

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2nd July 2008

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

**S/0629/08/F – LITTLE EVERSDEN
Erection of 10 Affordable Dwellings together with New Access
At Land Adj 52 Harlton Road, Little Eversden for Beechdale Homes**

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 1st July 2008 (Major Application)

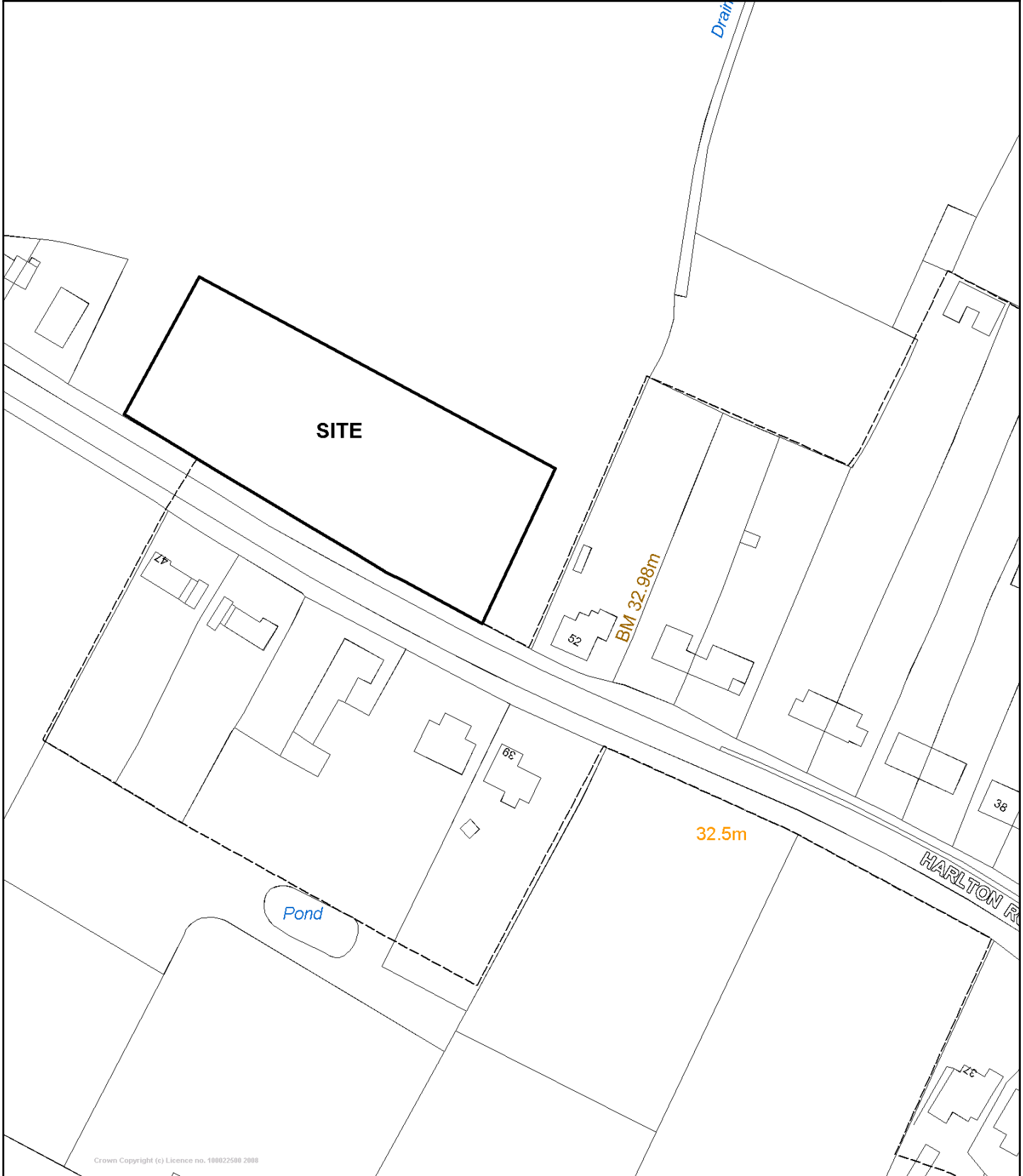
Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination as the application is for affordable housing as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Local Development Framework

Members will visit this site on Wednesday 2nd July 2008

Site and Proposal

1. This application, as amended by drawings received on 18th June 2008 and 20th May 2008 proposes the erection of 10 affordable dwellings on a 0.42ha of agricultural land between Nos. 52 and 54 Harlton Road, Little Eversden.
2. As amended the application comprises one 2-bedroom bungalow, five 2-bedroom houses and four 3-bedroom houses. The detached bungalow is located at the north east end of the site. A 4-bedroom house that was contained in the original submission at the south west end of the site has been replaced by a 3-bedroom house, which is now one of a terrace of three properties. The remaining six units are semi-detached. The exact tenure of the units is to be agreed but will be a split of shared ownership and rental accommodation.
3. The site, which is part of a larger area of agricultural land, has a mature hedgerow with tree planting along Harlton Road. As amended the application proposes a single point of access towards the north west end of the site and a 2m wide pedestrian access towards the south east end of the site. The layout comprises a line of properties parallel to the road, set approximately 20m into the site, behind an access roadway. The frontage hedgerow is retained except at the point of access. (In the original submission the vehicular access was located in the centre of the site).
4. The site, as amended, has a frontage to Harlton Road of approximately 108m. There is a 11m strip of land left between the north west boundary of the site and the adjacent property, and a 15m strip at the south east end.
5. Each unit is provided with one parking space within its curtilage with a further 10 spaces being provided in small groups of two or three between the new access roadway and the frontage hedge. The provision includes 2 disabled spaces.



