

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4th July 2007

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

S/0520/07/F - STAPLEFORD

Erection of 18 affordable dwellings, Hill Farm, Gog Magog Way, for Granta Housing Society

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 20th June 2007

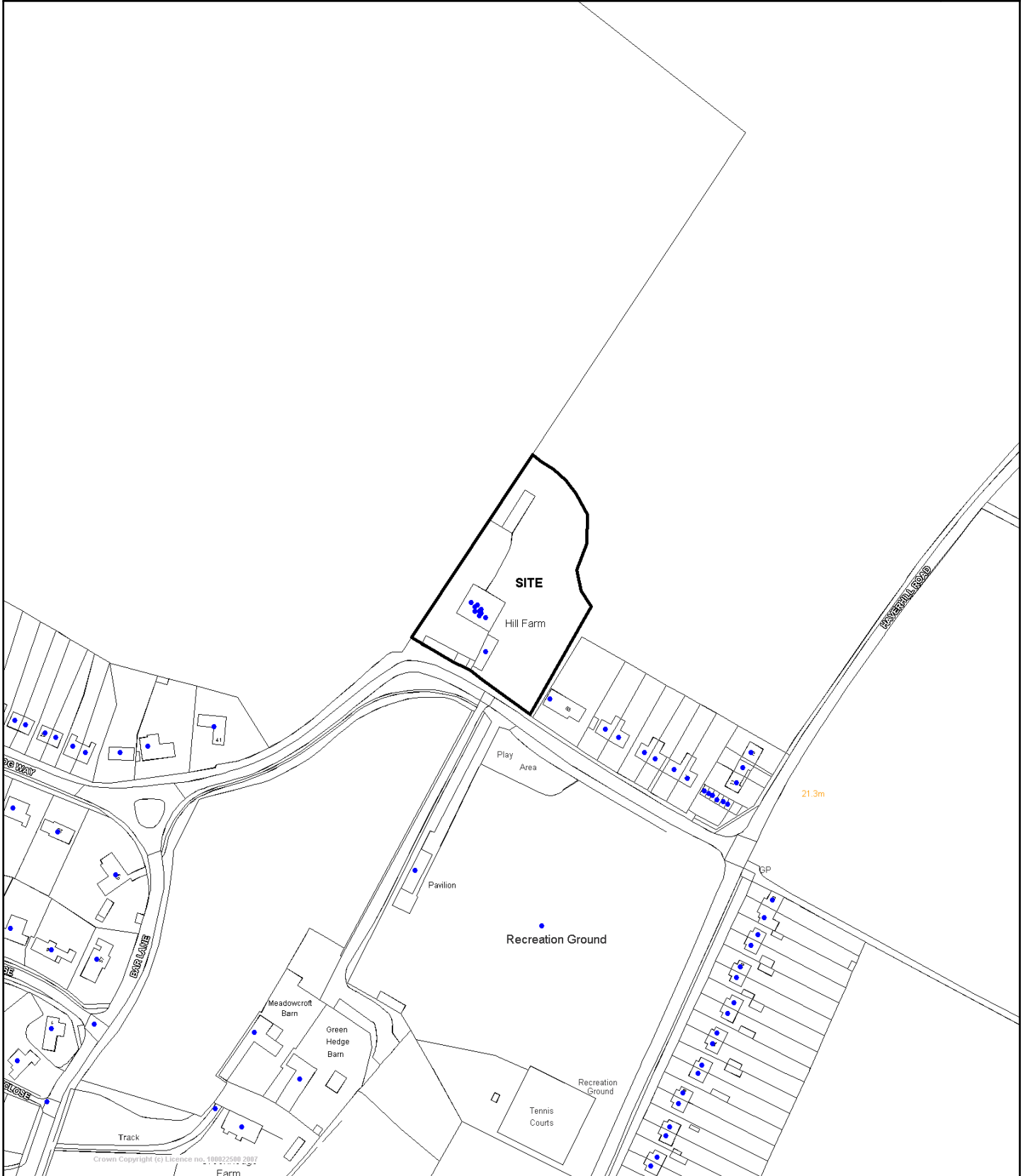
Major Development

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the recommendation of approval conflicts with written representations received from owners or occupiers of property.

Members will visit this site on Monday 2nd July 2007.

