

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

---

**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007

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

---

**S/1350/07/O - WILLINGHAM**  
**Affordable Housing Comprising 2 Houses and 2 Flats**  
**Land Adjacent 176 Station Road, for Accent Nene Housing Association**

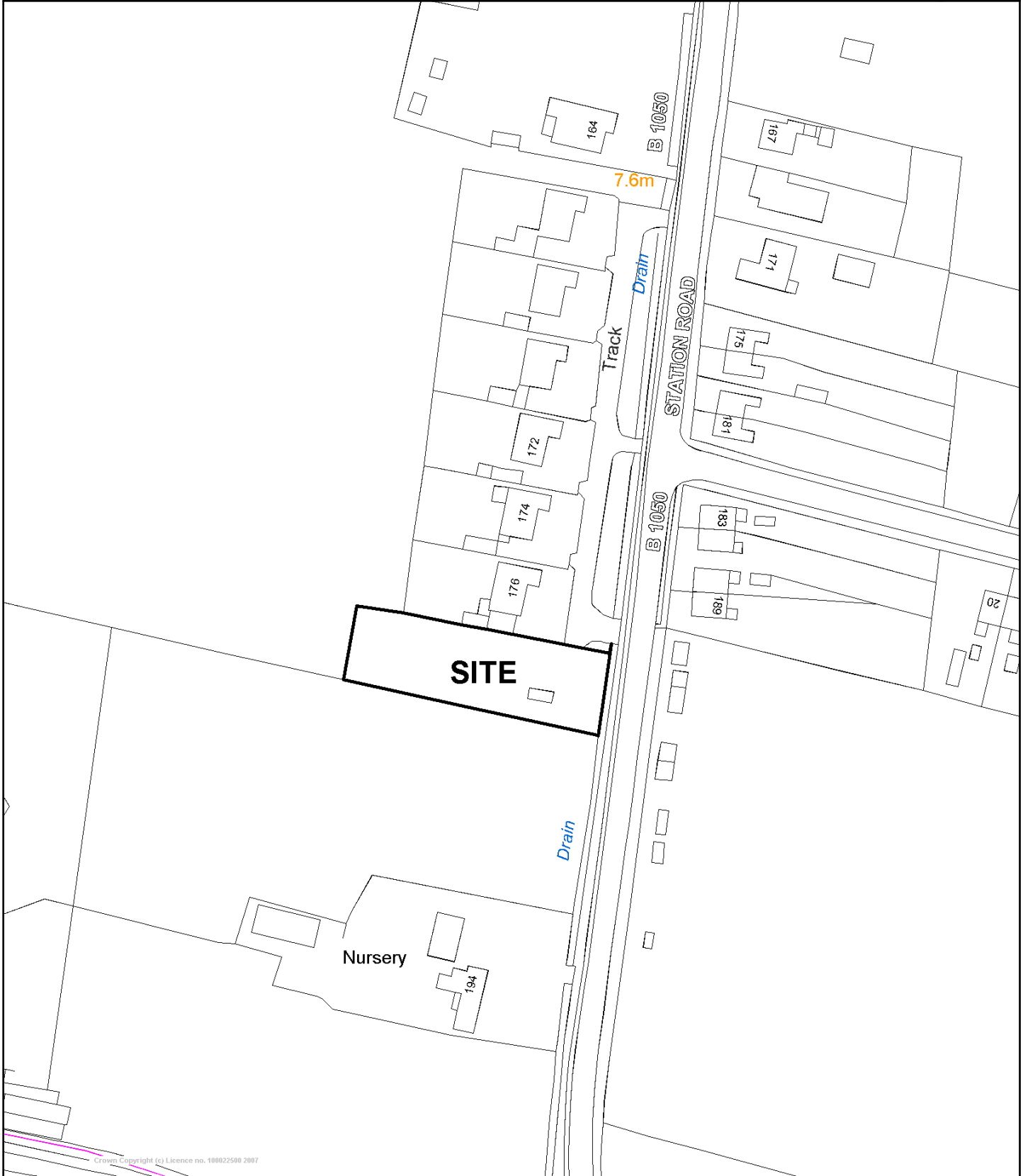
**Recommendation: Refusal**  
**Date for Determination: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2007**

