

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

4<sup>th</sup> April 2007

**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

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**S/0273/07/O – Impington**  
**Affordable Housing at Land adjacent St Georges Court off Milton Road**  
**for H.R. Builders Ltd and Bedford Pilgrim Housing Association**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval/Refusal**

**Date for determination: 7<sup>th</sup> May 2007**

**Notes:**

**This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the proposal is for affordable housing outside of the defined settlement framework within the Green Belt.**

Members will visit this site on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007.

**Site and Proposal**

1. The application relates to a 0.56 hectares site which is currently an area of paddock land with hedgerows to the north, east and southern boundaries. It lies outside of but immediately adjacent to the village framework. The dwellings on the south side of St Andrews Way are to the north. St Georges Court is to the north west consists of 7 dwellings. St Andrews Way is a mix of detached and terraced dwellings. To the south west is Middle White Farm a former piggery which is now used as a veterinary surgery. The site is generally flat.
2. This outline application seeks approval now for layout and access, with scale, appearance and landscaping to be determined at a later date. This application was registered on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007 and proposes the erection of 20 affordable dwellings. Access to the site is to be obtained via St Georges Court.
3. Parking for 20 cars is to be provided, with 2 disabled parking bays and 2 visitor spaces making a total of 24 car spaces. These are arranged in two parking areas with the access road along the southern side of the site.

**Planning History**

3. **Application Site** In 1981 outline planning permission was refused for residential development for the reasons that the site was within the Green Belt and rural area where development was restricted to agriculture. An appeal was dismissed on the basis that, with the site being in the Green Belt, a development of this nature was unacceptable. This was for market housing and not affordable housing.
4. **St Georges Court** Planning permission granted in 2001 for 7 houses.



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Scale 1/2500 Date 22/3/2007

Centre = 545274 E 263549 N

April 2007 Planning Committee

## Planning Policy

### *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003*

5. **Policy P1/2** relates to development within the countryside being restricted to that which is essential in a rural location such as agriculture or forestry.
6. **Policy P1/3** relates to sustainable design in built development and requires a high standard of design for all new development which responds to the local character of the built environment.
7. **Policy P5/3** relates to density of development being at a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare.
8. **Policy P5/4** relates to meeting identified local housing needs.
9. **Policy P5/5** relates to small scale housing being permitted where appropriate taking into account need for affordable housing, character of the village and level of jobs services.
10. **Policy P6/1** relates to the provision of contributions towards community and infrastructure requirements.
11. **Policy P6/4** relates to the drainage of new developments.
12. **Policy P7/2** relates to developments conserving and enhancing the biodiversity value of the affected area.
13. **Policy P7/4** development must relate sensitively to the local environment and contribute to a sense of place.
14. **Policy P8/1** development should be located where possible in areas that are accessible to public transport.
15. **Policy P9/2a** development in the Green Belt is restricted to that required for agriculture and other uses appropriate to a rural area.

### *South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004*

16. **Policy SE9** development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped.
17. **Policy GB2** planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless special circumstances can be demonstrated. Development is inappropriate unless it comprises affordable housing in accordance with the exception policy HG8 listed below where no suitable sites are available outside the Green Belt. Appropriate development must be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse impact on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.
18. **Policy GB3** development that is appropriate will be located within or adjoining existing complexes.
19. **Policy HG7** stipulates the criteria for affordable housing developments.

20. **Policy HG8** states that, as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Local 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 states that the following criteria will all have to be met:-
- (1) The development proposal includes secure arrangements for ensuring that all the dwellings within the scheme provide affordable housing in perpetuity for those in 'housing need' as defined in policy HG7.
  - (2) The number, size, design, mix and tenure of the dwellings are all confined to, and appropriate to, the strict extent of the identified local need.
  - (3) The site of the proposal 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.
  - (4) The development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.
21. It also states that development under this policy must also: be limited to units of types and sizes required to provide accommodation for those revealed to be in 'housing need' by an up-to-date survey; be occupied only by qualifying persons, subject to cascade provisions; and be secured in perpetuity as to the above provisions (or any agreed departure from them) by planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or an alternative form of equally effective provision.
22. **Policy TP1** seeks to promote the use of more sustainable transport choices and reduce the need to travel by car.
23. **Policy CS1** relates to planning obligations in relation to where it is necessary and relevant.
24. **Policy CS10** financial contributions for education will be sought on developments of 4 or more dwellings.
25. **Policy CS13** relates to the consideration of layout for community safety
26. **Policy EN3** states that, in those cases where new development is permitted in the countryside, the Council will require that (a) the scale, design and layout of the scheme (b) the materials used within it, and (c) the landscaping works are all appropriate to the particular 'Landscape Character Area', and reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.
27. **Policy EN5** relates to the landscaping of new development
- Core Strategy 2007*
28. **Policy ST/2** - refers to locations of housing in rural centres
29. **Policy ST/4** identifies Impington as a rural centre within the settlement hierarchy

