

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 1st February 2006
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/2297/05/RM - Hardwick

Erection of 42 Houses, Including 4 Live/Work Units and 12 Affordable Dwellings, Garaging and Associated Road Works, The Old Enterprise Café Site, St Neot's Road for Taylor Woodrow Anglia

Recommendation: Delegated Approval
Date for Determination: 2nd March 2006 (Major Application)

Site and Proposal

1. This 1.22 ha (3 acres) site is located on the southern side of the St Neots Road, just south of the Dry Drayton/Hardwick roundabout. The former Enterprise Café, the former café operative's bungalow and a former accommodation block have all now been demolished as part of site clearance works. Hawthorn hedges form part of the eastern and western boundaries; the southern boundary is open to the countryside. The ground level rises by approximately 1.7 metres over the 200-metre distance from north to south.
2. To the east and west is ribbon development along the St Neots Road frontage, predominantly well-spaced single storey residential properties with long back gardens.
3. This reserved matter application, registered on 1st December 2005, seeks 42 dwellings including 12 affordables and 4 live-work units. (34 dwellings per hectare).
4. The application is accompanied by a brief design statement, a landscape design statement, an external materials schedule, a landscape master plan, a site contamination report, a drainage plan and a layout showing positioning of street lighting columns.
5. The Housing mix proposed comprises:
 - a) *Private*
 - 10 x 4 bed detached houses
 - 12 x 3 bed terraced and semi-detached houses
 - 4 x live/work-units (2 bed accommodation over office floorspace).
 - b) *Affordable*
 - 4 x bed semi-detached houses
 - 8 x 2 bed terraced houses
 - 4 (2 bed) are for rent and 8 (mix 3 and 2 bed) are shared ownership, as required by a S106 Agreement dated 14th July 2005.
6. The layout incorporates 0.08 hectares of open space upon which will be a local equipped area of play and a retained horse chestnut tree.

Relevant Planning History

7. On 14th July 2005, outline planning permission was granted for the erection of 42 dwellings, including 4 live/work units, on the site. A Section 106 Agreement of the same date secured an education contribution, a public open space commuted sum, the provision, establishment, equipping and maintenance of 0.08 hectares of open space on the site and the provision of 12 affordable houses (see also para 5 (b) above).

Policy

8. Government Policy, incorporated in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3, "Housing" and PPS, 7, "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas", seeks to, inter alia, give priority to re-using previously developed land in urban areas, reduce car dependence, focus new development on existing towns and villages, determine the pattern of new development through the development plan process and to strictly control new house building in the open countryside, away from established settlements.
9. The site is outside of the village framework of Hardwick: Policy P1/2 of the Structure Plan 2003 restricts development in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location. Policy P1/3 requires a high standard of design and sustainability for all new development. Policy P5/5, referring to homes in rural areas, allows for small-scale housing developments in villages. The supporting text comments that, except for small sites to meet locally identified housing need, housing in the countryside beyond the built up areas defined in Local Plans is not considered appropriate.
10. Policy SE8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 presumes in favour of housing development within the defined physical framework of the villages. Residential development outside these frameworks will not be permitted.
11. Policy HG8 of the Local Plan allows, as an exception to the normal operation of the Local Plan policies, schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on sites within or adjoining villages. The number, size, design, mix and tenure of the dwellings should be confined to, and appropriate to, the strict extent of the identified local need and must also comply with certain criteria of Policy HG7 regarding affordable housing.
12. Policy HG10 of the Local Plan requires new housing developments to incorporate a mix and range of house sizes, types, and affordability to make the best use of the site and promote a sense of community which reflects local needs. The design and layout of schemes should be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape and landscape. Schemes should also achieve high quality design and distinctiveness, avoiding inflexible standards and promoting energy efficiency.
13. Policy SE4 of the Local Plan defines Hardwick as a group village. It requires development to be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours. All developments should provide an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and affordability.
14. Policy EN5 of the Local Plan requires trees, hedges, woodland and other natural features to be retained whenever possible in proposals for new development.

15. Policy EN12 of the Local Plan requires features and habitat types of nature conservation value to be retained where they occur on sites not specifically identified in the plan.

