

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee

5<sup>th</sup> April 2006

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/0057/06/RM - Stow-cum-Quy**  
**Erection of 48 Dwellings Including 24 affordable Dwellings, Land at Main Street for**  
**Croudance Homes Ltd**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval**  
**Date for Determination: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2006 (Major Application)**

### Site and Proposal

1. Vacant site of 1.0349ha on the south-eastern side of Main Street with Herrings Close to the south west, open arable land to the south-east (green belt) and the former vicarage, a Grade II\* Listed Building and its gardens to the north-east.
2. There are a group of mature trees, protected by a Trees Preservation Order, on the Main Street frontage. The Reserved Matters application, received 13<sup>th</sup> January, proposes the erection of 48 dwellings, comprising 24 market and 24 affordable.
3. The breakdown of the accommodation is:
  - i) Market -
    - 2 x 1 bed
    - 4 x 2 bed
    - 13 x 3 bed
    - 5 x 3 bed

**24 total**
  - ii Affordable -
    - 6 x 1 bed
    - 12 x 2 bed
    - 12 x 2 bed

**24 total**
  - ii) Overall -
    - 8 x 1 bed
    - 16 x 2 bed
    - 19 x 3 bed
    - 5 x 4 bed

**48 total**

### History

4. Consent granted in 1997 for the front section of the site, the plot being allocated in the 1993 Local Plan. The same plot was refused consent in 2001 for reasons of lack of affordable housing and insufficient use of land.
5. At the September 2002 Committee, following a visit to the site, members were minded to approve two applications one for 16 dwellings, inclusive 50% affordable,

on the front section of the site, and “residential development”, inclusive 50% affordable, on the whole site.

6. Both applications were Departure from the Development Plan and, as such, were advertised and referred to Go-East for comment. The response from Go-East was that it did not wish to intervene and it was for the Council to determine the applications. Approvals were subsequently issued with a Section 106 covering the matter of affordable housing, together with the transfer of the land and trees at the front to the Parish Council.
7. As subsequent application for 50 houses was refused under delegated powers in July 2005 for the reasons that:

1. Policies of both the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003 and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2004 reinforced by Government advice contained in PPS1 “delivering Sustainable Development” and PPG3 “Housing”, aim to promote high quality designs, and living environments, in the layouts of new developments.

The submitted scheme fails to meet these aims in all respects in that the proposed scheme, which is urban in character, would result in a nucleus of high density development contrary to the loosely spaced linear form of the village. The layout is tight to all external boundaries of the site resulting in the loss of, or future loss of, existing trees, 2½ and 3 storey housing, the rear gardens of which are only 10.0m - 12.0m deep, - insufficient to protect the existing greenery and/or provide adequate structural landscape to this important countryside and green belt boundary. Inadequate space is provided within the site for other landscaping. Other important trees within the site will be lost or severely compromised.

Notwithstanding the above fundamental objections to the whole design approach taken in respect of the application, the un-dimensions road layout for the storage of residents’ wheelie bins, not for their convenient and safe collection.

2. The site is immediately adjacent the Vicarage, a Grade II\* Listed Building. Policies of both the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003, and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2004, reinforced by Government advice in PPG15 “Planning and the Historic Environment” seeks to protect the character and setting of such important buildings.

The erection of a block of flats 11.8m high and 17.0m wide, sited only 1.5m off the treed boundary and within 12.0m of the Vicarage, would be contrary to the above aims, - a factor further compounded by the unsuccessful architectural approach to suggest a late nineteenth century villa, presumably in an attempt to compliment the Vicarage.

Notwithstanding the above, other planned development along the north-western boundary of the site, sited close to the boundary, will intrude into the setting of the Listed Building and detract from its character and appearance.

## Policy

- i) **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**  
**P1/3** Sustainable design in Built development  
**P7/2** Biodiversity  
**P7/6** Historic Built Environment.

