

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee 2nd April 2008
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and
Sustainable Communities

ADDENDUM

S/0146/08/F - IMPINGTON

Residential development of 113 dwellings (including 43 affordable) on all that land with frontage to and north of Impington Lane for Luminus Developments

Recommendation: Delegated Refusal

Date for Determination: 29th April 2008 (Major)

Addendum to the committee report:

Consultation

1. In addition to the comments within the report at paragraph 49 and notwithstanding these, the **Environment Agency** has further commented on the surface water and flood risk issues following receipt of a revised Flood Risk Assessment (FRA revision A dated 20th March 2008 has not been forwarded to the Local Planning Authority to date):
 - This FRA is acceptable and allows them to formally withdraw their OBJECTION and put forward conditions. These conditions should be appended to those put forward in our letter dated 6th March 2008. The conditions recommended are:
 - (a) The minimum ground floor level of any building involved in the development must be at least 10.90m AOD unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. (Reason: To provide a reasonable freeboard against flooding and an allowance for climate change).
 - (b) Flood compensation works shall be carried out such that for each building erected the flood compensation directly adjacent to it shall be constructed at the same time. Flood compensation areas shall be constructed in accordance with Flood Risk Assessment Ref SJ0/660521/LSP dated 20th March 2008 and drawing(s) numbered 660521/500Rev P6 and 660521/200 P6 unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority. (Reason: To provide satisfactory method of floodplain compensatory works, thereby maintaining the immediate floodplain regime).
 - (c) The flood compensation area to the East of the watercourse within the Play Area Provision shall be constructed prior to the erection of any building in accordance with Flood Risk Assessment Ref SJ0/660521/LSP dated 20th March 2008 and drawing(s) numbered 660521/500Rev P6 and 660521/200 P6 unless otherwise

- agreed with the Local Planning Authority. (Reason: To ensure that there is satisfactory floodplain compensation during construction).
- (d) The floodplain area as outlined in drawing No 660521/500 P6 shall remain sterile and no development, including any buildings, fencing, walls and/or ground raising shall take place unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Authority. (Reason: To ensure the flood storage areas are exempt from permitted development rights to alleviate the increased risk of flooding that would otherwise be caused by a reduction in flood storage capacity).
 - (e) Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of surface water drainage shall be submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans/specification at such time(s) as may be specified in the approved scheme. (Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding).
 - (f) Prior to the first occupation an as built drawing of the flood compensation areas with ground levels shall be submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with Flood Risk Assessment Ref SJ0/660521/LSP dated 20th March 2008 and drawing(s) numbered 660521/500Rev P6 and 660521/200 P6 unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority. (Reason: To ensure flood flow paths are preserved across the site).
 - (g) A high level safe access route from the relevant properties must be constructed in accordance with the FRA (revised in March 2008), with location shown in drawing No 660521/500 P6 and typical open construction in drawing No CJM 120 rev O and be able to be used at all time. (Reason: To ensure safe access and egress to the development during times of flood).
- It is stressed that for this development to proceed it is essential that a Section 106 includes the following issues:
 - (a) Ownership and maintenance regime of the proposed surface water drainage system including the orifice flow controls/outfalls and proposed permeable paving areas on a regular basis and specific treatment after times of flood.
 - (b) Ownership and maintenance regime of the flood compensation areas highlighted within dwg no 660521/500 such that the ground levels of these areas are not raised nor any development allowed within them other than that shown within this drawing. The flood compensation areas shall remain clear for the lifetime of the development.
 - (c) The proposed play area within the flood compensation area shall remain open in nature with no ground raising.
 - Informatives to be added to the decision notice, if approved, are:
 - (a) Soakaway Tests are required to be undertaken strictly in accordance with BRE365 on this site in order to ensure proposed permeable paving and any other infiltration techniques would perform. On uncontaminated land soakaways or other infiltration methods would be permissible for the disposal of clean surface water. Percolation tests should be undertaken, and soakaways designed and constructed in

accordance with BRE Digest 365 (or CIRIA Report 156), and to the satisfaction of the Local Authority. The maximum acceptable depth for soakaways is 2 metres below existing ground level. If, after tests, it is found that soakaways do not work satisfactorily, alternative proposals must be submitted.

- (b) Any culverting of a watercourse requires the prior written consent of the Agency under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991/Water Resources Act 1991. The Agency seeks to avoid culverting, and its consent for such works will not normally be granted except for access crossings. This is irrespective of any planning permission granted.