Consultation

16. **Hardwick Parish Council** has no recommendation but comments:
- (a) We would like 'wheelie bins' storage so that bins are not left in full view all the time;
 - (b) There appears to be a shortage of off road parking; and
 - (c) We query only one access road.
17. **Local Highways Authority** states that the layout is acceptable.
18. **Highways Agency** has no objections as the proposal will not adversely affect the A428 trunk road.
19. **Environment Agency's** comments are awaited.
20. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** requests that adequate provision is made for fire Hydrants. (Condition 6 of the outline planning permission is applicable).
21. **County Archaeology Office** states that its advice in respect of the outline planning permission remains appropriate. (Condition 11 of the outline planning permission is applicable).
22. **The Council's Ecology Officer** recommends that the perimeter hedgerows should be enhanced. Provision of nest boxes upon new buildings, retained hedgerows and trees would be desirable. With so much of the boundary hedgerows falling within private gardens, there is concern that hedges will be lost over time. Additional planting should occur along all boundaries. It would also be prudent to know how much of the present hedge might be cut back as boundaries are defined and what type of fence, if any, might be used. It is suggested that the open spaces be aligned in the east boundary to retain a greater length of hedgerow. The existing horse chestnut tree should be protected. A condition is required to control the removal of vegetation during the bird-breeding season.
23. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer's** comments are awaited.
24. **The Trees and Landscape Officer's** comments are awaited
25. **Housing Development Manager** supports the development and the planned number of units that support the housing need. It is suggested that the affordable units are well integrated within the site.
26. **The Environmental Operations Manager** comments that ' the hammerhead needs to be extended nearer to plot 16 so that plot 14 then becomes within the distance prescribed in our storage and collection policy. All access roads to be constructed to adopted highway standards (26 tonnes gw) to prevent damage by collection vehicles. Details of refuse storage required for every dwelling with special attention given to terraced properties that may require storage areas at the front of dwellings.'

27. The comments of the **Cultural Services Manager** are awaited.
28. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer has considered** the site contamination report and has recommended a number of procedures be adopted to ensure that the site is suitable for its intended use. These have been forwarded to the applicant.

Representations

29. One resident of St. Neots Road ("Maythorn") has objected. Their property adjoins the south and west side of the site. The grounds of objection are as follows:
- "(a) Housing development in this area was rejected recently, in favour of the new town housing development called Cambourne situated only two miles away. With planning permission in this area only for single dwelling on suitable gaps of land between properties would be allowed on merit. Why is it then, 42 dwellings are allowed to be built on a frontage of land similar to the string community here that would allow only three or four houses?
 - (b) The consequences of mass increase in the number of dwellings will force other owners in this area to sell their gardens and land to the potential of further development. Is it the intention of South Cambridgeshire District Council to do this?
 - (c) I have also written proof that the South Cambridgeshire District Council refused planning permission on this same stretch of land fronting the same road for single dwellings, because it was out of character with Hardwick Parish and it would also force local owner-occupiers as a lever against the Council to sell their land.
 - (d) This blatant force of dwellings will have immediate affect and will spread and merge further housing developments reversing the last government backed housing development, which was rejected after much public debate and scrutiny.
 - (e) One of the reasons why housing development was rejected in this area was to prevent the joining of the two villages of Hardwick and Caldecote-Highfields. This gradual infilling will reverse this decision. What is the point to have public inquiries in major planning decisions if the policies are ignored?
 - (f) How can we justify yet more houses to be built when it has been announced recently, again, there are over 2000 properties in south and east Cambridgeshire vacant for indefinite periods.
 - (g) There will be pressure on certain utility services such as sewage. We know for a fact that these services are never accurately calculated or promised to work fully whenever there is an increase in housing. Our sewage has been a problem for many years. Developers of Cambourne miscalculated when they tried to force a new sewage pipeline to be built anywhere to take up the effluent into other nearby communities including us. Can you guarantee that the sewage pipe covering the cul-de-sac community is able to cope with the substantial increase in effluent and surface water to our system which has had a history of problems in the past?

- (h) Why are there so many houses allowed to be built on such a small area? Surely this brown field site is more suited to a small business development or a redeveloped transportation system.

The following objections are based on more local issues regarding the farmland around the development.

- (i) There has been a notable increase in trespassing to our land when there is an increase in houses on our borders.
- (j) The south and west borders are mainly marked by hedgerows, however, there are gaps in the hedgerows mainly in the south border, which have been destroyed by vandals. This particular section was set on fire and completely decimated the established hedgerow. A post and wire net fencing was put up and that too has been knocked down. Can you assure me a more solid, permanent fence would be built around the perimeter to prevent people from trespassing?
- (k) Parts of land, mainly on the west side is set up for horse grazing. Fencing is not a problem at the moment but hedgerows are not enough to prevent people from breaking through. This sets up a safety and security liability. The more neighbours on the boundaries the more potential for somebody becoming hurt. There should be a rearrangement of the planning design and solid fencing introduced.
- (l) Would the new occupiers to this crowded development be aware and tolerate agricultural machinery, spraying or land left fallow? This development could force us to alter or even prevent our way of life.
- (m) Another problem is surface rainwater running off the land towards the development. The incline runs from south to north. The responsibility of surface rainwater not being able to drain into the soil fast enough during storms or high water-table in the winter, is a natural process which from my experience is not understood by home owners. This has caused unnecessary grievance in the past and should be addressed by appropriate drainage/ditching. There is a great deal of documented haste in building homes and then becoming waterlogged because the building developers didn't account for this problem and/or a cost cutting tactic. The houses most affected are the properties around the borders."