## Consultations

30. **Impington Parish Council** - Recommends refusal as located too far away from shops (1900 metres), school (1700 metres), inadequate public transport only 3 buses from stop nearby and 900 metres to stop in Village College, problems with surface water drainage in the vicinity history of flooding. Green Belt.
31. **Housing Development Officer** - Supports application. There is a local need for affordable housing in the village. Whilst it may be the understanding that Arbury Park has addressed the needs of the village this is not the case.
32. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** - No significant impacts.
33. **Environment Operations Manager** - Comments are awaited.
34. **Landscape and Tree Officer** - Existing boundary should be retained no objection in principle subject to landscaping scheme. Good landscape buffers between St Georges Court and new development and to east. Prefer to see strong buffer to south /west. Property frontages and minimal tree avenue would result in a harder view.
35. **Ecology Officer** - Current layout makes little provision for biodiversity. The most important features of the site are its boundary hedges. These should be buffered from development or paths by semi natural grass borders of a minimum 3m. This will prevent the hedges from being over managed. Existing hedge should be strengthened through additional planting. Artificial nest and bat boxes should be integrated into development.
36. **Drainage Manager** - The Council is responsible for an award drain on the downstream side of the site. Request a condition to agree suitable design of surface water drainage.
37. **Local Highway Authority** - additional information is required to assess capacity of existing junctions to manage traffic generated by development. The roads are to be shared but have separate footways the two conditions are mutually exclusive. A redesign or redefinition is required.
38. **Education Officer Cambridgeshire County Council** - Comments are awaited.
39. **Environment Agency** - Comments are awaited.
40. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** - Concerns are raised over the provision of tree and hedgerow planting to the rear of plots 5-12. Creates an area of public realm which will leave the dwellings vulnerable to crime. Similar comments made to the landscape buffer to rear of plots 1-4 and 13-20. Defensible space may be necessary to the side elevation of plots 5 and 12.
41. An **Affordable Housing Panel** was held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Due to the advanced writing of this report it was not possible to include the comments of this panel. These will be reported verbally.

## Representations

42. Seven letters of objections have been received summarised as follows:
  - a. Lack of car parking

- b. Loss of privacy
- c. Schools are located some distance away
- d. Not sustainable location for local services
- e. Nearest open space is 1 mile away
- f. No bus stop near development
- g. Development in the Green Belt development would detract from the openness
- h. Affordable housing does not equate to special circumstances
- i. Noise
- j. Parking chaos in St Georges Court
- k. Narrow access to St Georges Court
- l. Poor drainage in St Andrews Way
- m. Affordable housing already provided by Arbury Park

43. **Councillor Mike Mason (Local Member)** - Object for the following reasons:

1. The site is put forward as a Green Belt Exception Site for affordable housing in a settlement already grossly under provided with the necessary transport and drainage infrastructure. This point has been repeatedly emphasised in representations made during examination of Local Plan 2 and the emerging LDF. (Please see the supplementary LDF evidence submitted by Histon and Impington Parish Councils). The settlement has recently been subject to traffic calming and many residents suffer from surface water surcharge to foul drains during periods of high rainfall. May I please refer you to the recent Kay Hitch Way application at the last Planning Committee. These problems for residents are common throughout the settlement and are particularly worse at the extreme ends of the gravity foul drainage system as at Milton Road, Impington, where surface water from the development would drain to SCDC Award Drain 165 which is already over capacity.
2. The proposed development is poorly sited with respect to traffic and pedestrian access to facilities within the settlement. One section of Milton Road is dangerously narrow with no footway and schools, medical and recreation facilities, are not within walking distance. Furthermore traffic in and around the central areas and on the B1049 is already exceeding road capacity. There is little scope for these difficulties to be overcome or even mitigated by means of conditions.
3. Impington and Histon are regarded as one settlement for planning purposes and 270 affordable housing units are currently under construction in Impington to meet the area need already identified. Notwithstanding this comment it is understood that another site on land already allocated within the settlement, is likely to come forward in the near future. There is therefore no sustainable case for Green Belt development on the edge of the village.
4. The proposals do not satisfy the criteria in Local Plan HG8 (3) and (4) and Note 4.22 (alternative sites). The Proposals do not overcome the well documented "Infrastructure Deficit" in LDF ST/4 Para. 2. (Services, facilities and infrastructure).
5. The Parish Councils and this local member will continue to resist proposals which are unsustainable and detrimental to the existing residents.

