

ADDENDUM

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6th August 2008

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

S/0935/08/O - MILTON

Outline planning application for the demolition of existing buildings, removal of existing pylons/mast etc from training grounds & construction of 101 retirement units (including restoration of North Lodge for use as a retirement dwelling) 1 wardens unit, visitor accommodation, central facilities building, provision of formal & informal open space, associated landscaping & improvements to the existing access

**At the Former EDF Depot and Training Centre, Ely Road, Milton
For Helical (Milton) Ltd**

Recommendation: Delegated minded to approve

Date for Determination: 4th September 2008 (Major Application)

Addendum to the main report

Update to the report

1. Following a meeting with Officers on the 25th July 2008, an amended scheme has been received. The application proposals are now for a reduced scheme of 101 retirement dwellings, which includes restoration of North Lodge. The indicative layout has also been revised to create a view of the countryside from North Lodge towards the east and for the retirement development to be limited to the existing built area of the depot.
2. The following addendum provides a summary of the progress made since writing the main report. In light of the amended scheme, the recommendation is changed to allow officers to assess the responses to consultation upon it. As set out in the report below, by seeking a delegated decision, officers will be able to continue this process. It is possible then to refer the application, which is a departure to policy, to the Secretary of State and to issue a decision within 13 weeks if authorised to deal with the matter locally by her. The time frame is tight, however officers believe this to be achievable with the continued cooperation of the applicants.

Affordable housing

3. At paragraph 59 of the main report, the Housing Development and Enabling Manager's comments are summarised. Following the meeting referred to at paragraph 1, above, a valuation has been submitted and sent to the Council's retained consultant for assessment of the scheme's viability. The applicants have argued that it would be inappropriate to treat the site as an exception site, as this is not what they have proposed. They accept that the lack of affordable housing provided on site and provision of housing in the countryside is a departure from policy.

ADDENDUM

4. The applicant's case for an off-site contribution relates to the fact that the scheme is not for a typical housing development. It is to provide retirement housing. The social viability and integration of residents and the critical mass of market units required to support the facilities being provided on site mean that it is difficult to make an on site provision of affordable housing viable or socially acceptable. The latter being as a consequence of occupiers being required to pay an annual fee for use of the site's facilities and ground maintenance.
5. Officers have accepted that some flexibility in the approach to affordable housing may be justifiable, subject to:
 - (a) The outcome of the viability assessment; and
 - (b) Consideration being given to the inclusion of shared ownership units within the site, although it is likely that this will not be viable given the reduced scale of the scheme now proposed.

A verbal update will be provided on these matters.

Housing Mix

6. The applicants have provided further comment relating to the mix proposed and Officers acknowledge that there is a greater flexibility within the scheme than initially envisaged. Unit sizes are based on the company's experience that one bedroom units are not adaptable enough and are difficult to sell. Two bedroom units are adaptable in that these house types proposed include downstairs studies within them that can be adapted to bedrooms if the need arises. This enables residents to occupy separate bedrooms, if a couple, and to have carers or visitors to stay in the dwelling as well. Homes are to be to Lifetime Home Standards, including the ability to install lifts.
7. Subject to the details Officers are now satisfied that the mix proposed does provide adequate variation in the types and sizes of units and the final mix can be the subject of a planning condition if felt necessary.

Ecology

8. The Ecology Officer's comments have now been received (see paragraph 65 of the main report):
 - (a) The provision of the ecological appraisal is welcomed and its findings accepted with respect of potential biodiversity impact.
 - (b) The main impact is considered to be that on 2 (relatively small) bat roosts. One of these was within the North Lodge. The building would best be conserved along with the bat roost.
 - (c) There is a certain degree of concern that the scope for enhancement of the lake has not been considered in the level of detail that it requires. This is a major feature of the site. In addition to being shaded it is believed to be heavily silted and requires maintenance beyond simple tree work. If the lake is de-silted then the issue of silt disposal should be considered. Further details are required on this matter.
 - (d) Access to the lake and the surrounding woodland is also considered to not yet be clear. Will it all be publicly accessible? Could a link be

ADDENDUM

formed with the adjacent hospice so that residents could enjoy the lake's setting if they so wished?

- (e) The principle that the development could deliver biodiversity enhancement through the scheme is agreed, the full scheme has been fully considered. On the basis that the major enhancement aspect of the site is unclear I would wish to place a holding objection on the basis that the scheme does not comply fully with policy EN/6, part 1 to maintain, restore, enhance or add to biodiversity.
 - (f) Subject to further detail being supplied it is probable that a suitably worded condition could be used.
 - (g) The bat survey is already 1 year old, if this application is not determined this year, or a later submission is made, then new survey information will be required.
9. The above information has been forwarded to the applicants and it is anticipated that further detailed assessment will be submitted for consideration prior to determination and a condition added to secure appropriate works.
10. Access to the road serving the church and hospice has been explored by the applicants who are keen to include such a link. This does rely on the agreement of the neighbouring land owners which to date has not been forthcoming.