2. **Cambridgeshire Archaeology** has updated the comments at paragraph 53:

“Following a change in opinion of this land plot in 2006, I confirm that the archaeological requirements for this development area can be dealt with by imposing a standard negative archaeological condition on any planning consent (e.g. PPG16 para 30)”.

3. **Internal Drainage Board** - comments to be reported verbally.

4. The Council's **Urban Design Officer** has commented on the scheme in detail:

Layout:

The proposed layout design responds effectively to the specific parts of Site, but on the whole fails to provide an inclusive and sustainable design.

- (a) The overall development proposes to be **sensitive to the character** of the location proposing to retain the local features of landscape, maintain the **ecology** and re-furbish its **historic connection** through public art.
- (b) Part of the existing building fabric from the Unwins work has been retained and converted to houses. This succeeds in imparting the development with a **characteristic landmark feature** at its entrance whilst **retaining the historic context to its industrialized past**. This provision reinforces urban design principles of **landmark** (legibility) and **richness** (character) and is well accepted. Realising there is a strong need to retain the appropriate Unwins building for conversion there are concerns over the failings to justify the retention of the two storey saw-toothed structure in relation to adjacent single storey units.
- (c) The design layout across the Mid Site (pg 7; D&A statement) emphasis itself with the presence of a **‘square’ enclosure formed by group of perimeter buildings**. Though the perimeter buildings actively define this space on all three sides, the relation between the **spaces would be greatly enhanced** if the ‘square’ could face onto the ‘open space’ on its west and be reinforced with a strong active frontage to its east. This will prove helpful in providing **active surveillance** over the open space making it **secure to use** and **integrate the amenity space into the heart of the development** than the backs of a 4-storey block.
- (d) The Housing court layout allows for a cul-de-sac within its design, this is not acceptable. Though it is felt that this may have been done to retain access for future developments to adjacent properties, the scheme should firstly look to **provide quality access within its layout structure** with a possibility of pedestrian connection to the adjacent properties. The

proposed court in this scheme lies on central visual axis of the main path across the site if approached from Glebe way; it is therefore regarded as a **key vista**. A built form of high quality is sought **to enhance this vista** at its point of ocular cessation.

- (e) The western part of the site is been thoughtfully laid out in response to rainwater disposal and flood risk assessments. Provision of 'open spaces' has been made to compensate for the building footprint in the flood risk area. The blocks constituting mainly of one/two bed flats have been oriented north south to enable ease of floodwater drainage and are designed to provide minimum visual impact on existing neighbouring properties. The proposed tangible solution is much appreciated on a complex flood risk site on an urban fringe however due to its **proximity to a historic village core** this illustrates a **drastic transition in built form** - from decent sized houses on eastern, western and southern edges to relatively high-density blocks of the western section of the site.
- (f) Parking is mainly on plot for the houses. Parking for flats will be in two principle-parking courts that will be screened by buildings and partially sunken relative to the finished ground floor levels of the flats. These sloping banks around the parking courts will be planted with shrubs and trees. The proposed concept is well-received however adequate 'section' drawings depicting the sunken levels and its relation to ground level path across the site particularly of the western part need to be shown. The provision of sunken levels on a flood risk site also raises concerns over the flooding of the car-parking courts.
- (g) The drawings (i.e. Site Layouts) illustrate **provision of a biomass unit** to the north west part of the western section, however **no supporting information of this utility** is established in the design and access statement.

Permeability & legibility:

The way new development connects to the existing is always critical. The scheme should lend itself to the public realm rather than closing itself off, as would be the case with the cul-de-sac provision. The public route through the site is to be well landscaped with **robust** seating, **creating a feeling that it is a pleasant** place to live or pass through at a leisurely pace.

- (a) Principle access to the site is from Impington lane and is the only vehicular route into the site.
- (b) The featured saw-tooth landmark at its entrance makes the site **legible within its surrounding context**.
- (c) The site is connected by pedestrian and cycle routes to the Histon Village centre. Across the proposed western layout this linear pedestrian/cycle path becomes overpowering with car parking spaces. Due to the layout and edge conditions of the site it was felt that it would be much more efficient to provide a central access between Impington Lane and Glebe Way which would divide the western section of the site into two halves, thus **helping to achieve active frontages** on both sides of this central **'mews' like character street**, while providing a **robust and secure route** for the pedestrians through the site.
- (d) Garden walls adjoining the backcourts also allows for some surveillance while giving some privacy to rear gardens. A pathway that gently ramps up alongside the landscaped drainage basin reaches the front doors of the block units on the western section. **Disable access has been successfully integrated within the scheme**.