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6. The maximum height to the ridge of the two storey units is 8.3m. The site is set one metre below the level of Harlton Road and rises to the north west.
7. To the north west of the site are two detached bungalows. No 54 Harlton Road which is closest to the site has a conservatory attached to the elevation facing the site, along with other ground floor openings. To the south east is a detached house with several openings in the elevation facing the application site. Opposite the site are residential properties and agricultural land.
8. The proposed density is 24 dwellings per hectare.
9. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement.
10. The site is outside the Village Framework and in the Cambridge Green Belt.

Planning History

11. There is no relevant planning history for the application site.

Planning Policy

Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 2003

12. **Policy P6/1 - Development Related Provision** states development will only be permitted where the additional infrastructure and community requirements generated by the proposals can be secured.
13. **Policy P9/8 - Infrastructure Provision** identifies a coordinated approach to securing infrastructure improvements required to support development for the Cambridge sub-region. A programme encompassing for example, transport, affordable housing and education, amongst others is identified.

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007

14. **Policy ST/7 – Infill Villages** identifies Little Eversden as an Infill-Only Village and states that residential development and redevelopment within the village framework will be restricted to not more than two dwellings.

In very exceptional circumstances a slightly larger development (not more than about 8 dwellings) may be permitted where this would lead to the sustainable recycling of a brownfield site bringing positive overall benefit to the village. Development may exceptionally consist of up to about 15 dwellings where this would make the best use of a single brownfield site.

15. **Policy GB/1 – Development in the Green Belt** states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Cambridge Green Belt as defined on the Proposals Map.
16. **Policy GB/2 – Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt** states that 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. 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.

17. **Policy DP/1 - Sustainable Development** states 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.
18. **Policy DP/2 - Design of New Development** requires all new development to be of a high quality design and indicates the specific elements to be achieved where appropriate. It also sets out the requirements for Design and Access Statements.
19. **Policy DP/3 - Development Criteria** sets out what all new development should provide, as appropriate to its nature, scale and economic viability and clearly sets out circumstances where development will not be granted on grounds of an unacceptable adverse impact e.g. residential amenity and traffic generation.
20. **Policy DP/4 - Infrastructure and New Developments** requires that development proposals should include suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms. It identifies circumstances where contributions may be required e.g. affordable housing and education.
21. **Policy DP/7 - Development Frameworks** states outside urban and village frameworks, only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside will be permitted.
22. **Policy HG/1 - Housing Density** is set at a minimum of 30 dph unless there are exceptional local circumstances that require a different treatment in order to make best use of land. Higher densities of 40 dph will be sought in the most sustainable locations.
23. **Policy HG/2 - Housing Mix** Affordable housing should be of an appropriate mix to respond to identified needs at the time of the development in accordance with HG/3.
24. **Policy HG/3 - Affordable Housing** occupation will be limited to people in housing need and must be available over the long-term. The appropriate mix in terms of housing tenures and house sizes of affordable housing will be determined by local circumstances at the time of planning permission, including housing need and the achievement of mixed and balanced communities. In order to ensure sustainable communities, affordable housing will be distributed through the development in small groups or clusters.
25. **Policy HG/5 - Exceptions Sites for Affordable Housing** states
 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.
2. 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.
26. **Policy SF/8** states that within the 'Lords Bridge Restricted Area' planning permission will only be granted for development that would not result in any risk of interference to the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory at Lord's Bridge
27. **Policy NE/1 - Energy Efficiency** states development will be required to demonstrate that it would achieve a high degree of measures to increase the energy efficiency of new buildings, for example through location, layout, orientation, aspect and external design.
28. **Policy NE/6 - Biodiversity** requires new developments to aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity. The District Council will refuse development that would have an adverse significant impact on the population or conservation status of protected species, priority species or habitat, unless the impact can be adequately mitigated by measures secured by planning conditions. Previously developed land will not be considered to be devoid of biodiversity. The re-use of such sites must be undertaken carefully with regard to existing features of biodiversity interest. Development proposals will be expected to include measures that maintain and enhance important features whilst incorporating them within any development of the site.
29. **Policy NE/9 - Water and Drainage Infrastructure** indicates that planning permission will not be granted where there are inadequate water supply, sewerage or land drainage systems to meet the demands of the development unless there is an agreed phasing agreement between the developer and the relevant service provider to ensure the provision of necessary infrastructure.
30. **Policy NE/12 – Water Conservation** states that development must incorporate all practicable water conservation measures.
31. **Policy TR/1 - Planning for More Sustainable Travel** states planning permission will not be granted for developments likely to give rise to a material increase in travel demands unless the site has a sufficient standard of accessibility to offer an appropriate choice of travel by public transport or other non-car travel modes. The

amount of car parking provision in new developments should be minimised, compatible with their location. Developments should be designed from the outset with permeable layouts to facilitate and encourage short distance trips by cycle and walking. Safe and secure cycle parking shall be provided.

32. **Policy TR/2 - Car and Cycle Parking Standards** states car parking should be provided in accordance with the Council's maximum standards, to reduce over reliance on the car and to promote more sustainable forms of transport.
 33. **Policy TR/4 - Non-motorised Modes** states the District Council will use its planning powers by ensuring that all new developments are designed at the outset to facilitate and encourage short distance trips between home, work, schools and for leisure.
 34. **Policy SF/10 Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments** requires all residential developments to contribute towards outdoor playing space, formal outdoor sports facilities and informal open space to meet the additional need generated by the development. Where appropriate, provision will involve all or some types of space within the development site. However, an appropriate contribution will be required for 'off-site' provision of the types of space not provided on-site.
 35. **Policy SF/11 Open Space Standards** defines the minimum standards for outdoor play space and informal open space.
- Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 2 – Green Belts**
36. Paragraph 3.4 states (in part): The construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is inappropriate unless it is for limited affordable housing for local community needs under development plan policies according with PPG3.
 37. **Planning Policy Statement 3 - Housing** -encourages Local Planning Authorities to release sites solely for affordable housing, including using a Rural Exception Site Policy. These should only be used for affordable housing in perpetuity.

Consultation

38. **Little Eversden Parish Council** recommends approval of the application but with the following comments:

Original scheme

- “1. House at the east end changed to a bungalow.