- ii) **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
  - SE5** List in Infill Villages
  - HG9** Residential Care Homes
  - HG7** Affordable Housing on site within Village Frameworks
  - HG10** Housing Mix and Design
  - Appendix 7/1** Standards for car Parking Provision
  - RT2** Public Open Space
  - EN28** Development within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building

## **Consultations**

8. Stow-cum-Quy Parish Council states:

“The Council generally felt that the revised application was a significant improvement on the previous design. This submission would appear to have appreciate architectural merit

The layout and design are acknowledged to respond to the site respect the original vicarage.

The number of houses is still felt to be excessive, and the impact on the village will be considerable, particularly the inevitable increase in traffic. However, it is not considered desirable to have fewer but larger houses. There is a pressing need for small houses in Quy. All recently built individual or pairs of houses are substantial.

It has been recorded that 50% of all size houses will be “low cost”.

Traffic is a problem, particularly during the morning rush hour, often with queues of cars right through the village from the traffic lights by the church to Colliers Lane. This development is going to exacerbate the problem. If the houses are built with no alteration to the existing road layout, the traffic problem will be much grater and last much longer. Residents of Herrons Close will be further adversely affected by cars from the new estate queuing to join Stow Road.

It has been requested that the junctions of Stow Road/Main Street/Herrons Close could be combined to a single junction with a roundabout. This would help to reduce the problem and have an additional advantage of contributing to reducing traffic speed through the village at quite periods of the day. Could the developer be asked to provide this?

Parking on the site is clearly inadequately, and the Council are concerned that cars will be parked along the new roads, but also Main Street, and probably elsewhere. This would not be acceptable.

There remains uncertainly about the new houses, is included. This will tend to encourage children to play on the new roads, which will be busy, and will be crowded with parked cars.

It was felt that some of the large houses, through centrally located, were out if scale. Similar sized houses are less dominating because the top floor is incorporated in the roof.

Convenient space for refuse and recycling bins does not seem to have included for all the houses. This is important, or they will tend to be left out. This results in untidy and unsanitary conditions.

Reassurance is required that the infrastructure will tolerate this development. Sewage is already a problem, and a sewer run below the site. Will the electricity service have sufficient capacity, and will a new sub-station be required.

The Council would be able to support this application if a number of houses were to be omitted. This would release space for additional parking, play areas, bin storage and would help to reduce the impact of traffic on the village.

The Parish Council would be prepared to take over responsibility of any additional open spaces if they can be planned as, either an extension to the front area already agreed or a separate block, subject of course to agreement and a further commuted sum being paid”.

9. **The Local Highway Authority** has no objections to the amended drawing No. 046/10 rev A which overcomes its earlier comments.
10. **The Environment Agency** has no comments other than to ensure the disposal of surface and foul water is satisfactory. (NB - this would have been conditioned on the outline application.)
11. **Swaffham Internal Drainage Board** advises that, although the site is outside the district boundary, it actually drains into the district. No objections are raised to the use of soakaways for the entire development; if another system is proposed the Board should be re-consulted.
12. **English Heritage** has commented on two issues, firstly the frontage buildings and their relationship to the Vicarage, and secondly the remainder of the site o the gardens of the Vicarage.
  - i) **The Vicarage** “As regards the frontage buildings which will create a ‘street scene’ in combination to the Vicarage the reduction in scale of Building A is welcomed..., as long as the buildings do not challenge the Vicarage“ Other points are made regarding the fenestration, and other details of the building. The block of flats, on the other side of the estate road, is set well back from the road which reduces its impact, but the 3 rooflights should be omitted and a stained glass window should be introduced into the blind arch on the street elevation.
  - ii) **The Gardens** The layout would be improved if the estate road could be curved towards the boundary with the Vicarage to create and area of breathing space”. The traditional fans in the designs of the houses remains unsuccessful.
13. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** has not replied to the consultation.
14. **The General Works Manager**, SCDC states that all plots have adequate rear access for bin storage but there are some private drives where the distances bins will have to be pulled are in excess of 25.0m. To facilitate the turning of the RCV, the turning head at the top of the cul-de-sac will need to be provided with 6.0m kerb radii.
15. **The Conservation Manager** has no objections to the scheme insofar as it affects the setting of the Vicarage, stating:

”The revised design of units adjacent the Vicarage is more modest which will not visually compete with the status and character of this important historic building. The revised design has an improved relationship with the Vicarage which will not diminish

the architectural status of the Vicarage in the village as a whole, helping retaining its dominance in the streetscape.”