- (e) On the eastern section the house unit's access to rear gardens is through proposed 'Alleyways'. This is unacceptable due to security however this can be resolved by provision of **secure or gated access to alleyways**.

Built Form:

Overall scale is set at two storeys with high pitches dominating the eastern part and mainly three storeys with a setback fourth storey on the western part of the site.

- (a) The scheme's southern edge of the eastern section is identified as a "**key frontage**". Two storey-detached units with high-pitched roofs dominate the street scene along the 'key frontage' and form the main axis of the connection further into the site. This sits well with the existing street scene on Impington Lane, which is predominantly two storey-detached units.
- (b) The retained Unwins building sits too close to the adjacent property on Impington lane, this raises serious **concerns over light ventilation and privacy of the converted units**. It is also felt that the **scale** of the two storey converted saw-toothed structure is too high in relation to Impington lane and its surrounding context. The **concept of a converted block** relating back to Unwins on the site was felt to be admirable, therefore a better way to achieve this will be to look at retention of the single storey structures at both sides of the entrance. The relation of the intermediate **space in its scale and massing** is felt to be far better to the single storey Unwin buildings.
- (c) The mid site forms a transition '**square**' into the site, enclosed by units of varying heights and scale, two storey terraces on its east, houses with twin gabled frontages on its north and four storey building block to its west. This produces the required variety in roofcape however in terms of scale and massing, the presence of a four storey flat roofed building block is felt to be overbearing in a relatively small street/square scene. The '**square should be celebrated**' by opening up the play areas and **forming incidental space** at both entrances into the site. This provision of open spaces at both ends will **help in balancing the scale of the development in relation to its edges** (particularly on the western edge connecting to Glebe Way) as well as **provide a intermittent space to appreciate the volume and massing** of the overall scheme.
- (d) Beyond this the western part of the scheme is mainly four storeys set back for mitigating the effects on existing adjacent properties backing onto the site. The north-south **orientation of these blocks is to minimize visual impact**. It is strongly felt that the concern over visual impact to the neighbouring properties arises due to the proposed four-storey height. Therefore **attenuation in the scale** along the western section should be sought.
- (e) The built form on the western section is felt to be **too bulky and rigid** for the nature and context of the site. A much **more disintegrated and refined approach** relating to its surrounding context will be appreciated in this section.
- (f) There are serious concerns over the proximity of Unit 'E' to the existing buildings. Its orientation raises major **issues over light and ventilation**, due to its imminence to a mature group of trees. **Root protection area needs to be clarified** in relation to unit E. As per the layout, the back garden of the proposed unit will be forming **blank frontages to the enclosed space along the pedestrian route** to Histon Village Green

raising **concerns over safety and security** of its users and **privacy** of the owners.

- (g) The design of the scheme avoids the bland repetition of the many suburban housing typologies by **providing a variety in character and identity along the eastern section** of the scheme. The dwelling layouts and construction has been informed by the **10% renewable resources** target and aspires to **harness both passive and active solar energy**. Density of the scheme is been **55 dwellings/ha** of which 41% has been identified as affordable.

Architecture & Materials:

Overall contemporary with more traditional elements dominating the eastern part and modern features on the western part of the site.

- (a) Layouts are notable for the way **habitable rooms**, especially those at ground level, can be used as living rooms, bedrooms or home work spaces. This also enables the ground floor to function as a virtually self contained unit.
- (b) Corners of buildings are **articulated** with projecting windows or changes of materials.
- (c) Windows are exceptionally generous, especially when compared with recent more traditional developments, and allow **high levels of natural lighting** as well as providing opportunities for overlooking surrounding streets and courts.
- (d) **Skylights** and **domers** piercing the pitch seamed sheet roofing illuminate attic rooms and, unusually for houses, there are upper floor **balconies**.
- (e) The materials and construction are of a high standard, and these dwellings should last well over time.
- (f) The variety of the layout in particular to the eastern section of the site, together with the **sympathetic vernacular** will encourage customer demand.
- (g) A **sense of integration** to be achieved through a **consistent yet interesting palette of materials**.