The 4-bedroom house at the east end should be changed for a second bungalow. The grounds are that these houses are supposed to be affordable and starter homes which a 4 bed house is not.

2. Hedge preservation order

This Council feels that the preservation of the hedge along the frontage is so important that it will apply for formal hedge and tree preservation orders along the frontage and requests that the planning consent also requires its preservation.

3. Hedge at east end

The agricultural entrance at the east end is used but should be planted with a hedge on its left hand, development side.

4. Fence at east end of public area

During the establishment of the hedge in 3. A fence should be maintained at the east end so as to protect the hedge and give privacy to properties to the east.

5. Grasscrete between parking spaces

To forestall visitors parking along the service road the spaces between the designated paved parking areas should be provided with grass/concrete blocks for use as overspill parking.

6. Fence at west end of public area

To prevent headlights and other general activity impinging on property to the west it is recommended that a fence be erected on the boundary between the existing house (No 54) and the screening planting at the west end of the development and this fence be maintained until the planting is well grown.

7. Screening planting at west end

This strip, which is clearly shown in the Design Statement from Haysom Ward Miller is important, should be included in the sale of the land and responsibility for its planting and maintenance should be defined in the planning consent. The hedge forming the northern boundary of the site should thus be extended to join the boundary of the adjoining property (No 54).

8. Agricultural entrance

This has to be maintained at an adequate width but can still have a hedge bordering the site boundary.

9. Move entrance

It was proposed that the new entrance should be moved westwards to lie opposite the field to the west of No 47. The Parish Council had difficulty balancing the loss of amenity for the houses opposite the present access road due to headlights coming out of the entrance compared with the safety issues arising from the proposed movement nearer the junction with High Street.

10. Lighting

It is requested that the same conditions as to the provision of lighting around these houses should be applied as to the Affordable Houses in Great Eversden."

Amended scheme (20th May 2008)

The Parish Council is now unclear as to the status of the land to the west of the development and wishes that land to be treated as in 7. above. It is concerned that the present idea is that this strip should remain with the current owner and this is not satisfactory as its planting and maintenance as a screen is important and it also needs an access from the service road. The remainder of the original concerns seem to have been well addressed.

In a further email the Parish has supported the view expressed by a local resident that there should be a pedestrian access to Harlton Road at the east end of the service road.

The Parish Council's comments on the further amendments received on 18th June will be reported.

39. The **Local Highway Authority** comments, in respect of the scheme as amended on 20th May. Whilst the visibility splays have been shown they pass through the existing hedgerow and unless the hedge is trimmed so that it does not exceed 600m in height it will not comply with the Highway Authority request. The plans show an internal footway but do not include any pram crossings to allow for pedestrians to cross from one footway to the other. No turning facility for non-residents, including refuse and delivery vehicles is provided which has the potential to encourage unnecessary and possible hazardous manoeuvres.

Given the primary use of the access to serve private car parking the Highway Authority states that it will resist adopting the road.

Pedestrian visibility splays should be shown, along with the dimensions of parking and reversing spaces.

The Highway Authority states that it will seek the provision of an upgraded footway for the entire frontage of the development including tactile paving, under a Section 106 Agreement.

The drawings submitted on 18th June attempt to address these issues and the further comments of the **Local Highway Authority** will be reported at the meeting.

40. The **Trees and Landscapes Officer** assumes that the existing hedge along the road is to remain, apart from the access into the development. A substantial hedge should be planted around the other sides of the development, outside the property boundaries, so that it can be maintained by agricultural machinery as the roadside hedge must be at present. This should be a freely grown mixed hedge that will be sided up on the field side every two or three years, but allowed to grow 4-5m high. In order to have space to allow this level of screening the hedge should be planted 2m out from what is presumed will be a close boarded fence around the rear gardens. The inside of the hedge will not need to be cut as it will grow against the fence.

Rather than planting standard trees within the rear perimeter hedge a fruit tree should be planted in each garden. The planting of trees between the car parking spaces at the front is welcomed.

Comments on the amended plans received 18th June will be reported at the meeting.

41. **Cambridgeshire Archaeology** states that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential and therefore requests that the site should be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation to be secured through the inclusion of a negative condition in any consent.
42. The **Housing Development and Enabling Manager** comments “a Housing Needs Survey was completed for the village of Little Eversden in May 2005, which demonstrated a need for 12 units. The proposed scheme provides for 10 family homes with a mix of tenure (shared ownership and rented). The Affordable Housing Development team fully supports this planning application as it helps us to continue with our work of increasing the provision of affordable housing in South Cambridgeshire, which is one of the main corporate objectives of this authority. The scheme will be built in accordance with the Housing Corporation standards and will meet the new Code 3 requirement for development, which aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 25% per property.

The proposed scheme will be developed on an exceptions site and will therefore meet the needs of local people.

This project has been worked up in partnership with Accent Nene Housing and the Parish Council.”

43. The **Architectural Liaison Officer, Cambridgeshire Constabulary**, commenting on the original scheme, is concerned about the design of the individual units with main entrance doors on the side elevations as this will give encouragement to those intent on carrying out distraction burglaries or rogue traders, as their presence on doorsteps will be less visible and the site will lack the existence of an active frontage along its length. It is recommended that the units are redesigned with a view to positioning the main entrance doors on the front elevations.

Opportunities for natural surveillance will be lost by the retention of the high hedge between the parking area and the highway beyond. The hedge should either be removed or reduced in height to a maximum of 900mm.

In curtilage car parking arrangements are preferred as this will provide greater security for parked vehicles as offenders would be required to enter private rather than public space to commit crime. The size and shape of the site appear to offer the opportunity for parking within front gardens and it is recommended that such an opportunity is taken.

In response to the amended drawings received on the 20th May the provision of curtilage car parking is welcomed and the repositioning of the main entrance to Plot 10 to the front elevation but in other respects the earlier comments remain extant.