There is criticism at the apparent lack of a landscape plan and the treatment of the outer boundaries of the site, the lack of public open space and lack of public art provision.

16. **The Trees and Landscape Officer** is of the view that, whilst this scheme is preferable to the previous, the following issues remain:
- a) The proximity of the access at the entrance of the site will compromise the line tree (T4). Can the road be moved? Can the footpath be deleted? If not, can it be “no dig” construction?
  - b) Plots 23-25 should be moved 2.0m further away from the boundary to afford the Sycamore (T36) adequate clearance.
  - c) I agree that the 2 horse-chestnuts (T49 and T50) can be removed.
  - d) Various car-parking areas should be of “no dig” construction.
  - e) The multi-stemmed Elm adjacent Plot 37 (T17) should be retained.
  - f) Conditions are needed for tree protection and landscaping.

#### **Representations**

17. A letter on behalf of the corner of the Vicarage objects to the proposal for the reasons:
- a) Even though the numbers of dwellings has been reduced by two, it remains contrary to policies HG10 and EN28 of the Local Plan (Housing mix and design and setting of Listed Buildings) and the aims of PPG15.
  - b) The block adjacent the Vicarage has been substantially reduced whereby it is now at odds with the Vicarage and the flats at plots 43-48.
  - c) Overlooking from plots 3, 4 and 5.
  - d) Noise and disturbance from parking area
  - e) The applicants have made no attempt to contact my client to discuss the development.
  - f) It does seem strange that large open spaces and green areas have been provided on the opposite side of the site adjacent 7 Main Street, but not against my client's property.
  - g) Visibility splays appear inadequate and will entail the cutting back of vegetation which overhangs the highway.
  - h) Local difficulties of both foul and s.w. drainage
  - i) Too dense a development

*Four residents of Herrings Close adjacent have objected for the reasons:*

- a) Density too high
- b) Not enough parking spaces
- c) Too small gardens for many properties and lack of public open space
- d) Lack of buffer between new and existing properties
- e) Removal of tree on boundary
- f) Development does not benefit the community
- g) Will take away village and community spirit

- h) Additional traffic would create gridlock
- i) Support the need for new housing, and particularly the need for Affordable houses, but not crammed on every possible site
- j) The reduction to 4% does little to alter the scheme
- k) Still over the 30 houses approved for the site, and will represent a 15% increase in the number of dwellings in the village
- l) The gas tank could create problems of Health and Safety
- m) Lack of school provision and access to school
- n) Noise and pollution from traffic

A letter on behalf of the farming company which owns the land to the rear asks for a high and solid barrier on the rear boundary to prevent the risk of trespass and rubbish dumping.

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

18. Whilst this is a Reserved Matters application, various issues have been raised by consultees and neighbours which are:

- (i) Density
- (ii) Effect on Listed Building
- (iii) Traffic
- (iv) Lack of infrastructure
- (v) Lack of public open space
- (vi) Boundary treatment/landscaping
- (vii) Parking

**(i) Density.** The overall density is 46.3dpha. Whilst accepting that this is high, Members should look at the overall housing mix, and especially note that, of the 48 houses, only five are to be 4-bedroomed. From experience of other housing developments, this is a very low percentage. It is imperative to look at the scheme itself, its layout and overall design, not just as to whether or not a specific number is right or wrong.

When the outline application was submitted, reference was made by the agent that, with a site area of just over 1ha, a scheme of 30+ could be achieved to reach the Government's **minimum** standard.

**(ii) Effect on Listed Building.** Both English Heritage and the Conservation Manager have no objections to the group of buildings immediately adjacent to the vicarage, although the former has raised several points of detail to improve the appearance of the building. It has also been suggested that the estate road should be "curved round" to run closer to the vicarage garden to maintain an element of open space.

The alignment of the road is partly dictated by the route of a public sewer which crosses the site; if diverted closer to the boundary of the vicarage it would increase noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the vicarage.