Implementation & Delivery:

It is kown that localised flooding occurs at Impington Lane caused partly by silting up and lack of general maintenace to local ditches and watercourses. The proposed scheme will address this by ensuring that ditches and culverts within their site are cleaned of debris and kept well maintained at all times. The site will be re-levelled to ensure that it has optimum landform to allow natural drainage. Though the proposal sounds effective in short term, it fails to define the **maintaince regime and its application** over a length of period for the proposed development. The applicant needs to define the **phasing and delivery programme** for the development and state the emergency actions take should be taken in case of flooding during the built.

Key Issues and Advice:

- (a) To retain Unwins building of appropriate scale and massing for conversion.
- (b) To enable a robust and vibrant pedestrian pathway integral to the scheme.

- (c) To enhance vistas at their points of visual culmination with appropriate built form.
 - (d) To achieve a disintegrated and refined approach relating the western section to its surrounding context.
 - (e) Attenuation in the scale along the western section should be sought.
 - (f) To celebrate the 'squares' by opening up the play areas and forming incidental space at both entrances into the site.
 - (g) To balance the scale of the development in relation to its edges (particularly on the western edge connecting to Glebe Way) as well as provide an intermittent space to appreciate the volume and massing of the overall scheme
 - (h) To avoid insecure alleyways.
 - (i) To provide adequate 'section' drawings depicting the sunken levels and its relation to ground level path across the site particularly of the western part.
 - (j) To provide landscape plan depicting the removed plants/trees.
5. The Council's **Ecology Officer** has expressed concern at the potential impact on biodiversity. He notes "this is a large site, yet no ecological assessment appears to have been undertaken. Issues that require further investigation include bat surveys, bird surveys (for swifts and barn owls), and water voles. Further information is requested on how the watercourse will be treated and enhanced. It must not be overshadowed by screen planning. Who will manage it?"
6. **Housing Development Officer** states that they have met with the developer and have generally discussed needs and are satisfied with the suggested mix, however, the positioning and location of the affordable element does not support integration in order to ensure sustainable communities i.e. "small groups or clusters through the development". The affordable element within this development will not necessarily address the local housing needs, as allocations can be taken across the South Cambridgeshire District as a whole".
7. The Council's **Drainage Manager's** comments will be reported verbally.
8. **Building Control's** comments will be reported verbally.
9. **Arts Development Officer's** commented as follows:
- "As this is a larger development (i.e. greater than 50 homes) the applicant should submit a Public Art plan including the following headings, preferably within the Design and Access statement:
- (a) The contact managing the Public Art scheme - and the artist/s - on behalf of the developer (usually a member of the design team)
 - (b) The vision behind the Public Art plan, its aims and benefits.
 - (c) Community liaison and engagement - undertaken and proposed
 - (d) The nature and purpose of the Public Art intervention and its relationship to the site.
 - (e) A description of the kind/s of Public Art proposed and costs associated
 - (f) The strategy and timescale to be employed in order to realise the works
 - (g) The ownership, maintenance and decommissioning plan".

10. The **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** has provided the following initial comments:
- (a) I am concerned about the footpath link to Glebe Way which depends to a large degree on natural surveillance from only one dwelling in the south west corner of the site. This may be attractive to offenders seeking access and escape together with a degree of anonymity.
 - (b) The open space to the front of the Business Unit near F5 out of hours may become attractive as an area for informal association by youths to the annoyance/disturbance of residents.
 - (c) The through route exposes a significant number of existing rear garden boundaries, again with limited overlooking and potentially vulnerable car parking facilities.
 - (d) Play area provision should benefit from active frontages supplying opportunities for overlooking from dwellings whose occupiers will have a sense of ownership over the area and take responsibility for it. The degree to which this is achieved by block F1 is questionable.
 - (e) It is not clear as to the ownership or purpose of the land along the north and east boundaries. Where possible this should be included within curtilage (such as to the rear of houses, or well overlooked in the case of flats).
 - (f) Where flats adjoin public space there should be a clear demarcation to make clear that public domain is separate from space immediately adjoining a dwelling. This is particularly so where a ground floor elevation contains a door or window. In any case there should be an area of clearly identifiable defensible space associated with any dwelling.
 - (g) Care must be taken that planting does not impede natural surveillance nor provide climbing aids (next to fences) or hiding places by paths or parking courts (thorny species may be more appropriate).
 - (h) Lighting to roads, footpaths and car parking areas should be by means of column mounted white down lighters to BS 5489: Code of practice for outdoor lighting.
11. The **Conservation and Design Officer** comments that “The issues I would like to make are as follows:
- (a) The selection of the buildings to be retained - In my opinion the three storey 'saw-tooth' profile roof block is of less interest than the single storey range that fronts it is, in fact, of more architectural interest and has a better relationship to other buildings nearby. Also, if the single storey range were retained, and the 3 storey block behind removed, it would allow garden space for the units created from the single storey range and also space between them and the adjacent house to the west (which is outside the application site but I believe is to be turned into flats). Opposite this building is a lower 'saw-tooth' roof profile building which also is of some architectural interest and which I would like to see retained and converted to maybe studio apartments. Access into the site might then be moved further east, and the space between the single storey range and the lower saw-tooth profiled roof range turned into a pedestrian area with some parking etc.
 - (b) I am concerned that little attempt has been made to create a positive piece of urban space where the affordable housing is located at the north-east end of the site. The road here looks suspiciously like an access road to phase II in the field beyond, whereas I would like to see the buildings arranged to enclose the space.
 - (c) The four-storey (and to a lesser extent) the three-storey blocks are of a form, scale and massing that is out of keeping with their village location. I