**Notes:**

**This application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because it is for affordable housing on a site outside of the village framework.**

**Site and Proposal**

1. The 0.096 hectare site lies approximately 550m south of the village framework for Willingham on the west side of Station Road which connects Willingham with Longstanton.
2. It is currently agricultural land. To the north lie a row of bungalows all accessed from a private roadway which has two points of access to Station Road.
3. To the east is a development of Local Authority housing off Westfield.
4. The roadside elevation of the site contains mature vegetation and this continues along Station Road in either direction such that the site is not readily visible.
5. There is a gap in this screening where currently an access is being formed by bridging a ditch which runs along the front of the site.
6. The southern boundary of the site is also marked with mature vegetation.
7. The Outline Planning Application, received 9<sup>th</sup> July 2007 proposes the erection of 4 affordable dwellings. Scale, appearance and landscaping are reserved, layout and access are to be considered. The accompanying Design and Access Statement indicates that the dwellings will be a mix of shared equity and rented.
8. The access would come off Station Road at the northern edge of the site immediately adjacent to the bungalow at 176 Station Road. The layout shows 2 flats in one building at the front of the site just in front of the building line of the bungalows and two semi detached dwellings to the rear. Parking for 6 cars with turning is to be provided. Indicative plans show the buildings will be 2 storey but no maximum height has been indicated. The density equates to 41.7 dwellings per hectare.



Reproduced from the 2007 Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's stationary office (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Scale 1/1250 Date 12/9/2007

Centre = 539956 E 268971 N

October 2007 Planning Committee

### **Relevant Recent History**

9. Erection of one dwelling was refused and appeal dismissed in April 1970.
10. Erection of a bungalow was refused in October 1971.
11. Erection of a bungalow was refused in June 1972.
12. Erection of one detached dwelling was refused in May 1974.
13. Erection of a bungalow was refused in July 1975.
14. Erection of a dwelling was refused in February 1979.
15. Erection of a dwelling was refused in September 1979.
16. Erection of a dwelling was refused in March 1981.
17. Erection of a house was refused in July 1981.
18. Erection of one dwelling was refused and appeal dismissed in February 2002.
19. An application for part change of use for siting of mobile home, erection of two sheds and three polytunnels was submitted on 28th August 2007 and is currently under consideration.

### **Planning Policy**

20. **Policy P1/1** (approach to development) of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (the Structure Plan) states (in part) that development should be located where travel distances by car can be minimised, walking and cycling encouraged and where good public transport accessibility exists or can be provided.
21. **Policy P1/2** (environmental restrictions on development) of the Structure Plan states (in part) that Development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
22. **Policy P1/3** (sustainable design in built development) of the Structure Plan states (in part):

A high standard of design and sustainability for all new development will be required which:

- a) Minimises the need to travel and reduces car dependency by providing
- b) An appropriate mix of land uses and accessible services and facilities
- c) Direct walking and cycle routes
- d) Good access by public transport
- e) Managed access for the private car and other motor vehicles

Provides a sense of place which:

- a) Responds to the local character of the built environment
- b) Is integrated with adjoining landscapes
- c) Conserves important environmental assets of the site
- d) Pays attention to the detail of forms, massing, textures, colours and landscaping

23. **Policy P5/4** (meeting locally identified housing needs) of the Structure Plan states:

Local Plans should make provision to meet the locally assessed need for:

- a) Affordable housing, including key worker housing
- b) One and two bedroom homes
- c) Housing suitable for the elderly and those with mobility problems
- d) Other specific groups, including students, the homeless, travellers and gypsies

24. **Policy P5/5** (homes in rural areas) of the Structure Plan states:

Small-scale housing developments will be permitted in villages only where appropriate, taking into account:

- The need for affordable rural housing;
- The character of the village and its setting; and
- The level of jobs, services, infrastructure and passenger transport provision in the
- Immediate area.