44. The **Affordable Housing Panel** met on 3rd June when the principle of the development of the site was supported subject to the satisfactory resolution of the outstanding planning issues, specifically car parking, planting, the impact on the existing frontage hedge, the provision of a turning area within the site, and further confirmation from the Housing Development and Enabling Manager (since received) of the need for the bungalow.

45. The comments of the **Ecology Officer**, the **Environment Operations Manager**, the **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)**, and **Lords Bridge Observatory** will be reported at the meeting.

Representations

46. All the following comments relate to the application as originally submitted. Comments on the revised scheme will be reported verbally.
47. The occupiers of **No 52 Harlton Road**, to the east of the site, state that in principle they could support the application subject to the following changes:

The replacement of the 4-bed shared ownership property on Plot 10 with a shared ownership bungalow mirroring the design at the other end (Plot 1). This request is made on the basis that it is felt that the two-storey building will overlook No 52 resulting in material harm due to loss of privacy and amenity. As this is an 'exception site' this should make planning considerations more important rather than less so. No 52 is heavily glazed in the direction of the proposed plot and the kitchen/dining area opens out in this direction. Most of the heavily used outdoor space also faces this direction. Until recently it had been assumed that the Green Belt status of the land would be protected. The need for local affordable housing is recognised but is believed that there should be some degree of balance in good planning.

The support for the scheme locally was in order to offer housing to local people based on the local housing needs survey which did not identify a need for a large house. A large dwelling would be much less 'affordable' and a bungalow would offer accommodation to single people/key workers seeking to stay in the village. Alternatively, elderly or disabled people seeking to stay in the village in a more appropriate home could occupy a disabled- accessible bungalow allowing them to pass on their home to younger family members. Two bungalows in the scheme would offer better prospects for either of these situations

The submission states that the 4-bedroom property is 'in keeping' with the size of No 52 but the scheme departs significantly from the established 'building line' and would appear more stand-alone from many aspects. This minor change to the scheme will be beneficial for potential people in need of the accommodation as well as mitigating to some extent the effects on No 52.

A condition should be imposed that the east and west boundaries be screened with a 2m high close boarded fence or similar, to reflect noise and to some extent reduce glare from headlights shining into the east and west facing elevations of Nos. 52 and 54. Although the application describes the perimeter as hedges the plans do not reflect this on these boundaries and it is requested that this is also included and planted with native hedgerow plants to also allow wildlife access past the site

There is concern about lighting as the local community voted against having any streetlights in the past to avoid light pollution. It is asked whether a condition could be attached limiting any lighting to fall within the boundaries of the properties or discourage the use of floodlights that have caused problems already.

The view of the Parish Council that overflow parking grassed areas should be provided between the bays is supported.

In respect of the revised drawings received on 20th May, concern is expressed about the seemingly unnecessary openings in the side elevation of the house on Plot 10 and requests that these are removed. The request remains for a 2m high fence on the boundary and there is continued concern about lighting. It is suggested that a pedestrian access to Harlton Road be provided towards the south east end of the site given the relocation of the vehicular access.

48. The occupier of **53 Harlton Road** comments that the site is in the Green Belt in an infill-only village, and would contravene several planning policies. The application also contains several material errors.

Policy HG/5 requires that no alternative sites can be found. Alternative sites were not sought despite numerous requests to the Parish Council by residents. The chance discovery later by the Parish Council of a very suitable site for six dwellings illustrates this lack of interest in other possibilities. That site was dismissed as too small, contrary to Policy HG/3. There was also another available site on the corner of Bucks Lane and Harlton Road which some Parish Councillors and the objector felt would integrate much better into the village.

This development would not be well-related to the built-up areas of Little Eversden (Policy HG/5). The site is, as one Parish Councillor put it, part of the gateway to the Eversdens. It is near the highest ground in the village and would spoil views of the village from the high ground by Quarry Drift – often used by residents for local walks.

Little Eversden has minimal facilities – one GP surgery and an inadequate bus service, which implies travel and car-dependency contrary to Policy DP/1. It is least preferred for affordable housing (Policy ST/2), as an infill-only village.

There are errors in the Design and Access Statement – there is no longer a shop and post office in Great Eversden.

'Survey demonstrates local need'. These 10 units are one half on the Eversdens' needs, with 10 units at Great Eversden. In practice priority is given to potential tenants with the greatest need. Local affiliation is a minor part of that assessment as was found with the existing affordable housing in Great Eversden. 'Local' also appears to be flexible, the proposed 10 units at Great Eversden have been abandoned, at least for five years.

'The parish is very supportive of the scheme' – this is not true – both the Chairman and deputy are strongly in favour and of the other seven relevant members (the eighth owns the site), at least three were opposed. At an extraordinary meeting of the residents no formal vote was taken but from the combined votes of those cast in advance by absentees and those at the meeting the clear majority was against the proposal.

The statement that there is a post office and shop in Great Eversden is untrue.

