

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 10th May 2006
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0618/06/O - Longstanton
Erection of Two Bungalows, Land at Clive Hall Drive/Mills Lane for D J Harradine

Recommendation: Refusal
Date for determination: 24th May 2006

Departure Application

Conservation Area

Site and Proposal

1. The 0.25 ha site lies to the north-east of the junction of Mills Lane and Clive Hall Drive and has a frontage to both roads. The site is pastureland, surrounded on its boundaries with hedgerows and young trees. There is a wooden shed close to Clive Hall Drive. Directly opposite, to the north-west, there are two dwellings fronting Mills Lane. Further along Mills Lane, to the north-east, there is a group of three dwellings and a caravan park. Oakington Barracks lies beyond these to the north-west. To the south and south-west there are detached dwellings in Clive Hall Drive, and to the south east, there is Badger's Holt mobile home park.
2. The outline application, dated 17th March 2006, proposes the erection of 2 bungalows on the site. All detailed matters are reserved for subsequent approval. The application is supported by Planning and Design and access statements. Indicative drawings show two bungalows linked by a single-storey range providing car ports. Good-quality external materials are intended (stained timber boarding, dark-stained timber windows and clay pantiles). These together form a three-sided courtyard in the style of a farmyard. Landscaping to provide an 'orchard'-effect adjacent to the dwellings is also proposed.
3. The proposal represents a density of 8 dwellings per hectare.

Planning History

4. The site has a long history of refusals for residential development dating back to 1975. Two applications in 1994 and 1997 were withdrawn prior to the issue of decision notices refusing planning permission and in 1999 a single bungalow was refused.
5. Planning permission for the erection of three dwellings on the site was refused by Members May 2005, following a site visit (**S/0475/05/O**). The applicant has lodged an appeal against this decision, which is to be considered at a hearing (at a date to be confirmed).
6. Planning application for development identical to the current proposal, but not supported by indicative drawings, was recommended for refusal at 7th December 2005 (**S/1907/05/O**). The recommended reasons for refusal were as follows:
 1. *The site is located in the countryside and residential development is contrary to the following Policies:*

- (a) *Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 which restricts development in the countryside to proposals which can demonstrate an essential need for a particular rural location. No essential need has been demonstrated in this case; and*
 - (b) *Policies SE8 and Longstanton 5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 in that the development is not infilling within the physical framework of Longstanton as defined on the Inset Map No 67. The country lane character of Mills Lane would be eroded and development in this location would make it difficult to resist further similar proposals, which cumulatively would damage both the rural character of this part of Longstanton and undermine policies aimed at protecting the countryside from unnecessary development.*
2. *The site lies within the extended Longstanton Conservation Area. Notwithstanding the inadequate standard of the information of the development proposals submitted with the application, the Local Planning Authority considers that the erection of two dwellings on this land would neither preserve nor enhance the existing landscape setting of the village and the rural character and open appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. For these reasons, the proposal would be contrary to Policy P7/6 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy EN30 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.*
 3. *Notwithstanding the above reasons for refusal, the proposal does not contain sufficient information of surface water and foul water drainage to enable the impact of the development on the environment to be assessed. For this reason, the proposal does not conform to Policy CS5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.*
7. The application was withdrawn before being considered by Committee.

Planning Policy

8. The site is outside the village framework defined in the 2004 Local Plan. The site is included within the extended Conservation Area for Longstanton which has been designated following a period of public consultation and was adopted by Full Council as Council policy on 22nd September this year.
9. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 states: development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposal can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
10. **Policy P7/6** (Historic Built Environment) LPA's will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
11. **Policy SE4** (Group Villages) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states that redevelopment up a maximum scheme of 8 dwellings will be permitted within the village framework provided that the retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village; the development would be sensitive to the character of the village and the amenities of neighbours, the village has the necessary infrastructure capacity and residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly policy EM8 (loss of employment sites in villages).
12. **Policy SE8** of the 2004 Local Plan states: there is a general presumption in favour of residential development within village frameworks. Residential development outside these frameworks will not be permitted.