25. **Policy DP/1** (sustainable development) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007 (LDFDCP) states (in part)

Development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that it is consistent with the principles of sustainable development, as appropriate to its location, scale and form. It should:

- a) Minimise the need to travel and reduce car dependency;
- b) Make efficient and effective use of land by giving priority to the use of brownfield sites and achieve adaptable, compact forms of development through the use of higher densities;
- c) Contribute to the creation of mixed and socially inclusive communities and provide for the health, education, recreation, community services and facilities, and social needs of all sections of the community;
- d) Conserve and wherever possible enhance local landscape character;

26. **Policy DP/2** (design of new development) of the LDFDCP states (in part).

All new development must be of high quality design and, as appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, should:

- a) Preserve or enhance the character of the local area;
- b) Conserve or enhance important environmental assets of the site;
- c) Include variety and interest within a coherent design, which is legible and provides a sense of place whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;
- d) Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;

- e) In the case of residential development, provide higher residential densities, and a mix of housing types including smaller homes;
- f) Provide an inclusive environment that is created for people, that is and feels safe, and that has a strong community focus;
- g) Include high quality landscaping compatible with the scale and character of the development and its surroundings.

27. **Policy DP/3** (development criteria) of the LDFDCP states (in part):

Planning permission will not be granted where the proposed development would have an unacceptable adverse impact:

- a) On residential amenity;
- b) From traffic generated;
- c) On village character;
- d) On the countryside, and landscape character;
- e) From undue environmental disturbance such as noise, lighting, vibration, odour, noxious emissions or dust.

28. **Policy HG/5** (exceptions sites for affordable housing) of the LDFDCP states (in part):

1. 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.

4.17 National policy allows for the exceptional release of small sites for affordable housing within or adjoining villages in circumstances where planning permission would not normally be given and where there is a demonstrable local need for affordable housing that cannot be met in any other way. These 'rural exceptions' sites provide a small but important source of affordable

housing in rural areas and are regarded as additional to the provision of housing to meet the general needs identified by the Structure Plan.

- 4.18 In every case the needs of the particular village are carefully surveyed and assessed by the Council before a scheme is progressed. Occupancy controls are imposed to ensure that the benefits of affordability (usually gained by the low land value derived from the exceptional basis of the scheme) are preserved in perpetuity for subsequent occupiers.

### **Consultation**

29. **Willingham Parish Council** recommends approval. It states:

“Willingham Parish Council notes that this application is outside the village envelope but it very much wishes to support the provision of much-needed low-cost housing. It therefore approves this application at the Outline stage”.

30. **Local Highway Authority** objects. It states:

Please request that the applicant show 2.4m x 125m visibility splays from the proposed development to Station Road.

There is clearly a conflict between the existing access to 176 Station Road and the proposed access to the development. The proposed radii kerbs encroach upon the left hand turn sweep of any vehicle entering the drive of 176 Station Road. This conflict needs to be resolved before a detailed application is made. The simplest solution would be to hand the development.

Any full application should show all the proposed dimensions for the footway and road widths.

Please make the applicant aware that the granting of a planning permission would not constitute a permission or licence to a developer to carry out any works within, or disturbance of, or interference with, the Public Highway, and that a separate permission must be sought from the Highway Authority for such works”.

Following these comments I have informed the Local Highway Authority that the access and layout are matters for determination and it has confirmed that it objects to the location of the access due to potential conflict with vehicles using this and the existing immediately adjacent access which serves a number of dwellings.

31. **Affordable Housing Panel**

The panel concluded that there are several problems with this development both site specific and in terms of its location but was also mindful of the significant need for affordable housing to serve Willingham and the possible unavailability of alternative sites.

32. **Council’s Development Officer (Housing)** supports the principle of the provision of much needed affordable housing in Willingham, but fully appreciates the policy for exception sites and agrees that this particular site proposal is not particularly well placed for access to village amenities. Consideration of more suitable sites should be explored.

