

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

1st March 2006

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/2365/05/F - Meldreth

24 Affordable Dwellings, Land Off Whaddon Road (Adj West Way), For Flagship Housing Group

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 15th May 2006 (Major Application)

Site and Proposal

1. This full application, as amended by drawings received 13th February 2006, proposes the erection of 24 affordable dwellings on a 0.74ha area of vacant land to the southwest of Whaddon Road, Meldreth to the northwest of the main village. The application site is part of a larger area of paddock land to the northwest and southwest.
2. The frontage to Whaddon Road is formed by a mature hedgerow and ditch. To the southeast the site abuts the rear of West Way, a development of 28 dwellings accessed from Kneesworth Road, and agricultural land. A right of way to the rear of an existing dwelling in West Way exists in the southeast corner of the site.
3. The northwest and southwest boundaries of the application site are currently undefined although there is a hedgerow along the boundaries of the larger field of which this site is a part.
4. The development comprises 10 x 3 bedroom houses, 6 x 2 bedroom houses and 8 x 2 bedroom flats. 45 car parking spaces are provided. These are provided on plot for the 3 bedroom houses and block paved parking bays for the remainder of the units.
5. A 210m² area of unequipped play space is provided within the site.
6. A single point of vehicular access to the site is proposed from Whaddon Road at a central point on the site frontage.
7. The application proposes the erection of a 1.8m high close-boarded fence along the boundaries of the site with landscaping shown inside the fence.

Planning History

8. In August 2004 Members considered an outline application for the erection of 24 affordable dwellings on this site (**Ref: S/1118/04/O**). Following a visit to the site Members were minded to approve the application, subject to it being advertised as a departure from the Development Plan, referred to GO-East, and not being called in for determination. Prior to such advertisement and referral the applicants would be required to undertake that they would enter into a Section 106 Legal Agreement requiring that the affordable housing be for rental only, that the status would continue in perpetuity, and that public open space and a children's play area would be

provided. In addition matters of visibility, health and safety and flood risk should be resolved prior to referral to GO-East.

9. The application was referred to GO-East who resolved that the Local Planning Authority could determine the application. However at the time of writing this report the Section 106 Agreement is awaiting final completion and outline consent has not been issued.

Planning Policy

10. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (“The County Structure Plan”) restricts development in the countryside unless it can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular location.
11. **Policy P5/5** of the Structure Plan states that small-scale housing developments will be permitted in villages only where appropriate and having regard to the need for affordable rural housing.
12. **Policy SE8** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (“The Local Plan”) states that residential development outside village frameworks will not normally be permitted.
13. **Policy HG8** of the Local Plan states that as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Plan, planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on sites within or adjoining villages. The Policy sets out a range of criteria that need to be met including a requirement that the site is well related to the built-up area of the settlement and the scale of the scheme is appropriate to the size and character of the village and; the development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.
14. The Local Development Framework Submission Draft 2006 **Policy HG/5** rehearses the criteria of Policy HG8 but adds that a site should be well related to facilities and services within the village.

Consultation

15. **Meldreth Parish Council** recommends approval. It states “Meldreth Parish Council supports this application, considering there to be no harm to the community. However, the Council would like South Cambridgeshire District Council to take note of the following points:
 - a) Given that a 60 mph speed restriction is in place along the roadway adjacent to the site, developers to provide a 1.8m wide footway (as set out in the planning report of a previous application by the Director of Development Services Ref. S/1118/04/O dated 4th August 2004).
 - b) Adequate street lighting to be provided in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council specifications along the 1.8m wide footway and within the development.”
16. The **Local Highway Authority** comments in respect of the initial drawings that the site is outside the built up framework of the village alongside a road subject only to the national speed restriction of 60mph where vehicle speed is high. It is questioned whether this is really a reasonable sustainable location for new dwellings. If approval is to be granted various detailed amendments are required to the layout.

17. The provision of the footpath link to West Way as an alternative to providing a footway adjacent to the carriageway of Whaddon Road is accepted. However, it is essential that the physical link be made to West Way rather than just to the site boundary and as a result the red edged site area needs to be extended. The footpath link would be considered for ultimate adoption.
18. Comments on the amended drawings will be reported verbally.
19. The **Development Officer** supports the scheme and the number of affordable units. The units have been revised due to transferred funding by the Housing Corporation so that 13 of the units are to be for rent and 11 for shared ownership. Flagship Housing is one of the preferred partners and this size of scheme supports the local needs survey. The Public Open Space is to be incorporated into the Section 106 and retained by Flagship.
20. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests that conditions be attached to any consent restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the period of construction, and requiring an investigation of the site to establish the nature and extent of any contamination together with any remedial works. An infomative should be attached to any consent in respect of the use of driven pile foundations.
21. The **Environment Agency** points out that a Flood Risk Assessment is required.
22. The **Council's Drainage Manager** requests a Flood Risk Assessment with an indication of the impact of the development on the award drain at the front of the site and should also indicate the method of disposal of surface water drainage. Under the Council's Land Drainage by-laws, no obstructions will be allowed within 5-metres of the award drain.
23. The **Cambridgeshire Archaeology** requests a condition requiring that the site be the subject to a programme of archaeological investigation prior to any consent.
24. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue** requests that adequate provision be made for fire hydrants within the scheme by way of a planning condition.
25. The comments of the **Cultural Services Manager** will be reported at the meeting.