**(iii) Traffic.** During the peak morning rush hour traffic on the main road through the village, traffic queues back from the Quay interchange/Traffic lights as far as the crossroads in the centre of the village. In the other direction it queues on the Newmarket Road back as far as the Prince Albert Public House.

Vehicles from the planned 48 new dwellings will add to this problem but the Local Highway Authority has not raised objections to the amount of traffic generated and, if taken as a percentage of the traffic already on the B1102, it would be infinitesimal. The local view is that the junction of the B1102, Main Street and Herrings Close should be re-planned and re-aligned to incorporate either a mini-roundabout(s) and/or traffic lights.

Such a solution is not justifiable bearing in mind the fact that the site already has the benefit of a planning consent.

**(iv) Lack of infrastructure.** Although the village does have a shop/Post Office and three public houses, there is no village school. The County Council, as Education Authority, has not asked for a contribution towards extra school places.

Neither Anglian Water nor the Environment Agency have objected for reasons of inadequate drainage.

**(v) Lack of Public Open Space.** The mature trees on the frontage of the site, and the land associated with them, is to be transferred to the Parish Council under the 106 Agreement. This had an area of 162m<sup>2</sup>.

The current layout proposes plots 43-48, a block of flats, to be set further back into the site on the south-western corner and the Developer is offering part of the space in front, which abuts the open space containing the trees, to the Parish Council. This is an additional 178m<sup>2</sup>, making a total of 340m<sup>2</sup>.

No additional public open space (P.O.S.) was requested at the time of the outline application. Policy RT2 asks for 60m<sup>2</sup> of P.O.S. per dwelling for schemes of 21+ houses. For this scheme, as submitted, we should be asking for 24 x 60.0m (1440m<sup>2</sup>) of P.O.S. If this area were to be provided, plots would be lost, whereby there would undoubtedly be less than 21 market houses. The additional 4 houses would, in themselves, require 4 x 60m<sup>2</sup> = 240m<sup>2</sup> of P.O.S. That offered, plus that covered by the 106 agreement, amounts to 340m<sup>2</sup>.

In the circumstances, I feel that this is sufficient, albeit not ideal.

**(vi) Boundary treatment/landscaping.** No landscaping scheme has been submitted in detail, albeit indicative areas for planting have been shown.

The important countryside boundary, south-east, has been re-planned since the previous refused scheme, whereby houses **front** onto a 5.0m planting belt, as opposed to it being in the rear gardens. There is space of both of the side boundaries, to the gardens of Herrings Close and the vicarage, for the retention and reinforcement of existing hedges/trees. In respect of the Trees and Landscape Officer's comments, the point of access is virtually fixed by the geometry of the site and the need for visibility splays. The footpath adjacent the lime tree will be hand dug and all underground services will be under the footpath on the opposite side of the road.

**(vii) Parking.** Car parking is in accordance with the Authority's standards, but visitor parking is short; six more spaces are required.

19. For the above reasons I am satisfied that the scheme is basically acceptable and is a great improvement on that previously refused. However, some minor changes are

needed and an addendum to the Section 106 for the transfer of the Public Open Space to the Parish Council.

### **Recommendation**

20. Delegated approval as outlined above.

### **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:**
    - P1/3** (Sustainable Design in Built Development)
    - P7/2** (Biodiversity)
    - P7/6** (Historic Built Environment)
  - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
    - SE9** (Village Edges)
    - HG7** (Affordable Housing on Sites within Village Frameworks)
    - HG10** (Housing Mix and Design)
    - Appendix 7/1** (Standards for Car-parking Provision)
    - RT2** (Public Open Space)
    - EN28** (Development within the Curtilage or setting of a Listed Building.)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
  - Contrary to policies of Local Plan
  - Detrimental to setting of vicarage
  - Noise and disturbance
  - Inadequate infrastructure
  - Too high a density
  - Inadequate parking
  - Lack of public open space
  - No benefit to local community
  - Traffic congestion

**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 Files Ref: S/1203/97/O, S/0675/01/O, S/1154/02/O, S/1155/02/O and S/0911/05/RM

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