Site and Proposal

1. The site, 0.43 hectares in area, is located within the Cambridge Green Belt. A U-shaped group of brick, boarding and blockwork asbestos roof farm buildings with an existing farm access to the west stand in the west corner of the site with a render and asbestos sheeting roof farm building to the north. The remainder of the site is cultivated or uncultivated land. The rear of one of the existing farm buildings sits along the western part of the Gog Magog Way frontage. A hedge runs along the eastern half of the site's Gog Magog Way frontage. The site falls to the north but the land then rises beyond the site to the north. To the west of the site, No 63 Gog Magog Way is a two-storey red brick and concrete interlocking tile roof dwelling. The adjoining boundary of this property is marked by low fencing with some planting.
2. This full application, received 21st March 2007 and amended by plans date stamped 17th May 2007, proposes the erection of 18 affordable dwellings. These comprise 10 x 2-bedroomed and 4 x 3-bedroomed terraced houses and 4 x 2 bedroom flats, grouped into five blocks. All buildings are two-storey. The houses have a ridge height of 8.4 metres and a roof pitch of 35 degrees. A total of 29 car parking spaces are proposed. Perimeter planting is proposed around the development. Visibility splays are shown along Gog Magog Way, including three trees on the opposite side of the road, which are shown to be retained. A footpath link on this opposite verge to the highway is also shown.
3. The density of development equates to approximately 42 dwellings to the hectare. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Flood Risk Assessment and Biodiversity Assessment.
4. A traffic survey was undertaken on behalf of the applicants by highway planning consultants during the morning peak period on Friday 4th May 2007. This showed



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that in the period 8.10am – 9.00am 52 vehicles used the road, which the consultants considered to be a “very low” traffic flow.

5. The applicants have put forward a statement which they wish to be put before Members. This is attached at Appendix 1.

Planning History

6. Planning permission was granted in 2002 for change of use of the existing agricultural buildings on the site to office and storage use (Classes B1 and B8) under reference **S/1835/02/F**.
7. Planning permission for the erection of 17 houses, 8 flats and change of use of agricultural land for new football pitch was submitted last year (**S/0442/06/F**). The application was withdrawn prior to presentation to Development and Conservation Control Committee with an officer recommendation of refusal.

Planning Policy

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

8. **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.
9. **P9/2a** (Green Belt) - within the Green Belt, new development, including change of use, will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

10. **GB2** (Green Belt General Principles) states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. It also states that development is ‘inappropriate’ unless it comprises, amongst others, uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and affordable housing in accordance with Policy HG8 where no suitable sites are available outside the Green Belt. It also requires any development considered appropriate in the Green Belt to be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.
11. **GB3** (The Location of Development) Development which is not inappropriate, as defined in Policy GB2, will be located within or adjoining existing complexes or entail the redevelopment of redundant buildings to protect the rural nature and openness of the Green Belt.
12. **HG8** (Exceptions Policy for Affordable Housing) 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:-
 - a. 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.

- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. The development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.

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.

- 13. **TP1** (Planning for More Sustainable Travel) states that the Council will seek, through its decisions on planning applications, to promote more sustainable transport choices and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, by amongst other things restricting car parking to a maximum of an average of 1½ spaces plus ¼ space for visitors per dwelling.
- 14. **EN1** (Landscape Character Areas): In all its planning decisions the District Council will seek to ensure that the local character and distinctiveness of Landscape Character Areas are respected, retained and wherever possible enhanced. While recognising that landscape is a dynamic concept, planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the character and local distinctiveness of these areas.
- 15. **EN3** (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development in the Countryside) 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' (the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Area in this instance), and reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.
- 16. **EN13** (Protected Species) states that the District Council will not grant planning permission for development which could adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the habitats of animal and plant species which are protected by law unless the need for the development clearly outweighs the importance of conserving that habitat and the advice of English Nature is to the effect that permission may be granted. Where development is permitted which may have an effect on these species, the District Council will impose conditions, where appropriate, and seek to use its powers to enter into planning agreements to: facilitate the survival of individual members of the species; reduce disturbance to a minimum; and provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of population.

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy,
(adopted January 2007)

- 17. **ST/E** (Strategic Vision and Objectives) - seeks to ensure that the scale and location of development in each village is in keeping with its size, character and function and

that the buildings and open spaces which create their character are maintained and wherever possible enhanced.

18. **ST/3** (Re-Using Previously Developed Land and Buildings) – Between 1999 and 2016 at least 37% of new dwellings will either be located on previously developed land or utilise existing buildings.

Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (Inspector's Report on the Examination received May 2007)

19. **GB/2** (Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt)
- a. Any development considered appropriate within the Green Belt must be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.
 - b. Where development is permitted, landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained, will be attached to any planning permission in order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.
20. **HG/3** (Affordable Housing) Affordable housing should be of a high quality and integrated with market housing. In order to ensure sustainable communities, affordable housing will be distributed through the development in small groups or clusters, typically 6 to 8 units. The appropriate size of affordable housing groups or clusters will vary depending on the scale of development.
21. **HG/5** (Exceptions Sites for Affordable Housing) As an exception to the normal operation of the policies of this plan, planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on small sites within or adjoining villages. The following criteria will all have to be met:
- a. 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;
 - b. 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;
 - c. 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;
 - d. The site is well related to facilities and services within the village;
 - e. The development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.
22. In the case of sites within the Cambridge Green Belt, before planning permission is granted for such development, the District Council will have to be assured that no alternative appropriate sites can be found for the scale and type of development proposed and that the scheme fulfils all the criteria set out in the Council's policies, including those relating to the impact of new development on local surroundings.

Consultation

23. **Stapleford Parish Council** - Recommends approval, and comments that a survey of the current volume and speed of traffic should be carried out in the vicinity of the site, together with a calculation of the probable increase in traffic resulting from the development, and suitable measures for amelioration.
24. **Development Officer (Affordable Homes)** - The scheme generally fits in with regional and local priorities. A recent needs survey has been carried out and the scheme goes part way to satisfying village needs.
25. **Environment Agency** - The EA advises that soakaways are acceptable in principle subject to a maximum depth of 2.0m. The site falls within flood zone 1 (low to medium risk) where sustainable drainage methods should be used if possible.
26. **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)** - No objection subject to conditions restricting noise during the construction period and an examination of the site for possible contamination, and related informatives.
27. **Ecology Officer** - Comments awaited.
28. **Local Highway Authority** - The LHA considers that the access and visibility are acceptable. Three trees growing on the opposite verge in the visibility splay can be retained provided that the crown is kept at a minimum height of 2.0m. Conditions regarding the service strip provision and pedestrian visibility splays are recommended. The LHA has no concerns on the grounds of traffic generation onto Gog Magog Way, and is satisfied with the position of the proposed footpath link, and would be concerned if this were to be altered.
29. **Affordable Housing Panel meeting is to arranged.**

Representations

30. Letters of objection have been received from the occupiers of Nos 4, 10, 20, 39, 41, 63, 71, 74, and Meadowcroft Farm and Green Hedges Barn in Gog Magog Way, Nos 15 and 86 Haverhill Road, and 9 Finch's Close. The following concerns have been raised:

Impact on Green Belt and Landscape

31.
 - a. The development will harm the Green Belt and will ruin the scenery. PPG2 (Green Belts) and Policy HG8 seek to restrict affordable housing development in Green Belt locations to small sites. Policy HG/3 of the LDF Development Control Policies seeks to ensure that affordable housing is delivered in small clusters, typically 6-8 units. This development should be in a cluster of 6-8 houses only.
 - b. The development will extend beyond the rear boundaries of the adjoining dwellings, which will harm the open landscape of the area. Development should not extend any further to the north-east than the boundaries of Nos 63-75 Gog Magog Way. This view was put forward by planning officers and Stapleford Parish Council in relation to planning application S/0442/06/F.
 - c. The current proposal will irreversibly damage an important viewpoint and the views from the Magog Down. There will be an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt and landscape. Contrary to GB2 (5) and HG8(4).

Traffic issues

32.
 - a. Increased traffic dangers, especially after the recent housing development on Bar Lane; access on a blind bend; narrow road that is used by parents taking their children to school, where there is not a continuous pavement on Gog Magog Way. The road is heavily parked when there are sporting events on at the recreation ground. The proposal does not comply with advice received from the Highways Authority in the earlier application.
 - b. The traffic survey does not predict the likely increase in traffic arising from the development. The writer estimates that this could be between 50 and 70% in the morning peak, which does not take into account the further increase in traffic that is likely to occur when the Green Hedges development is completed.