Landscaping

11. Following the initial detailed comments of the Landscape Design Officer, which were forwarded to the applicant, matters have progressed (see paragraph 65 of the main report). These are comments are in relation to the scheme for 121 units:
- (a) Although the detailed landscape design is to be the subject of a reserved matters submission, the Landscape Design Officer has provided further guidance on the level of detail required at this outline stage that relate to principles and commitments.
 - (b) The reserved matters issues would concern how the landscape would look and work, detailed layouts, what the plants are etc., not whether it is possible to restore the lake, allowing public access, or establishing if anything remains of the Repton planting.
 - (c) He is keen to see the landscape restored, acknowledges that it could be a real asset (although he had not appreciated how by much the footprint had increased) – and offers support of the principle of some development which will allow restoration and public access, however further work is required:
 - Greater details of what they are going to do to restore the lake and woodland including an idea of how and when this will be carried out as it is difficult and expensive - getting rid of 10,000m³ of possibly contaminated silt for example, and nature of the works to the woodland, which needs a lot of work.
 - What, if anything, remains of the original landscape structure within the woodland?

ADDENDUM

- Details of the hydrology are required to ensure that there is enough good quality water available to sustain a healthy lake. Boreholes may be needed.
- Questions whether the public have access to the park and lake, not just the pitches area? Hopefully this would be an asset to the whole village. If there is access to the south of the lake then it should be shown.
- More detail of how the lake and southern shore can contribute to the landscape.
- More information on planting and sympathetic edge treatments which will help to integrate the built areas into the parkland landscape - large parkland trees will help. Planting here will be different to other similar developments because of where it is.
- Some consideration needs to be given to the Cambridge Sports Lakes and how this could influence the design - there will be 8m bunds covered in pine trees.
- Idea of how the Hall and its landscape can be linked –as these are currently split.
- Parts of the road layout do need to be established now - e.g. turning heads abutting the parkland makes the edge look like 'stage one'.

The applicants have been asked to provide further detail in answer to the above queries.

Historic Environment

12. The comments of English Heritage have now been received (see paragraph 69 of the main report):

“Summary

The application is in outline only for the demolition of existing buildings, plus associated masts and pylons, and for the erection of 120 new retirement units together with a further unit in the restored north lodge. English Heritage has been consulted on this application as the site adjoins that of a Grade II* building (the Parish Church of All Saints) and in addition the development site partially overlaps the Milton Conservation Area and exceeds 1000 square metres.

Setting of All Saints Church (Listed Grade II*)

There is a substantial and mature tree screen between the church and the existing industrial buildings on the north side of the former park. Historically it is likely that the church would have enjoyed a more open aspect, with views into the park, but these trees now provide a key role in protecting the setting of this important listed building. Therefore, while it is noted that the applicants intend to restore the surviving parts of this park including re-opening views from Milton Hall to the lake, English Heritage would expect to see the existing tree belt adjacent to the church retained and reinforced where necessary.

Impact on the Conservation Area

The Milton Conservation Area overlaps the site at the south end, where the lake is within the Conservation Area, and again in the area around North Lodge. The existing industrial buildings are outside of the Conservation Area, but their removal would represent an

ADDENDUM

enhancement to its setting. In respect of the replacement structures, the application is at outline only and the layout provided is indicative. It is therefore difficult to fully determine the impact that they will have on the Historic Environment, but it is noted that the indicative heights of the buildings applied for adjacent to both North Lodge and the historic park are up to 9 metres. Historically the lodge and the part of the Conservation Area in which it sits was an isolated, rural location that will be fundamentally changed by the construction of a series of 9 metre high new dwellings. The impact of these new houses will potentially be more harmful than the former car park and as such will neither preserve nor enhance the Conservation Area.

Impact on Grade II Listed Buildings

While it is not within English Heritage's core remit to comment on the setting of Grade II Listed Buildings, we note that the extent and heights of the new build elements adjacent to the Lodge, as indicated on the 'Building Scale Parameters' drawing, may result in discernable harm to the setting of this building and changing it from an open, essentially rural setting to something much more suburban. West Lodge has already had its setting heavily compromised by 20th century expansion of the village and it would be unfortunate for North lodge to suffer a similar fate. While the main area of new build development is currently occupied by a series of industrial type units, it is unclear from the information provided whether the height of these existing structures is greater or less than the 9 metre height sought for the replacement buildings. In the event that the new buildings are to be taller than the existing structures, then they will have the potential to adversely impact on the setting of both Milton Hall and the historic park. Furthermore it is noted that the main area of new-build development extends south and east of the boundary of the current industrial units, into part of the former park, and this includes an area containing a vista arrow from Milton Hall on Fig 20 Constraints and Opportunities (Heritage) of the Barton Willmore Historic Appraisal. It will be necessary for the LPA to carefully assess whether the enhancement resulting from restoration of the remaining areas of the park are sufficient to offset the impact of this encroachment, or whether it will be necessary to further restrict the area of new development.