44. **Disability Vetting Group** main concern regarding the layout centred around the provision of the disabled car spaces and use of drop kerbs and tactile paving.

## **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

### ***Need***

45. The Council's Housing Development Officer confirms that there is a need for the number of dwellings proposed. Whilst it may be the understanding that Arbury Park has addressed the needs of the village this is not the case. Even with the housing at Arbury Park there is still a need for affordable housing. In Impington there is a need for 130 affordable houses over the next two to five years. In addition there are 1305 people on the active housing register for Impington as at April 2006. Arbury Park is likely to result in 280 affordable housing over the next two to three years. However these are being allocated to the villagers of other areas and not just Impington.

### ***Green Belt***

46. The site is outside of the village framework and within the Green Belt. The key question is whether this site is the most appropriate and that there are no other sites of a similar scale and type that may be more suitable. Any site adjoining Impington will be within the Green Belt. Therefore it is then a question of whether there are any other sites which have a lesser impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The applicants state that to date there have been no other sites coming forward as exception sites. A site has been allocated in Impington for an estimated 42 houses on the north side of Impington Lane and east of Glebe Way. The site will therefore provide up to 14 affordable houses. In addition a recent planning application on the Unwins site Impington Lane was refused and dismissed at appeal for reasons associated with archaeology, loss of employment and flood risk.

### ***Visual impact***

47. The dwellings would be viewed against the backdrop of the dwellings in St Andrews Way thereby not adversely affecting the openness of the Green Belt in this location. The key features of the site are the boundary hedges which should be retained. The layout does not show the retention of these hedges and therefore the visual impact of the development would be greater. On the basis of this layout the development would not be acceptable however it is considered that the site could be developed where by the hedgerows are retained. The applicant has been advised to withdraw the layout and leave this matter for later approval. There is a landscape buffer to the eastern boundary of 10m which will substantially screen the development.
48. There are no public footpaths adjacent the site to afford a public view from the countryside. The main views are from St Georges Way and glimpses from Milton Road.

### ***Sustainability Issues***

49. Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is located away from the centre of Impington and local services it is located on the edge of a village which is designated a rural centre within the settlement hierarchy. The Core Strategy refers to rural centres as the larger more sustainable villages whereby there is no strategic constraint to the amount of housing that can come forward subject to compliance with other policies in the Development Plan.

### ***Highway Safety***

50. Further information has been requested to assess the capacity of the existing junctions. This has been requested and discussions are taking place between the Highway Authority and the applicant.

### ***Car parking***

51. The Council's car parking standards require an average of 1.5 spaces per dwelling = 30 and a maximum of 2 per 3 or more bedrooms in poorly accessible areas = 40. The

proposed parking provision is 24 spaces. As this scheme is for affordable dwellings it is not considered necessary to require the maximum standard. It is considered that 24 spaces are sufficient and I note that the Local Highway Authority are not objecting to the proposal on this particular issue.

***Neighbour amenity***

52. The indicative back to back distances to existing dwellings ranges from 28 metres to 41 metres. This is more than sufficient to protect the residential amenities of the adjacent occupiers. The side elevation of plot 20 is however too close to the boundary with the dwellings to the north which have rear gardens of 12m deep.

***Drainage***

53. The comments of the Environment Agency are awaited, however, it is anticipated that it should be possible to condition the details of surface water drainage. The Councils Drainage Manager has not raised any objections subject to a suitable condition for surface water drainage. In relation to flood risk the site is located a significant distance from any main river.

***Ecology***

56. The proposed layout does not accommodate the important hedgerow features. The applicant has been advised to withdraw the layout and leave this matter for later approval. It is considered that a layout could be designed to accommodate these features.

**Affordable Housing Panel Protocol**

55. The Council normally requires support from the Panel and I will have regard to their views in my final recommendation.

***Other Issues***

57. The development may be subject to contributions for education transport and public art which can be agreed and delivered through a Section 106 legal agreement.