Local Need

33. This application should also be put in the context of the new housing allocations within three miles of the site in the forthcoming development of the Southern Fringe. The Monsanto and Clay Farm/Addenbrookes developments are provisionally expected to provide 900 and 3200 dwellings, although this is likely to increase in density. Slightly further afield in South Cambridgeshire the housing development at Northstowe is due to commence in 2007 with at least 8000 dwellings to be built. These three sites will provide over 12000 dwellings of which a minimum of one third will be affordable housing, possibly up to a half, ie 4000-6000 affordable houses within 3-10 miles of Stapleford that should remove the pressure to develop exception sites in the Green Belt.

Sustainability

34. Stapleford does not have the facilities to cater for this size of development – only one small shop. Residents will have to drive to Great Shelford for their shopping 1mile/ 1.5km away. Emerging policy HG/5 of the draft LDF requires exception sites to be well related to facilities and services within the village. As such the site is considered to be too isolated to sustain a development of the scale proposed and achieve reduced car dependency.

Layout and design

35.
 - a. The current layout is inappropriate and unimaginative with a straight cul-de-sac and turning head flanked by conspicuous areas of parking that dominates the built form of bland house elevations.
 - b. Stapleford has a small village ambience. The erection of a block of flats would be out of keeping with this. The argument that a scheme of this size is needed to be economically viable is not accepted.

Neighbouring amenity

36.
 - a. The amount of new infrastructure, light pollution will adversely impact on the existing seven adjacent houses in Gog Magog Way.
 - b. The design and layout has unacceptable overlooking between bedroom windows that are only eight metres apart and from the bedroom and kitchen windows of the flats into the kitchen, conservatory and private garden of 63 Gog Magog Way.

- c. Repositioning of Plot 14 in the amended plans: The neighbouring occupier is pleased that overlooking windows have been removed, but the repositioning will result in loss of daylight and sunlight in the afternoon and evenings. The occupier requests that the originally-submitted layout be adhered to.

Planning Comments

Exceptions Housing

37. The proposal is for 100% affordable housing provision, which has received the support of Stapleford Parish Council and this Council's Development Officer (Affordable Homes). As such, subject to the applicant entering into a suitable Section 106 legal agreement for affordable housing, I consider that the proposal complies with HG/5 a) and b) in meeting an identified local need.
38. The development site is located on the northern fringe of the village. However, the site is close to a bus route and there is an adequate footpath network to the village shop in Stapleford and the range of shops and services in Great Shelford. I do not consider that the site is unduly remote from local facilities.

Green Belt and Rural Landscape

39. The proposal lies wholly within the Cambridge Green Belt. There are existing buildings on the site, to be demolished, which were formerly in commercial use. The site is therefore also previously developed, or brownfield. As Great Shelford and Stapleford are located within the Green Belt, I am satisfied that no alternative housing exceptions sites are available outside the Green Belt. For the purposes of Policies P9/2a, GB2 (5) and GB3, I consider the development to be not inappropriate, subject to compliance with Policy HG8.
40. The site is located adjacent to existing dwellings on Gog Magog Way on previously developed land. Although the site is not within or adjoining the village framework, it is well-related to the existing settlement, and it does not represent sporadic development. The scale and character of the village includes smaller estates of housing, for example at Finch's Close, as well as frontage development. I do not consider the proposed form to be out of keeping with the size or character of the village.
41. The supporting text Policy HG/3, at paragraph 4.16, refers to clusters of 6-8 dwellings when it is to be integrated with new market housing in larger developments. The current proposal is an exceptions site where Policy HG/5 (b) applies, which links the size of the development to identified local need rather than the cluster-approach of HG/3.
42. The development will affect the appearance of the countryside in this position, because the amount of development is different in density and layout to the existing commercial buildings. In particular, the development of Plots 7, 8 and 9-11 at the northern end of the site, will have more of a visual impact than the building that it replaces. This part of the site is lower than the adjoining agricultural land, which is to be planted with a substantial landscaped margin. The main views of this part of the site will be from Haverhill Road, some 150m to the west. On balance, I consider that the erection of the proposed dwellings, with a ridge height of 8.3m on land where an existing building is to be replaced, will not be unduly harmful to the appearance of the rural landscape, subject to suitable landscape planting on the site perimeter.

43. The frontage dwellings are shown with a ridge height of 8.3m. This is taller than the existing adjoining dwelling at No. 63 by 1.0m, but as there is a distance of some 8m between the roofs, I do not consider that this height difference will be significant in the street scene.
44. I consider that the proposal complies with Policies GB2 (5), HG8, EN1, EN3 and GB/2. I note the preference of objectors that the development should be limited in depth to match the rear boundaries of adjoining development Gog Magog Way, however, for the reasons explained, I do not consider that this would represent a reasonable ground for refusal of the proposed development.