Recommendation

English Heritage is satisfied that, so long as the tree screen between the church and the park is maintained and reinforced as necessary, then the proposed development will have a neutral impact on the setting of the Grade II* listed church. In respect of the impact on the Conservation Area, we are concerned that there is not sufficient detail contained in this outline application on heights and massing of the new buildings to fully assess the impact. PPG 15 requires an applicant to submit sufficient information to enable a full assessment of the impact of the proposals on the Historic Environment and it is therefore our view that the applicant should be advised to withdraw the application and submit a full application, or to revise the application to include more of the indicative layout as part of the outline, so that the impact on the Historic Environment can be properly assessed. We would also wish to have more information on the

ADDENDUM

precise heights of the buildings to be removed to help in our assessment of the impact of the new development.”

13. The comments are on the whole similar to those of the Historic Buildings Officer and the applicants have been asked to provide further detail in answer to the above queries. Comments on the revised scheme have not yet been received. The applicants will be asked to address the particular concerns regarding the scale of development in terms of building heights, as although indicative, there is some concern about these in relation to Milton Hall and the Conservation Area.

Archaeology

14. In reference to paragraphs 71 and 111 of the main report, further works have been carried out in relation to archaeological assessment of the site. The applicant has advised that the main concentration of finds are Roman and in the eastern area which is to be largely left undeveloped. They anticipate being able to retain any finds in situ. The built area of the site is likely to require careful recording and preserving of finds from later periods. Comment is anticipated in response from Cambridgeshire Archaeology.

Highways

15. In reference to paragraphs 72 and 121 of the main report, the applicants have contacted the Local Highway Authority and are due to provide a revised Transport Assessment using more recent TRICS data. Officers anticipate that this is likely to be acceptable, particularly as the scheme is now reduced in size, leaving the issues relating to the indicative road layout, which can be dealt with at reserved matters stage.

Countryside Access Team

16. Comments regarding public access have been received (see paragraph 74 of the main report). The team make no comments as there are no recorded public rights of way over or adjacent to the site.

Primary Care Trust

17. Comments of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) have now been received (see paragraph 80 of the main report):

“The development of 121 retirement units in Milton will increase the demand on general medical services in Milton particularly as the residents will all be elderly and some may also be frail. Whilst the local practice will be prepared to accept these patients on to their list this needs to be borne in mind when considering the application. I would also request that South Cambridgeshire District Council ensure that, if the application is approved, these properties are built to Lifetime Homes Standard as they will have a life expectancy of more than four years and because their targeted customers are the elderly.”

A response will be sought regarding medical provision to serve the development, although it is suggested that the site will be served by its own medical team through an arrangement with a local practice. Homes are to be to Lifetime Home standards.

Representations

ADDENDUM

18. The applicant has advised that the leaflet referred to in paragraph 85 of the report was circulated to 1800 residents of Milton.
19. The Chairman of Milton Colts Football Club has written in support of the application:
 - (a) Last season the club consists of 178 registered players from the under 7s through to under 16s. Four of these teams had to play their 'home' league matches outside Milton at both Landbeach and Impington.
 - (b) The club has been reluctant to utilise the planning permission for extra pitches on Landbeach Road due to safety concerns of children crossing the A10. It is also hoped that a number of children will then be able to walk or cycle to the home matches.
 - (c) Elderly resident are likely to enjoy watching regular organised matches, as indeed is the case for residents of Barnabas Court and the Coles Road recreation ground.
 - (d) The club looks forward to continuing discussion with the Parish Council and the applicant to ensure that its requirements with regard to the pitches and the pavilion are noted.

Section 215 Amenity Notice

20. In reference to Paragraphs 93, 110 and part B of the recommendation contained within the main report, the possibility of serving a section 215 Notice has been questioned by the applicants, on the basis that they believe this to not be an option in these particular circumstances. Counsell's advice has been sought to establish what the Council's powers are in relation to the structures within the parkland.
21. It has been agreed that enforcement action will be removed from the recommendation in order not to cloud the main issue at hand, the determination of this planning application, and as this is not a current enforcement case.

Green Belt

22. When responses have been received to the revised scheme, which does improve the impact upon the Green Belt, an assessment will have to be made as to whether the material considerations put now do amount to very special circumstances that can outweigh the harm by way of inappropriateness and other harm.

Conclusion

23. Following meetings with officers, the Council is in receipt of an amended scheme which seeks to overcome a number of its concerns. Consultation upon this smaller scheme is underway. The views of consultees in relation to the key issues are not known at this point, however officers are optimistic that these can be resolved satisfactorily through negotiation, submission of further details and planning control, if permitted, by way of planning conditions and section 106 requirements. In light of the above the recommendation it is not possible for Members to be able to determine the application at its meeting.

ADDENDUM

24. As the application would be a departure to Local Plan policy it must be referred to the Secretary of State. The recommendation is therefore revised.

Recommendation

25. Subject to the consultation upon the amended scheme received 4th August 2008, and responses thereon, it is recommended that Members delegate powers to approve the application to officers who will refer the application to the Secretary of State with a recommendation of approval if all material objections are overcome. Approval will be subject to appropriate safeguarding conditions and section 106 to secure public open space provision and occupancy restrictions to those aged over 55 years.