49. The occupier of **15 Finch's Field** asks affordable dwellings – for whom? Certainly not for anyone young starting on the property ladder or anyone who does not have a very good income as this is a village with few amenities and a bus service which is totally inadequate for nursery school onwards into employment and then retirement. Travelling is therefore expensive and to live here is more expensive than living in Cambridge with a regular bus service and shops. The site is also wrong as the properties in the road from the High street to the A603 are all private ones. Why not build next to the ones already built in Great Eversden if there is to be more affordable housing?
50. The occupier of **54 Harlton Road**, to the west of the site, comments in respect of the original drawings, that she has been told by the Parish Council Chairman that there will be natural screening on the side of the site facing No 54. However this will take some time to establish and grow to a height that would obscure the development. There is concern that car lights will shine into kitchen and conservatory windows and it is requested that a 2 metre high fence is erected in addition to the natural screening, prior to the commencement of development, which would help to minimise noise during building works. As No 54 and No 52 Harlton Road will be experiencing the most impact as a result of this development it is felt strongly that the position of the access remains as shown on the plan and not moved close to the boundary as has apparently been muted. The view that a bungalow would be more suitable adjacent to No 52 is supported from the point of view of affordability, appearance and consideration of the occupants of No 52.
51. The occupier of **No 57 Harlton Road**, whilst having no objections to the provision of affordable housing in Little Eversden raises concerns about the information supporting the application. The shop and post office has been closed for nearly three years. The nearest post office is now 5 miles away and there is no shop or banking provision or similar amenity in the Eversdens or within walking distance. There is a doctor's surgery but it is only part-time. The bus service is very limited. The density of the development is below national standards which is important as allowing a higher density could set a precedent for future developments in the area which may have a higher impact on the local environment. Access is a concern – whilst the layout may meet minimum standards the application fails to mention that the site lies on an unlit street with a 40mph speed limit. From either direction there is no clear sight line over a large distance as there is a long left-hand bend from the direction of the A603. The access could potentially prove hazardous and relies on drivers obeying the speed limit, which is a problem in the area. The above errors should be corrected before a decision is made and at the present time there is an objection raised.
52. The occupier of **No 6 Wheelers Way** objects as the land is green belt and should be preserved as such as green spaces are important in the village. Affordable housing should be built where there are facilities for young families and local residents. These services are not available in the Eversdens. Little Eversden is a very small village with no shop or post office and a very poor bus service. If such homes are desperately needed in the Eversdens they should be built on the site in Great Eversden, OSP 148, which was compulsory purchased by the District Council in the 1930's specifically for this purpose. It is questioned why SCDC has leased the land in question to the very people of Great Eversden who object to the Parish Council encouraged development of the Great Eversden site. This land should have been sold to the housing association and the developers.

53. The occupiers of **43 and 45 Harlton Road**, opposite the site, object. The development is unsustainable. The strategic vision for South Cambridgeshire is to encourage a more sustainable pattern of living (Objective DP/c and Policy DP/1) where developments must be located where access to day-to day needs for shopping, education and other services is readily available by public transport (Objective ST/b). The proposed development is not consistent with these policies and will therefore have an adverse impact on the development criteria set out in sub-paragraphs (k), (l), (m), (o) and (q) of Policy D/3.

Little Eversden is one of the smallest villages in South Cambridgeshire and the level of facilities is frequently described as low. There is now no shop or post office in Little Eversden (nor in nearby Great Eversden) contrary to statements made in the application, and there is no primary school with both primary and secondary education being provided in Comberton. Public transport links to Cambridge are virtually non-existent with one bus departing first thing in the morning and returning in the early evening. As a consequence local residents must travel outside of the village by private car for all their daily needs. Government policy is to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and this is reflected in Objective TR/b and Policy D/1, according to which development should 'minimise the need to travel and reduce car dependency'. The intention instead is to promote the use of more sustainable modes of travel such as public transport 'by making such modes...highly accessible'. The District Council has stated in its Development Control Policies that 'at the local level, there is a need to ensure that development is located such to minimise distances to travel to facilities and services' and that 'by ensuring development takes place in locations that are accessible by a range of modes of transport, the District Council can promote more sustainable travel patterns by reducing reliance on the private car'. It is therefore obvious that, in planning policy terms, it is important to limit the amount of development that can take place in rural areas with no services and extremely limited public transport. Taking into account the lack of local facilities and the complete absence of regular public transport links from the village, it is clear that the proposed development would be unsustainable as it would generate a disproportionate number of additional car journeys outside of the village.

The unsustainability of development of the proposed site is further evidenced by the designation of Little Eversden as an Infill-Only Village for planning purposes (Policy ST/7). The development opportunities within such villages are extremely limited. Subject to some of the District Councils overriding policies on affordable housing (see further below), residential development within the relevant village framework must be restricted to not more than 2 dwellings and is conditional on the satisfaction of one or more of the criteria at sub-paragraphs 2(a)-2(d). Planning permission may exceptionally be granted for up to 8 dwellings 'in very special circumstances' where this would lead to the sustainable recycling of a brownfield site (Policy T/7, para 3)

The proposed site is not within the designated village framework for Little Eversden and does not satisfy any of the criteria as sub-paragraphs 2(a)-2(d) (e.g. the site is on an otherwise built-up frontage to an existing road, but the gap is sufficiently large enough to accommodate far more than 2 dwellings). Similarly the proposed site is agricultural land within the Cambridge Green Belt (see below) and so clearly does not fall within para 3 of Policy ST/7. Furthermore, the fact that planning permission for up to 8 dwellings on brownfield sites will only be granted in 'very exceptional circumstances

suggest that allowing 10 dwellings on Green Belt land would be even more exceptional in nature.

In circumstances where the site of the development is outside of the relevant urban or village framework, as in the present case, Policy DP/7 states that only development for horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside will be permitted. The proposed development does not come within any of these excepted categories. As the development frameworks define where policies for the built-up areas of settlements give way to policies for the countryside it is considered that the District Council should consider these points seriously before granting planning permission for a development which is outside the village framework. This is because the boundaries of the village framework for Little Eversden, as with all such village frameworks, have been carefully located to ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment on the edges of the village and to help guard against incremental growth in an unsustainable location.

As noted above, the proposed site is also located within the Cambridge Green Belt. The Government attaches great importance to land designated as Green Belt and the aim of Green Belt policy is to maintain areas of open countryside between settlements in order to prevent coalescence of urban areas and to 'encourage sustainable patterns of development' (PPG 2 Green Belts). Limited affordable housing may be appropriate within the Green Belt (Policy HG/5), but the District Council has stated that 'given the nature of the Cambridge Green Belt, which is relatively small in extent, and the need to avoid prejudicing other strategic and local policies the District Council will implement this policy with caution'. Furthermore, para 2 of Policy HG/5 states that '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 Councils policies including those relating to the impact of the development on local surroundings.'