13. **Policy SE9** (Village Edges) - development on the edge of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact of development on the countryside.
14. **Policy HG8** (Exceptions Policy for Affordable Housing) Planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing on sites adjoining villages provided
 - a) the scheme is limited to those in 'housing need';
 - b) the number, size, design, mix and tenure are appropriate to identified local need;
 - c) the development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.
15. **Policy CS5 (Flood Protection)** – planning permission will not be granted where the site is likely to increase flood risk unless it can be demonstrated that the effect can be overcome by appropriate alleviation and mitigation measures.
16. **Policy EN30** (Development in Conservation Areas) – proposals in conservation areas will be expected to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the area, especially in terms of their scale, massing, roof materials and wall materials. Schemes that do not specify traditional local materials or details that do not fit comfortably into their context will not be permitted. Applications should be accompanied by sufficient details to allow their impact on the conservation area to be assessed.
17. **Policy Longstanton 5** states development in Longstanton St Michael's will be restricted to infilling within the built-up framework of the village (infilling is defined in Policy SE5). The supporting text states "in particular, the country lane character of St Michael's Lane and Mills Lane will be retained..."

Local Development Framework Submission Draft (2006)

18. **Policy SP/15** (Conservation Area and Green Separation at Longstanton) - Countryside within the conservation area at Longstanton will be included in its entirety within the Green Separation between Longstanton and Northstowe. Urban uses and open space uses such as playing fields, allotments or cemeteries will not be permitted. The open aspect of the fields affording views of All Saints Church will be maintained, elsewhere the landscape character of a series of hedged paddocks, small copses and tree belts will be maintained and enhanced.
19. The supporting text states: 'The village character of Longstanton and Oakington and the individual landscape character in the areas adjoining them has been taken into account in determining the minimum extent and landscape treatment of the Green Separation. An absolute minimum of 200m between the edge of the built up area of the town and the village frameworks of the two villages is required to allow for either woodland copses which are deep enough to close off views through an area, or a series of paddocks and tree lined hedgerows that provides sufficient depth to filter views. The Green Belt will be extended to cover these areas to provide the certainty that they will be kept free from development. The predominant historic character of land adjoining Longstanton comprises a series of paddocks with hedgerows and small copses. This landscape character will be used as an appropriate treatment to enhance most of the landscape areas adjoining Longstanton, in particular the golf course and land adjoining Magdalene Close. The paddocks bounded by Mills Lane and St Michael's Lane already exhibit that character' (Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 Site Specific Policies).

20. Longstanton is included within the Fen Edge parishes. These parishes are characterised by low-lying, flat open landscape with extensive vista. Settlements sit low in the landscape, often screened by thick hedgerows to paddocks, copses etc. There is a more loose arrangement of building facing the roads on some village approaches, with open areas and mature hedges interspersed.

Consultations

21. **Longstanton Parish Council** has recommended approval, but has made no additional comment.
22. **Council's Conservation Manager** – The CM notes that the proposal now includes indicative designs, however no justification has been provided for development in the countryside. He considers that this site should be left undeveloped to ensure maximum separation between Longstanton and the proposed new development at Northstowe. Aside from the principle of development he would not wish to see a pair of detached bungalows built here, although the linked arrangement shown in the indicative drawings is a more satisfactory solution.
23. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** – comments awaited.
24. **Environment Agency** - no comments received.

Representations

25. 3 letters of support for the proposal have been received. These comment that:
- The applicant has kept the site in a tidy state and has planted hedgerows.
 - The site should be within the village framework as an infill area.
 - A modest and sensible addition to the housing stock at this end of the village.
 - A better layout than some others in the village.
26. 3 letters of objections have been received, on the grounds that:
- The development would nullify the conception of a buffer strip of land/ green belt between Longstanton and the proposed new town.
 - This would not protect the rural nature of this part of the village.
 - Reduction of green space in the village.
 - Increase in congestion and traffic in the area.
 - Inappropriate for a conservation area.
 - Outside the development framework, contrary to policies P1/2, SE4, SE8 and Longstanton 5.
 - Sufficient dwellings are being constructed in Longstanton to cater for local need.
 - Loss of good agricultural land.
 - Harmful ribbon development.
 - A few years ago the owner planted hedge plants and trees in a line across his land parallel to Clive Hall boundary, artificially creating potential 'plots' either side of the field access.

27. Agent's Representations

In support of the application, the agent states that:

- Since the existing village framework boundary was drawn, the appearance of the site has changed because of the establishment of a mature hedgerow, which provides a visual screen when viewed from the north.

