephone Number:

01954 713237