It is therefore a matter for the judgement of the District Council, having had regard to all material circumstances (including the objectives of Green Belt policy and the sustainability of development at the proposed location), whether to release Green Belt land on an exceptional basis for low-cost housing schemes. It is believed that in the present case the necessary pre-conditions for such an exceptional release are not satisfied for the following reasons:

The proposed site is located on the fringe of the village and is not therefore well related to the built-up area of the settlement

The scale of the scheme is not appropriate to the size and character of the village as the number of existing dwellings within the village framework adjacent to the proposed site is approximately 49, meaning that the proposed development (if built) would represent a 20% increase in the number of residential properties within the relevant framework.

The proposed site is not well related to facilities and services, within the village (e.g. schools, shops and post offices) because, as explained above Little Eversden does not benefit from such facilities and services.

The proposed development would damage the character of the village and the rural landscape, as the proposed site provides an important rural break between the two nearby, but detached parts of a village framework, thereby assuming an importance for the character of the village as a whole. The land at the proposed site currently enhances the setting, character and appearance of the village and should remain as agricultural land in order to retain the sense of connection between the village and its rural origins and surroundings

Alternative appropriate sites can readily be found for the scale and type of development proposed. The Core Strategy states that most of the limited development in the district should be focussed on the larger, more sustainable Rural Centres or Minor Rural Centres. A development of this nature would be better suited to such communities as Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres, which have a wider range of services and facilities, better public transport links to Cambridge city centre and a greater established need for affordable housing.

Granting planning permission for the proposed development would arguably also contravene Policy NE/17 which aims to protect high quality agricultural land by providing that the District Council will not generally grant planning permission for developments that would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land. The land between Little Eversden and Great Eversden is high quality, grade 2 agricultural land, and much of the remainder of the land surrounding Little Eversden is grade 3. Allowing the proposed development would therefore entail the irreversible loss of some of the best, and most versatile and productive agricultural land in the UK and it is submitted that the loss of agricultural land in this way should be restricted to the districts major development locations.

The District Council aims to protect and enhance natural heritage (Objective NE/b) and is committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity (Objective NE/c). It will therefore generally refuse development that would have an adverse significant impact on the population or conservation status of protected species (Policy NE/6) and will not give planning permission for developments that may have an unacceptable adverse impact, either directly or indirectly, on a Site of Biodiversity or Geological Importance (which includes Special Areas of Conservation) (Policy HE/7).

Little Eversden lies in the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Clayland Landscape Character Area and the West Anglian Plain Natural Area, and the local flora and fauna is fortunate enough to benefit from statutory protection in various locations (e.g. nearby Great Eversden Meadow and Wimpole Road are both County Wildlife Sites). However, by far the most important site within the locality of Little Eversden is the Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (the Wood SAC), which is the only site of international importance within South Cambridgeshire. The site provides a habitat for a colony of the Barbestelle bat, one of the rarest bats in Western Europe, and the bats have been recorded at a small number of other sites up to 11 kilometres from the Woods SAC. The area of particular interest for the protected bats flight and feeding areas are identified within the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy and Little Eversden is situated in the centre of the area in which the bats are known to feed. If agricultural land in this area should be lost to further residential development, it is believed that

this would have a significant damaging impact on the already limited feeding area of the endangered Barbestelle bats. Whilst the proposed development is outside the strict confines of the Wood Sac Policy NE/7 applies to both direct and indirect adverse effects on Special Areas of Conservation, 'development outside an important site can still have a damaging impact on it'. It is therefore believed that the planning application should be subject to intense scrutiny to ensure that the proposed development does not adversely affect the Woods SAC.

Affordable housing is by its very nature, often occupied by families with young children and the proposed development consists of several 2-4 bedroom family homes. The proposed site is however within the beam of highest intensity of a mobile telecommunications mast situated to the rear of No 49 Harlton Road. It is understood that to permit residential homes to be built within this radius (particularly those that are likely to be occupied by young children) would not comply with the relevant recommendations of the European Commission, the World Health Organisation and the UK's Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones.

54. The occupier of **No 41 Harlton Road** queries the role of a 4 bedroom house in an affordable homes project as this would not be affordable and suggests its replacement with a bungalow similar to that at the other end of the development. The entrance to the site from Harlton Road is in one of the most dangerous areas in the village for speeding cars and to have this opposite houses makes this even more dangerous with cars entering onto Harlton Road from both sides. It would be more appropriate to move the entrance further along towards No 54, thus clearing all entrances and making for a better view of traffic approaching from High Street turn and the blind corner. Why, in times of rising food prices and shortages has it been seen fit to propose this site which is Green Belt, farmland and capable of producing grain etc when there has been a site earmarked for housing for many years in the village which now seems to be used for private purposes.
55. The occupier of **No 31 Lowfields** comments that the houses will be sited off an already busy road with cars parked on the road between the site and the doctor's surgery, impairing visibility. Whilst it is understood that the homes will be for people with a local connection, which is something most people would not argue about, if there are not enough local people found to move into these houses are there any guarantees that none of them will be used for problem families? This has happened in the past causing great problems for the small community. Little Eversden is a small village with no facilities and a very limited bus service. There is already a good proportion of either Council or low-cost housing for a village of this size.
56. In two letters the occupiers of **43 Harlton Road** object believing that the current proposed development is totally out of keeping for a rural greenfield designated location and contradicts the SCDC Environmental and Sustainability planning strategies and policies. The Design and Access Statement states that the Parish is very supportive of the scheme however a considerable number in the community are not. It is believed that the proposed development of this specific site is totally unnecessary and is following an unethical route due to the fact that building land in Great Eversden between Chapel Road and the Church (OSP148) has been assigned for approximately 70 years by the District Council to meet the stated requirement for affordable housing within the Eversdens

It was on the basis of this information presented for investigation and analysis the objectors were informed of this fact following due process searches when they moved into the Eversdens in 1966.

In addition when they moved into Little Eversden in 1979 they state that they were advised that the land directly opposite the property upon which this development is proposed and will remain registered as Green Belt agricultural land with open view status and would not be built upon. Advice confirmed the land in Great Eversden was allocated for the next major building development phase with the only exceptions being very limited development in accord with SCDC in-fill policies

These facts have always been supported to date by SCDC and the Parish Council.