Representations

26. None received

Planning Comments – Key Issues

27. The key issues to be considered with this application are whether the site complies with the criteria set out in Policy HG8 of the Local Plan in respect of the need for affordable housing, the suitability of the location of the site (including highway and drainage issues), the scale of development proposed and its impact on the rural landscape, the layout of the site, and any impact on the amenity of the occupiers of adjacent dwellings.
28. In reporting the outline application to Members in August 2004 I expressed my concern that the location of the site did not comply with the criteria set out in Policy HG8 of the Local Plan 2004. Having visited the site prior to the meeting and taken into account all material considerations Members resolved to support the use of this

site for affordable housing. The application was advertised as a departure from the Development Plan and referred to GO-East, who having considered the matter was content for this Authority to take the decision.

29. Although the outline consent has yet to be issued the Section 106 Agreement is nearing completion, which would allow that application to be approved. The current application cannot therefore be considered as a submission of reserved matters at this stage but I am content that Members have accepted the principle of development of the site and that unless there has been any material change in circumstances since August 2004 that support should be carried through to this submission.
30. In resolving to grant outline consent Members specified that all 24 affordable dwellings should be for rent. Since that time there have been discussions about the mix of tenure and 13 of the dwellings are now proposed for rent and 11 for shared ownership. The proposed change of tenure has been agreed with the Development Officer and Local Member. Members acceptance of this change is sought through the full application.
31. At the time of the outline application the Local Highway Authority sought the provision of a footpath link from the proposed entrance to the site on Whaddon Road to run southeast to link up to the existing footpath network at the junction of Whaddon Road and Kneesworth Road. That requirement would have been a condition of the outline consent had it been issued. Rather than providing a link as described the current application proposes a footpath link through the site into West Way and onto the existing footpath along the Kneesworth Road. To achieve that, the application site has been amended to include land between the current boundary of the site and the highway in West Way. The additional land is not within the ownership of the applicant but belongs to this Council and revised ownership certificates have been served.
32. Meldreth Parish Council has commented that it would wish to see the provision of the footway along the Whaddon Road, as originally requested, given that the site is located within the 60mph speed restriction. Whilst the Local Highway Authority has not objected to the proposed link to West Way I understand that its preferred option remains the footway along Whaddon Road. West Way itself does not have a dedicated footpath. I have asked the applicant to submit additional information setting out why a footway along the Whaddon Road is not included as part of the scheme.
33. The drawings have been amended to incorporate other comments made by the Local Highway Authority. Its comments on the amended drawings will be reported at the meeting.
34. The site is located away from the main village of Meldreth and it is important to ensure that the boundaries of the site are adequately landscaped to minimise the visual impact of the development. The submitted drawing shows a buffer zone of planting of between 4m and 6m wide on the north west and south west boundaries. The other boundaries would be planted with a mixed native hedge.
35. The application proposes an area of open space, which was suggested at the outline stage and is provided for within the draft Section 106 Agreement. I was disappointed at the initial layout of buildings around the area open space, in particular Plots 5-7 which presented an end gable to that area. At that time the open space was partly surrounded by a 1.8m high brick wall which was not appropriate. The amended drawings attempt to address this issue by rearranging units within the site so that a

block of four plats is now facing the open space. The views of the Cultural Service Manager on this proposed layout will be reported at the meeting.

36. A Flood Risk Assessment is currently being carried out and I have suggested that the applicant contacts the Councils' Drainage Manager to ensure that the impact of the development on the award drains is properly assessed.
37. In my view that proposed layout of the site, as amended, does not have an adverse impact on the amenity of occupiers of adjacent dwellings in West Way.
38. The Chief Environmental Health Officer has requested a condition be attached to any consent requiring an investigation of the site to look at the possibility of contamination. I understand that the applicant has already commissioned a study which will be submitted for consideration shortly.
39. The affordable housing can be secured by progressing the Section 106 Agreement that is currently being drafted. The agreement can be required by condition of any consent.
40. I will report any comments received in respect of the amended drawings at the meeting but provided that all outstanding matters can be satisfactorily resolved I will recommend that consent be granted

Recommendation

41. Subject to the receipt of consultations in respect of the amended plans and the resolution of all outstanding matters referred to under Planning Comments above, that consent is granted subject to safeguarding conditions.

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: **P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development)
 - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: **HG8** (Exceptions Policy for Affordable Housing)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Highway safety
 - Visual impact on the locality

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
- Planning File Refs: S/2365/05/F & S/1118/04/O

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