am not criticising their design, but feel they would be more appropriate at Arbury Camp.

- (d) At the west end of the development is a single dwelling of more traditional design. This is poorly sited in relation to the trees (which will completely over shadow the garden and the tree roots may be compromised by the foundations of the house). Also, the private garden to this house is located right by the footpath from the new housing development back into Histon village centre, and will therefore require either a high fence or wall to maintain privacy. Such a wall or fence will be unfortunate for the footpath, trapping it between this new wall/fence and the back wall of the existing block of garages to the north”.

Representations

12. Councillor Jonathon Chatfield has commented on the scheme: “I support the principle of development at this location, although I would like to see 50% of the housing as affordable. There was a very large public meeting held in Impington in February and people expressed real concerns about the high density, height of the flats and flooding issues in particular. I agree with these concerns”.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

13. Subject to receipt of the revised FRA and the recommended conditions the concerns regarding flooding and drainage can be addressed.
14. A condition is required to address potential archaeology impacts.
15. The layout, form and design of the scheme in its current form do not achieve a high enough standard of design. A revised scheme addressing the Conservation and Design Officer and Urban Design Officers’ comments could be achieved, however in its current form is not acceptable.
16. Further work is required in terms of assessing the biodiversity impact. In its current form the application provides insufficient information to be able to assess the scheme’s impact.
17. Within the scheme the affordable housing is inadequately “pepper-potted” and in this respect fails to meet the policy requirements of policy HG/3 that seeks affordable housing within small groups.
18. A public art scheme is referred to in the application documents and further to the recommendation of the Art’s Development Officer could be sought via a section 106 agreement.
19. It is still necessary to ascertain whether the development of the eastern part of the site for housing is acceptable in principle due to the loss of employment land. The response of an independent agent is awaited.

Recommendation

20. Subject to the further detailed comments awaited and the Highway Agency’s holding objection, delegated refusal is sought. The reasons for refusal have been amended, below, to reflect the updated comments set out in the above addendum.

Reasons

- a. The built form, scale, and density of the scheme is out of keeping with the local area and will have a detrimental impact upon it, including harm to the Conservation Area and Green Belt contrary to policies P1/3 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003 and DP/2 and DP/3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007.
- b. The nature of the development fails to achieve a layout and design that is sufficiently permeable or legible, or that is inclusive and sustainable in terms its design and as such fails to meet the requirements of policy DP/2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007.
- c. The traffic assessment fails to adequately identify that no harm to the public highway will result from the development.
- d. Insufficient information has been submitted to enable an assessment of the biodiversity impact contrary to PPS9 and policy NE/6 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007.
- e. The proposed housing mix does not meet the identified local need as required by policy HG/2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007.
- f. The proposed affordable housing is located in large groups contrary to policy HG/3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007.
- g. Insufficient provision for public open space within the development.
- h. Loss of employment site, contrary to policy EM/8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007.
- i. Inadequate provision for car parking and cycle parking within the scheme contrary to policy TR/2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007.
- j. Contrary to policy DP/5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007, the development would prejudice the development of the neighbouring land within the Impington 1 housing allocation.

Plus any other matters, if arising, from consultation responses yet to be received.