There are more appropriate sites in keeping with the village structure available which have been rejected by the Parish Council member who is also the landowner. This situation requires publicly demonstrable strict compliance to the Parish Council Model Code of Practice

There is also a brownfield site available for development in Harlton Road with existing established vehicle access.

The proposed development coupled with the intended additional access road to the development, if it is ultimately approved, will immediately create a dangerous road safety risk, totally eradicate the established green field environment and would drastically impact and interfere with quiet enjoyment of the local and visiting Ramblers community as well as the rural domestic environment within houses and gardens. In addition environmental policies encourage the minimisation of noise and exhaust pollution and this proposal would seriously impact the associated wildlife environment.

As an Infill Only village there are minimal facilities for the young or the old in the village and it is not therefore compatible with the proposed community sustainable development objectives

The proposed development targets 'affordable' housing. Inherently such a development requires sustainable infrastructure support. In this respect there is not a shop, there is no Post Office, the bus service is totally inadequate for purpose and in these circumstances requiring each new family to have as a minimum driving capabilities for two vehicles and thereby adding to the carbon footprint impact

The development would abandon key agricultural land to justify landowner change of use for building development

There are trees and hedges on the proposed development site.

There are trees and hedges adjacent to the proposed development site.

57. The occupiers of **47 Harlton Road** comment that the revised position of the access road is opposite their driveway and will represent an additional hazard when using the driveway. There will be headlamp nuisance as vehicles exiting onto Harlton Road from the site will be in a direct line of sight down the driveway and in through living and front bedroom windows of No47. There are 24 parking spaces all

funnelled through the single access point opposite that of No 47 which will mean that vehicles waiting to turn right will be stationary in the entrance to the driveway of No 47. The noise from vehicles braking to turn into (and accelerating away from) the development will be directly outside the property. Strong objections are raised. The location of the access further to the north west, whilst still undesirable, would cause less potential hazard.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

The key issues are:

Green Belt
Size and Numbers
Need/Mix/Tenure
Alternative Sites
Highway Safety and Parking
Neighbour Amenity
Design and Layout
Ecology

Green Belt

58. The proposal lies in the Cambridge Green Belt. However Policy HG/5 of the Local Development Framework 2007 is an exception to the normal operation of the policies of that Plan, and the starting point for consideration is whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
59. The proposal should not be considered inappropriate development if it is for “limited affordable housing for local community needs.” Limited is not defined but it must relate to the impact of such development on the purpose of including the land within the Green Belt and of key relevance is the impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
60. Any built development here will have some impact on the openness of this 0.42ha area of agricultural land and it is therefore necessary to consider whether this impact is limited and can be mitigated to a sufficient degree.
61. The site currently forms a gap between existing properties in Harlton Road which is characterised by the mature hedgerow on the front boundary. To the rear the site is open forming part of a larger field although there is some existing planting beyond the site to the north. Whilst views of the site across from High Street, to the north west, are limited during summer months views would be greater at other times of the year.
62. The proposed development seeks to retain the existing frontage hedge except at the points of access. This will entail the loss of a section of the hedgerow, approximately 10m in length, to provide the vehicular access and a further 2/3m wide section to provide the pedestrian access. These openings will not affect significant trees within the hedge.
63. Additional information submitted by the applicant has demonstrated that, whilst the visibility splays will require a trimming back of the hedgerow, particularly to the south east of the point of vehicular access, the removal of the hedge is not required.

64. The submitted plan proposes additional planting to the rear of the existing hedgerow to ensure that its current depth and form is maintained in the longer term. New tree planting is shown behind the hedge.
65. As amended the layout plan shows a new hedgerow to be planted along the sides and rear of the application site. This planting has been set outside the curtilage of the residential units and appears to conform to the suggestions of the Trees and Landscapes Officer. The further comments of the Trees and Landscapes Officer on this latest plan will be reported at the meeting.
66. The future maintenance of these new hedges is to be agreed but it is my view that this responsibility should be transferred to the existing landowner. The applicants are to discuss this matter with the landowner and future maintenance will need to be secure through the Section 106 Agreement.
67. I am of the view that provided the existing hedge on the frontage of the site is retained, except where required for access, and the additional planting carried out and maintained as shown that the development can reasonably be said to have a limited impact and I therefore conclude that the development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt.
68. Policy GB/2 states that appropriate development must be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt. Again I consider that the proposal achieves this objective.

Size and Numbers

69. Policy HG/5 requires sites to be 'small'. No definition of 'small' in this context exists. At HG/5c the scale of the scheme is required to be appropriate to the scale of the village. I consider that the linear form of frontage development proposed is in character and I consider that it is in scale, although at the upper end of what might be considered as small in a village that is normally limited to infill development only, and consistent with the scale of affordable schemes in other infill villages.
70. Many of the letters of representation refer to the Infill Only status of Little Eversden and that to allow development for this number of units would fly directly in the face of the Councils objectives of trying to promote sustainable development. Services in the village are limited, although there is a doctor's surgery, and I can confirm that the reference in the Design and Access Statement to the existence of a shop and post office is incorrect as that facility has unfortunately closed.
71. The policy of allowing sites for affordable housing in villages for people in housing need in that particular village is an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Local Development Framework and can result in a scale of development being permitted that is in excess of that which would normally be allowed, providing the scheme addresses the criteria in Policy HG/5

Need/Mix and Tenure

72. Exception sites are limited to the people in housing need within the specific village in which it is proposed. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager has confirmed that the need exists in Little Eversden for the number of units proposed. Following the replacement of the four bedroom dwelling by a three bedroom unit the housing mix is supported.

73. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager has however confirmed that the introduction of a second bungalow into the scheme, as originally suggested by the Parish Council and neighbours could not be supported.
74. The tenure of the units is to be agreed through the Section 106 Agreement but must ensure that the split of tenure relates to the local need.

