

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

4th August 2004

S/1118/04/O – Meldreth
24 Affordable Dwellings, Land adj. West Way, for Mr and Mrs M Sole

Recommendation: Refusal

Members will visit this site on Monday 2nd August 2004.

Site and Proposal

1. This outline application, registered on 27th May 2004, proposes the erection of 24 affordable dwellings on a 0.82ha area of pasture land to the southwest of Whaddon Road, Meldreth to the northwest of the main village. The application site is part of a larger area of paddock land to the northwest and southwest. That part of the paddock to the northwest benefits from an extant planning permission for use as a wholesale nursery (see History below).
2. The frontage to Whaddon Road is formed by a mature hedgerow and ditch. To the southeast the site abuts the rear of West Way, a development of 28 dwellings accessed from Kneesworth Road, and agricultural land. A right of way to the rear of an existing dwelling in West Way exists in the southeast corner of the site.
3. The northwest and southwest boundaries of the application site are currently undefined although there is a hedgerow along the boundaries of the larger field of which this site is a part.
4. All matters are reserved for consideration at reserved matters stage. The application is accompanied by an indicative layout plan showing access from Whaddon Road, although this does not form part of the formal application to be considered at this stage.
5. The site is outside the village framework and falls within the notifiable zone of Eternit UK to the northwest of the site in respect of the storage of hazardous substances.

Planning History

6. There is no planning history that affects the application site. However the land to the northwest, which is owned by the applicant and currently comprises part of the same field, benefits from an extant consent for the erection of polytunnels, shed, bunded tanks, vehicular access and parking to form a wholesale nursery (**Ref: S/1947/97/F**). To date that consent has not been implemented.

Planning Policy

7. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The County Structure Plan") restricts development in the countryside unless it can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular location.
8. **Policy P5/5** of the Structure Plan states that small-scale housing developments will be permitted in villages only where appropriate and having regard to the need for affordable rural housing.
9. **Policy SE8** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") states that residential development outside village frameworks will not normally be permitted.
10. **Policy HG8** of the Local Plan states that as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Plan, planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on sites within or adjoining villages. The Policy sets out a range of criteria that need to be met including a requirement that the site is well related to the built-up area of the settlement and the scale of the scheme is appropriate to the size and character of the village and; the development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.
11. **Policy CS6** of the Local Plan states that in considering proposals for development in the vicinity of hazardous installations, account will be taken of the amount, type and location of hazardous substances present, and the need for special precautions or restrictions to protect future users of the site and any affected land.

Consultation

12. **Meldreth Parish Council** recommends approval. "This application does not abut the village framework. If permission is granted, dwellings should be no more than two storeys. The access, as drawn on the site plan, is too close to the existing entrance of No.14 West Way. Meldreth Parish Council continues to hope that the redundant Cambridgeshire County Council Travellers Site (brownfield) would be available for affordable/social housing when the time comes to sell". These comments are reiterated in a subsequent letter from the Parish Council.
13. The **Local Highways Authority** comments that the site is outside the built up framework of the village alongside a road subject to only the national speed restriction of 60mph where vehicle speed is high. It questions whether this is really a suitable location for new dwellings? If the District Council is minded to grant consent conditions are recommended, including the provision of a 1.8m wide footway from that existing to the south east of the site up to and including the access/junction onto Whaddon Road, and appropriate visibility splays. It states that it is not clear that the visibility splay to the southeast can be achieved without crossing adjacent land and therefore a survey plan of the frontage is requested.
14. The **Acting Research and Development Manager** comments that a scheme of this size can be supported in terms of housing need, based on the April 2003 survey. However he has severe reservations about the suitability of this particular site based on its 'isolation' from the main village. This could be a major problem for those without access to a car and with young children".
15. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests a condition restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the construction period. Should driven

pile foundations be proposed a statement of the method of construction should be submitted and agreed.

16. The **Environment Agency** objects as insufficient information has been submitted in respect of surface and foul water drainage to allow a full assessment of the application to be made. A flood risk assessment is requested.
17. The **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** requests that adequate provision is made for fire hydrants in any planning consent.
18. The **County Archaeology Office** recommends that the site be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation, secured by condition attached to any consent.
19. The **Affordable Housing Panel** is content that the proposal can satisfy two of the four criteria set out in Policy HG8 of the Local Plan in respect of housing need and tenure. However there is not agreement that the proposal satisfies the remaining two criteria in respect of the relationship of the site to the built-up area of the settlement and the impact on the rural landscape. The Parish Councils view, in respect of its representation on the panel, is that the overriding need for affordable housing outweighs the departure from the criteria that normally apply to such sites, particularly due to the lack of any available, more appropriate alternative.
20. The comments of the **Health and Safety Executive** will be reported verbally.

Representations

21. None received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

22. The key issues to be considered with this application are whether the site complies with the criteria set out in Policy HG8 of the Local Plan in respect of the need for affordable housing, the suitability of the location of the site (including highway issues), the scale of development proposed and its impact on the rural landscape, and the impact on the amenity of the occupiers of adjacent dwellings. An additional matter is the proximity of the site to the Eternit UK works and whether the location of the site complies with the criteria set out in Policy CS6 of the Local Plan.
23. The Acting Research and Development Manager confirms that a scheme of this size can be supported in terms of housing need, based on the April 2003 survey.
24. Policy HG8 requires that sites are adjoining and well related to the built-up area of a village. This is to ensure that the visual amenity of the countryside is protected, local services and facilities are conveniently available for the occupiers of the dwellings (especially those without access to a car) and to reduce dependence on the car (for those that do have access to one). In my view this site does not comply with that criteria. This concern is supported by the Acting Research and Development Manager and the Local Highway Authority. The site is in an isolated position 350 metres beyond the village framework in Fenny Lane and 600 metres beyond the framework in Whitecroft Road. It is therefore poorly related to the existing village, as is the existing housing development at West Way.
25. I am concerned that the need to provide adequate visibility splays will result in the loss of a significant section of the existing planting along the frontage of the site,

which will detract from the rural character of the area. I have asked the applicant to provide details of the proposed visibility splays, as requested by the Highways Authority.

26. The Affordable Housing Panel has met twice to consider this site and cannot offer unanimous support for the reasons outline above.
27. I will report the comments of the Health and Safety Executive as to whether residential development of this site is advisable in view of its proximity to the Eternit works. The hazardous zone around these works relates to the storage within the site of LPG.
28. I have advised the applicant of the need to undertake a flood risk assessment.
29. Whilst I am sympathetic to the wish of Meldreth Parish Council to find a site to help satisfy the local need for affordable housing I cannot support this application which clearly conflicts with the several of the criteria set out in Policy HG8 of the Local Plan.

Recommendation

30. Subject to the comments of the Health and Safety Executive, that the application be refused for the following reason:
 1. The site is outside the village framework of Meldreth where development is restricted by Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2004 and Policy SE8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 to that which is demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location. Whilst Policy HG8 of the Local Plan 2004 allows for an exception to be made to the aforementioned policies in respect of schemes for 100% affordable housing this application fails to satisfy the criteria set out in that policy in that the site is poorly related to the existing village and development will have an adverse effect on the rural character of the area.
 2. Holding objections pending the submission of acceptable details of visibility splays and a flood risk assessment.

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 Application File S/1302/04/F

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