Planning Comments

30. The principle of residential development of this site and the erection of 42 units, inclusive of 12 affordable dwellings and 4 live/work units has been established by the grant of outline planning permission on 14th July 2005. Consequently the issues about whether this was an appropriate location, use or scale of development were carefully considered at that time by the Local Planning Authority and the Secretary of State, who did not call the application in for his determination.
31. The key issues for determination are now, therefore, whether the siting, design, means of access and landscaping achieve the objectives of Development Plan Policies, principally P1/3 of the Structure Plan and HG10, SE4, EN5 and EN12 of the Local Plan.

32. The housing numbers, mix, provision of affordable housing and area of open space accords with the outline planning permission and the S106 Agreement. The siting and layout of the development is largely dictated by the shape of the site. At the front are proposed the 4 live/work units. Frontage in this form reflects the nature of adjoining development but the siting forward of bungalows either side is a concern.
33. In the middle of the site is proposed the open space, the affordable housing and the remaining 2 bed and 3 bed houses, some of which will overlook and provide surveillance for the open space on the south and east sides. Although the open space does not adjoin a section of the existing hedge on the west boundary, it does incorporate the one tree, a Horse Chestnut on site worth retaining. The landscaping scheme also proposes further tree planting and an area of wildflower seeding. I therefore consider its location to be acceptable.
34. There is scope for better integration of the affordable and the private two and three bedroom accommodation. I shall discuss this with the applicant.
35. The rear of the site comprises an informal layout of four bedroom houses, partly served by the estate road and partly by a private drive. This is considered to be acceptable subject to the bin collection arrangements being amended and to the landscaping scheme incorporating proposals for planting on the south boundary. I have also brought to the attention of the applicant inconsistencies between the landscaping scheme and the proposed layout.
36. Although the buildings are of traditional design, I do have concern regarding their height in this particular location, given that adjoining development is dominated by low bungalows. The buildings range from 9 metres to 10 metres in ridge height. The applicant has agreed to revise the design in this respect. Inconsistencies between the house plans/elevations and street elevations, in respect of the provision of chimneys, are also to be amended.
37. The layout incorporates wheelie bin storage at the rear of each unit. There is adequate off-street car parking (71 spaces plus garaging for up to 19 vehicles), which exceeds the average requirement for 1.5 spaces per dwelling plus visitor spaces. One access road is quite adequate to serve this scale of development. Indeed a condition of the outline planning permission required the closure of a former access on the eastern boundary of the site. The layout has been approved by The Local Highway Authority.
38. Security on the perimeter boundaries is important but this has to be balanced with the landscaping and biodiversity value of the existing hedgerows, which should be retained. Any additional fencing should not prejudice the health of these hedgerows.
39. In conclusion it is hoped that amendments to the layout and landscaping of the scheme and the design of the houses will render the proposal acceptable.

Recommendation

40. Subject to the receipt of satisfactory amended drawings, delegated approval of reserved matters (siting, design, means of access and landscaping) pursuant to outline planning permission dated 14th July 2005 reference S/1204/04/O and to the conditions attached thereto.

Additional Conditions:

1. Standard Condition 5(a) (samples of bricks and tiles to be used) (RC - To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development.)
2. During the period of construction no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays), unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions. (RC - To minimise noise disturbance to adjoining residents.)
3. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 and Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order), the following classes of development more particularly described in the Order are expressly prohibited in respect of dwellings on plots 27 to 38 inclusive unless expressly authorised by planning permission granted by the Local Planning Authority in that behalf:
Part 1 Classes A, B and C
(RC - To maintain small units of accommodation.)

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - a) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:
P1/3 - Sustainable Design in Built Development and P5/5 - Homes in Rural Areas
 - b) South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:
SE4 - Residential Development in Group Villages, HG8 - Exceptions Policy for Affordable Housing and HG10 - Housing Design
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations, which have been raised during the consultation exercise: **principle of the development, layout and parking, hedgerow retention and security on the site boundaries.**

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

County Structure Plan 2003

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

Planning Application Files: S/2297/05/RM and S/1204/04/O

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