- b. The development will be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact upon the surrounding countryside.
- c. The individual design approach will add to the agricultural character of the Longstanton St Michaels, which is an objective of the conservation area appraisal, and will redress the impact of the existing hard urban edge. In line with the SCDC Design Guide, the new development will be integrated with hedgerows and other copses.
- d. The buildings together with the enhanced landscaping, will improve views of the village from surrounding countryside by masking the modern estate and mobile homes. The proposals will add to the leafy appearance or character of this part of the village.
- e. There will be no access onto Mills Road, so preserving its 'country lane' character.
- f. The proposed new homes will be similar in scale and massing to those existing on Mill Lane, but will be of a much simpler, less domestic form reflecting the agricultural heritage of the village. Materials sympathetic to the locality will be used and intrusive urban materials will be avoided.
- g. The rural character of Mills Lane will not be compromised by the development proposals.

Planning Comments

Village Framework

- 28. The site is outside the village framework defined in the 2004 Local Plan and its development for residential purposes would be contrary Policy SE8 and to the specific Policy Longstanton 5 which seeks to retain the "country lane" character of Mills Lane by restricting developments to infilling (i.e. no more than 2 dwellings) within the village framework. Policy SE5 of the Local Plan confirms that infilling is considered as development in an otherwise built-up frontage. The existing site is not built up and so cannot be considered as infilling, notwithstanding that it is also outside the village framework.
- 29. The case for an exception to be made in this case is based upon the assessment that there will be no material harm to the country lane character as a result of the development. The site is part of an extensive open and green area which creates a strong rural setting to the village. The erection of two bungalows and the various paraphernalia associated with domestic use would fundamentally alter the character and appearance of the site and its contribution to the setting of the village. In refusing planning application S/0475/05/O. Members accepted that development of the site would cause harm to the character of the area, and the same concern applies to the current proposal as the openness of the site would be harmed in a similar way. Account should be taken of the particular form and appearance of the two dwellings, and associated landscaping, as shown in the submitted indicative drawings. In my opinion, the harm identified above would not be offset by the admittedly sensitive approach illustrated in these drawings.
- 30. If allowed, this development would set a precedent for development on other sites outside village frameworks, to the progressive detriment of the appearance of the countryside.

Conservation Area

- 31. The site lies within the recently designated extension to the Longstanton Conservation Area. The supporting statement of the report describes the open land between Mills Lane and St Michael's as 'very important to the landscape setting of the village'. As noted above, the Conservation Manager considers that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and he recommends refusal.

Representations

32. The considerations put forward by the agent and supporters of the proposal have been carefully considered. The agent has not attempted to deny that the site lies outside the village framework and that the proposal is contrary to the Council's longstanding policy of protection of the countryside from unnecessary development. The agent has not put forward any ground for consideration under the housing exceptions policy, HG8. As the proposal is not acceptable in principle (that is, it does not comply with part c) consideration under HG8 is not appropriate in this case. For the reasons set out above I do not consider that it amounts to an overriding reason to allow the proposed development.

Recommendation

33. Refusal for the following reasons:

1. The site is located in the countryside beyond the village framework of Longstanton and, as such, residential development would be harmful and would be contrary to the following policies:
 - (a) Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 which restricts development in the countryside to proposals which can demonstrate an essential need for a particular rural location. No essential need has been demonstrated in this case; and
 - (b) Policies SE8 and Longstanton 5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 in that the development is not infilling within the physical framework of Longstanton as defined on the Inset Map No 67. The country lane character of Mills Lane would be eroded and development in this location would make it difficult to resist further similar proposals, which cumulatively would damage both the rural character of this part of Longstanton and undermine policies aimed at protecting the countryside from unnecessary development.
2. The site lies within the extended Longstanton Conservation Area. Notwithstanding the inadequate standard of the information of the development proposals submitted with the application, the Local Planning Authority considers that the erection of two dwellings on this land would neither preserve nor enhance the existing landscape setting of the village and the rural character and open appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. For these reasons, the proposal would be contrary to Policy P7/6 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy EN30 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

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
- Local Development Framework Submission Draft (2006)
- SCDC Draft Design Guide 2005
- Planning file Refs. S/0618/06/O, S/1907/05/O and S/0475/05/O.

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