## **Representations**

33. Two letters of objection have been received from the occupiers of Nos. 174 and 176 Station Road. The main points of objection are summarised below:

### **1. No. 176**

- a) Access is new not existing.
- b) Access is dangerous in combination with existing access to 166 – 176.
- c) Consistent history of refusal of planning permission for a single dwelling due to highway safety concerns.
- d) Not in keeping with surrounding properties.
- e) Site not within or adjoining the village.
- f) Detracts from the open and rural appearance and character of the area – ground which the Council has previously cited as reasons for refusal.
- g) What will the use of the land immediately in front of the flats be.
- h) The access will add to the impact on the character of the area.
- i) Increase in noise and disturbance.
- j) Problems with providing adequate sewage disposal.
- k) Will impact on existing trees at 176.
- l) Northstowe will address much of the housing need.
- m) Development is unsustainable.
- n) Affordable housing has come forward within the village and it is questionable whether exception sites are needed.

### **2. No. 174**

- a) Increased traffic flow to an already busy road.
- b) Development is a good mile from the centre of the village and further from the guided bus. The residents will have to have a car each.
- c) Insufficient car parking may result in parking on bungalow access road.

## **Planning Comments - Key Issues**

34. The key issues are:

Need  
Location and sustainability  
Neighbour amenity  
Visual impact  
Highway safety

### ***Need***

35. There is a significant need for affordable housing for people in Willingham. The Housing Development Manager indicates that the low cost housing survey of 2003 suggests a need for 112 units over a 5 year period.

### ***Location and sustainability***

36. The site lies some 550m outside of the village and is neither within or adjoining it. It is not well related to the built-up area of the settlement and not well related to facilities and services within the village. As such it lies in an unsustainable location and is contrary to Policy HG/5 as well as to policies aimed at resisting unsustainable developments.
37. Policy HG/5 is already an exception to other policies in the plan recognising the considerable need for affordable housing in the District. I can see no reason why an exception to the exception policy could be justified in this instance for a development that will necessitate the need for unnecessary travel. It is likely that all journeys into the village, even to simply buy a newspaper, will be by car.
38. This small hamlet of dwellings exists and were constructed prior to the emphasis on sustainability. The presence of this unfortunate situation cannot justify further development which will only serve to exacerbate the problem.

### ***Neighbour amenity***

39. The proposed access will run along the whole southern boundary of the neighbouring bungalow at 176 Station Road. The resultant vehicle movements and manoeuvring will have an adverse impact on the occupiers of this property through undue noise and disturbance. If the access were relocated to the southern edge of the site it would necessitate locating the buildings closer to this bungalow and could introduce potential issues of overbearing and loss of light. In any case the location and position of the access are for determination as applied for.

### ***Visual impact***

40. There is good screening along the boundary with Station Road and some within the site. Much of what is within the site will be lost and the opening up of the access onto Station Road will result in the development being visible from Station Road. It is hard to assess quite how visible the two storey structures will be as the application gives no indication of maximum height. However, in my assessment two storey buildings will be visible from both Station Road and from two tracks that run to the south and west of the site.
41. The existing development on this side of the road is all single storey and linear in form. It is not readily apparent from Station Road. The introduction of two storey development in depth will be wholly out of character with this pattern of development and will be apparent in both the street scene and when viewed from the countryside.
42. There is insufficient space available within the site for any meaningful planting to be achieved, particularly at the location of the parking spaces to the rear and on the southern boundary.



### **Highway Safety**

43. I note the comments of the Local Highway Authority and in this regard I consider the proposed access lying immediately adjacent to an existing shared access will result in a danger to highway safety through the potential conflict of vehicles using both accesses at the same time.

### **Conclusions**

44. There is a significant need for affordable housing in Willingham. However, this site is in the wrong location and will have too much impact on the amenity of neighbours, visual impact on its surroundings and cause danger to users of the highway. Having balanced my concerns with the significant need for affordable housing I find I cannot recommend this proposal for approval. In addition I am not satisfied that there are no other sites that are better related to the village. I have seen no evidence that this is the case and the applicants have submitted no information that demonstrates this.

### **Recommendation**

45. Refusal for the above reasons of location/sustainability, undue impact on neighbour amenity, visual impact on the street scene and countryside, danger to highway safety and insufficient justification for a departure from Development Plan Policies.

### **Background Papers:**

- Planning Application File Ref S/1350/07/O
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007

**Contact Officer:** Nigel Blazeby – Area Planning Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713165