Alternative Sites

75. Little Eversden is surrounded by the Cambridge Green Belt and any land outside the village framework will be within the Green Belt.
76. Policy HG/5 states that, for sites proposed within the Green Belt, before planning permission is granted the District council will have to be assured that no alternative appropriate sites can be found for the scale and type of development proposed. The housing need will not be met within the village framework as there will be insufficient land available for schemes to come forward for market schemes such that 40% of such schemes in an Infill Village to satisfy that need.
77. Representations refer to a brownfield site that is available, and although the letters do not specifically identify the site, I believe the comments relate to a former garage site on the corner of Harlton Road and the A603 and is currently disused and being marketed. This site is within the village framework where Local Development Framework policies would resist the loss of employment sites to residential uses. It is a relatively small site and even if it were to be developed for residential purposes 40% of the units that might be erected would not be sufficient to meet the identified housing need.
78. I conclude that there are no alternative appropriate sites in Little Eversden, outside the Green Belt that can accommodate the scale and type of development proposed.
79. Reference is made in the representations to OSP148 in Great Eversden as being a site that was acquired by the Council many years ago specifically for the purpose of affordable housing, and that this should be used to meet the housing needs of both villages. That site is also in the Green Belt and in my view it is quite appropriate for a site to be found in Little Eversden to meet its housing needs.

Highway Safety and Parking

80. The Local Highway Authority has not objected to the application although it has required amended drawings that demonstrate the ability to provide adequate visibility splays and turning/parking facilities. Revised drawings have now been submitted and the further comments of the Highway Authority will be reported at the meeting.
81. A single point of vehicular access to Harlton Road is acceptable to the Highway Authority and its location ensures that the required visibility splays can be provided.
82. I agree with the local views expressed that car parking on the Harlton Road in the vicinity of the site is difficult and should not be encouraged. In my view the design of the scheme, with an access roadway within the site serving all units, rather than each unit or pair having its own access, will help achieve this.

83. The adopted car parking standards require a maximum of 20 spaces to be provided (including a provision for visitor parking). As amended the scheme provides for 20 spaces.
84. I note the comment of the Highway Authority that it will be seeking an upgraded footway for the entire frontage of the site however this is likely to have a significant cost implication for the delivery of the units and this request will be the subject of further discussions.

Neighbour amenity

85. The land is presently vacant and the adjacent properties currently benefit from the undeveloped state of the site and any new development will inevitably have some impact on the residential amenity currently enjoyed nearby properties. It is important therefore to ensure that this amenity is adequately protected.
86. The unit at the north west end of the development is proposed to be a single storey dwelling. The existing property beyond the site to the north west (54 Harlton Road) is single storey. There will be a minimum distance of 11m between the boundary of the new development and that of No 54, which, when coupled with the hedge planting now proposed at that end of the site, will in my view be sufficient to ensure that the residential amenity of that property is sufficiently preserved, provided that a 2m high close boarded fence is erected on the north west boundary of the application site prior to commencement of development and thereafter maintained.
87. The unit at the south east of the site is two storeys and the existing detached house at No 54 has a number of ground and first floor windows that face the site. It also has a patio area close to the site boundary. There will be a minimum distance of 16m between the boundary of the new development and that of No 52, and 19m to the house on Plot 10 itself. The latest revised drawings show a high level bedroom window in the end elevation of Plot 10 facing No 52. The hedge planting now proposed at that end of the site and a condition requiring the erection and maintenance of a 2m high fence on the boundary of the site should mitigate the impact of development on No. 52. External lighting within the site can be controlled by condition
88. The occupiers of No 47 opposite the site are concerned particularly about dangers associated with the new access and its impact on their existing driveway. The impact of headlights is also a concern. The Highway Authority has not raised an objection to the relationship of the new roadway to existing entrances and I am of the view that any conflict in use will be minimal and could not warrant a refusal of the application. Although there may be some impact on residential amenity from headlights of cars using the new entrance, again I do not consider that it be of such significance to warrant a refusal of the application.

Design and Layout

89. It is my view that the linear form of development proposed is appropriate given the pattern of development in the vicinity. The central access point and roadway within the site requires the units to be set further back into the site than I would ideally like to have seen. However, this does lessen the impact of the new built development on the existing properties to either side. There is an existing mix of designs of properties on Harlton Road and it is my view that, with the use of suitable materials and landscaping, this development can be adequately assimilated.

Ecology

90. The detailed comments of the Ecology Officer will be reported at the meeting. The new planting proposed may offer an opportunity to add to the biodiversity of the site. I have asked the Ecology Officer to comment on the concerns expressed about the possible impact of the development of this site on the habitat of the Barbestelle Bat colony in Eversden Wood. This is a protected species and Eversden Wood is afforded European protected status and any impact will need to be adequately assessed and if appropriate mitigation measure sought.

Street Lighting

91. Given the existing low level of street lighting in Little Eversden it will be necessary to ensure that any lighting of the new development is sensitively carried out in order to preserve the character of the area. Details can be required through condition and if necessary discussions can take place with the Local Highway Authority.

General

92. The site is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land.
93. The houses have been designed to achieve code 3 of the code for Sustainable Homes. A condition can be attached to any consent to ensure that the units comply with the Councils policy on the use of renewable energy and water conservation.

Conclusions

94. Whilst there have been a number of letters of objection to this scheme I do not consider that it amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and in my view it complies with the requirements of Policy HG/5. There is an identified need for affordable housing in Little Eversden which this scheme will help to meet.
95. In my view issues such as neighbour amenity, highway safety have either been addressed in the application as amended or can be mitigated by condition.
96. I will report the outstanding comments in respect of the latest amended plans but will recommend delegated approval subject to conditions, including the need for a Section 106 Agreement.

Recommendation

97. That, subject to the comments of outstanding consultees and safeguarding conditions, delegated powers of approval be given.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework – Development Control Policies (adopted July 2007) and Core Strategy (adopted January 2007).
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Ref: S/0629/08/F

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