**Recommendation**

58. Subject to the view of the affordable Housing Panel delegated approval/refusal subject to the resolution of layout and highways issues Proposed conditions in the event that, subject to the above matters, the application can be recommended for approval with the signing of a section 106 Legal Agreement to cover affordable housing, education transport and public art.

1. Standard Time Condition – Time limited permission (RCA);
2. No development shall commence until full details of the following reserved matters have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:
  - i. Scale
  - ii. Appearance
  - iii. Landscaping(Reason-The application is for outline permission only and gives insufficient details of the proposed development);
3. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged

or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

(Reason - To enhance the quality of the development and to assimilate it within the area);

4. SC5b and c – Details of surface and foul water drainage (RC5b and c);
5. Details of the treatment of site boundaries shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the work completed in accordance with the approved details before the building(s) are occupied or the development is completed, whichever is the sooner.  
(Reason - To ensure that the appearance of the site does not detract from the character of the area);
6. The permanent space shall be reserved on the site for permanent parking shall be provided before the occupation of the dwellings hereby permitted and thereafter maintained.  
(Reason - In the interests of highway safety);
7. No development shall be commenced until a tree survey and arboricultural method statement detailing the retention and protection of existing trees and hedgerows, and ensuring the supervision and inspection of such measures, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the protection measures shall be implemented as approved.  
(Reason - In order that the layout of the site and the siting of buildings can be assessed in relation to existing trees and to ensure their future retention);
8. Prior to the commencement of the development, hereby approved, details of the public art to be provided within the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the approved scheme shall be implemented.  
(Reason –To ensure that public art is incorporated into and to enhance the character of the development);
9. Prior to the commencement of development hereby approved a biodiversity strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the approved strategy shall be implemented.  
(Reason-To enhance the biodiversity of the development);
10. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a strategy for the use of renewable energy resources and water efficiency shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the approved strategy shall be implemented.  
(Reason – To ensure that the development meets the sustainability aims of the Development Plan);
11. No development shall commence until details of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
  - a) Refuse storage accommodation.  
(Reason - To ensure refuse storage is adequately provided on site without causing visual harm to the area.)
  - b) Materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas.  
(Reason - To ensure that the development enhances the character of the area.)

c) Car parking provision in accordance with the Local Authority standards. (Reason - To ensure adequate car parking provision is provided and suitably laid out);

12. Prior to the occupation of the dwellings hereby permitted the access shall be laid out and made available for use at all times. (Reason In the interest of Highway Safety).

### 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** (development within the countryside being restricted).
    - P1/3** relates to sustainable design in built development.
    - P5/3** relates to density of development.
    - P5/4** relates to meeting identified local housing needs.
    - P5/5** relates to small scale housing being permitted where appropriate.
    - P6/1** provision of contributions towards community and infrastructure requirements.
    - P6/4** relates to the drainage.
    - P7/2** conserving and enhancing the biodiversity.
    - P7/4** development must relate sensitively to the local environment.
    - P8/1** development should be accessible to public transport.
    - P9/2a** development in the Green Belt is restricted to that required for agriculture and other uses appropriate to a rural area.
  - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
    - SE9** development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped.
    - GB2** planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless special circumstances can be demonstrated.
    - GB3** development that is appropriate will be located within or adjoining existing complexes.
    - HG7** stipulates the criteria for affordable housing developments.
    - HG8** states that, as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Local 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.
    - TP1** seeks to promote the use of more sustainable transport choices.
    - CS1** relates to planning obligations.
    - CS10** financial contributions for education.
    - CS13** relates to the consideration of layout for community safety.
    - EN3** states that, in those cases where new development is permitted in the countryside, it should reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.
    - EN5** relates to the landscaping of new development.
  - **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy**, adopted January 2007.
    - Policy ST/2** refers to locations of housing in rural centres.
    - Policy ST/4** identifies Impington as a rural centre within the settlement hierarchy.

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 matters; drainage; sustainability; green belt; amenity, impact on openness.

### **Informatives**

1. Should driven pile foundations be proposed, before development commences, a statement of the method for construction of these foundations should be submitted to and agreed by the District Council's Environmental Health Officer so that noise and vibration can be controlled.
2. During construction, there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site except with the prior permission of the District Council's Environmental Health Officer in accordance with best practice and existing waste management legislation.

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

- Core Strategy 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning file Ref: S/0273/07/F

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