Layout, design and neighbour amenity

45. The layout of the development is based on a straight access road culminating in a turning head. The advantage of this layout is that views through the site to the Gog Magog Hills will be possible, as the development does not fully occupy the turning head at the northern end of the site. The appearance of the proposed dwellings is simple, characteristic of the existing dwellings on this part of Gog Magog Way, and I consider this to be a good standard of design.
46. The amended layout plan shows the frontage dwelling on Plot 14 to be resited 2.0m back from the adjoining dwellings, to prevent direct overlooking of the rear garden from an existing first floor bedroom window in the east elevation of No. 63 Gog Magog Way. I note the wish of the occupier of No.63 for this dwelling to revert to its original position, however I consider that no significant loss of light or overbearing effect will be caused to No.63 as a result, and that the amended siting is more satisfactory.
47. The rear garden of No.63 will be overlooked from first floor windows in the block of flats, Plots 17 and 18. The overlooking will be directed over the rear garden area, and not the main sitting out area close to the dwelling. The windows in the rear elevation of Plots 17 and 18 are shown to be sited 14m from the boundary. I acknowledge that some loss of privacy will result, however I do not consider this to be so serious as to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

Highways and Traffic

48. The Local Highways Authority has indicated that the layout and junction design is satisfactory, and that the highway network can accommodate the likely amount of traffic to be generated by the development safely. I consider that the proposal is acceptable from the point of view of highway safety.

Recommendation

49. Subject to no objections being raised by the Affordable Housing Panel, approval of the application and plans dated 12th February 2007, as amended by drawings date-stamped 16th May 2007, and subject to the following conditions:

50. Conditions

1. Standard Condition A (time limit) (Reason - A.)
2. SC5 a) (external materials) (RC a) i.)

3. SC20 (car parking) 'drawing no.04/960/PL.11 rev B' (Reason - In the interests of highway safety.)
4. SC22 'eastern and western elevations of the dwelling on Plot 14' (RC22.)
5. SC51 (landscaping) (RC51.)
6. SC52 (maintenance of landscaping) (RC52.)
7. Trees in the highway verge within the vehicle-to-vehicle visibility splays shall be maintained with a minimum height to crown of 2.0m. (Reason - In the interests of highway safety.)
8. Details of service strip provision to be submitted. (Reason - In the interests of highway safety.)
9. SC60 boundary treatment of all site boundaries (RC60.)
10. Pedestrian visibility splays within an area of 2.0m x 2.0m measured from and along the back of the footway respectively shall be provided and shall be maintained free from any obstruction over a height of 600mm. (Reason – In the interests of highway safety.)
11. SC26 – [Restriction of hours of use of power operated machinery] – *Add at beginning* "During the period of construction...", *then* "8am/8am/6pm/1pm" (RC26.)
12. No development shall begin until a scheme for the provision of affordable housing has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The affordable housing shall be provided in accordance with the approved scheme. The scheme shall include:
 - a. The arrangements to ensure that such provisions is affordable for both initial and subsequent occupiers of the affordable housing; and
 - b. The occupancy criteria to be used for the determining the identity of prospective and successive occupiers of the affordable housing, and the means by which such occupancy shall be enforced.
 (Reason - To ensure that the dwellings remain affordable in perpetuity and that the development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt in accordance with Policies HG8 and GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004).

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy**, adopted January 2007
ST/e (Strategic Vision and Objectives)
ST/3 (Re-Using Previously Developed Land and Buildings)

- **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
GB2 (Green Belt General Principles)
GB3 (The Location of Development)
HG8 (Exceptions Policy for Affordable Housing)
TP1 (Planning for More Sustainable Travel)
EN3 (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development in the Countryside)

- **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
P1/3 (Sustainable design in built development)
P9/2a (Green Belt)

The proposal conditionally approved is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material considerations, which have been raised during the consultation exercise: **Design and Appearance; Neighbouring Amenity; Impact on Green Belt and Landscape; Highway Safety; Local Need; Sustainability.**

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007
- Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (Inspector's Report on the Examination received May 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File refs S/0520/07/F, S/0442/06/F and S/1835/02/F.

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