

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

1st October 2008

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

S/1356/08/F - IMPINGTON

35 Dwellings Including 14 Affordable Homes, Roadways, Open Space and Landscaping at the Former Unwins Site, Impington Lane for ORO Properties Ltd

Recommendation: Delegated Minded to Approve (refer to Secretary of State)

Date for Determination: 31st October 2008 (Major Application)

Notes: This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee as the recommendation of approval conflicts with that of the Parish Council and as it is a departure to the development plan which requires referral to the Secretary of State.

Members will visit this site on 1st October 2008.

Departure

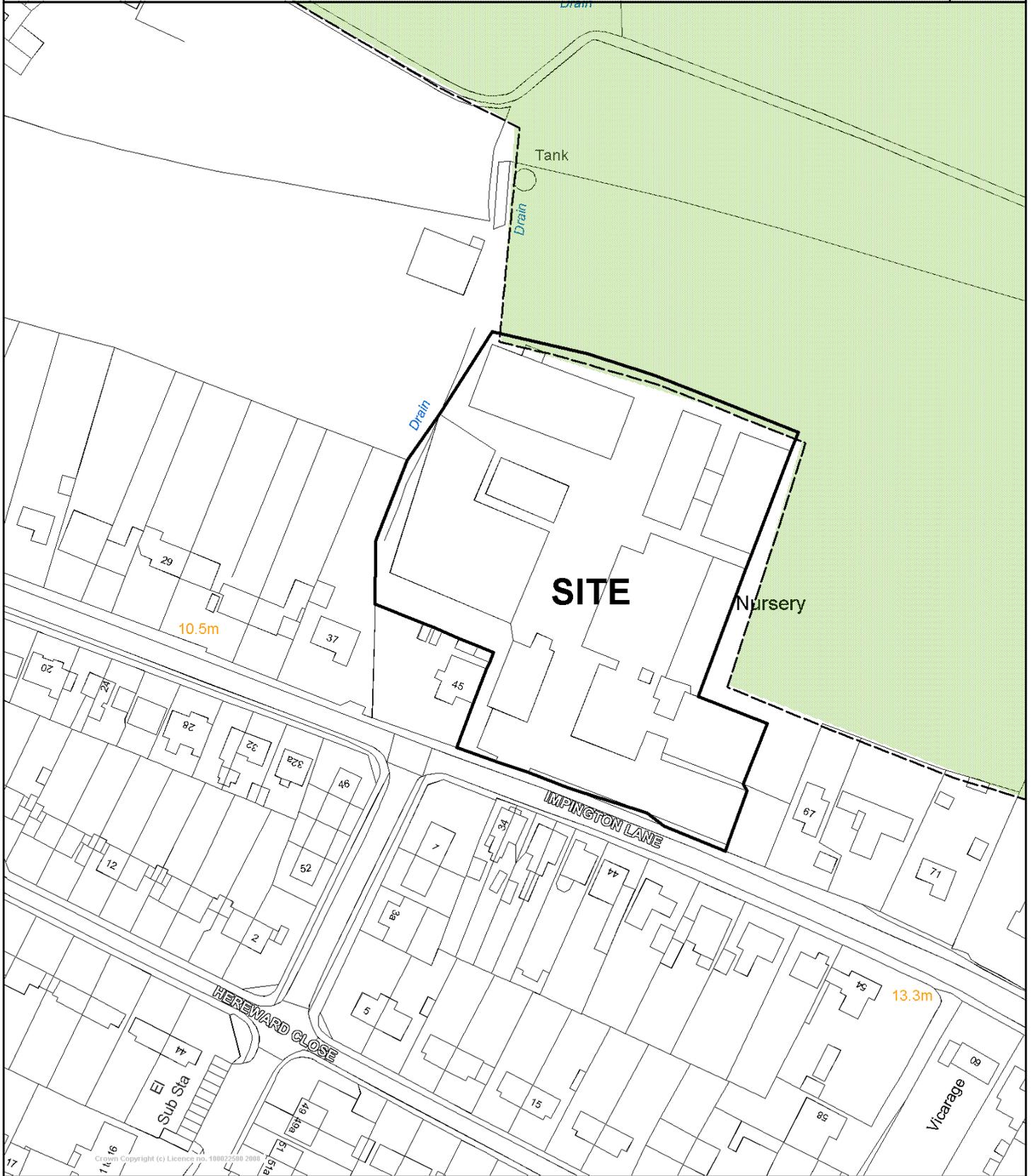
Site and Proposal

1. The site, measuring 1.1 hectares (ha), is located north of Impington Lane fronting the road and to the rear of no. 45. Land to the west of the site is a long-standing housing allocation (Impington1 in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2004). The site is being cleared of commercial buildings and hardstanding that occupy it. The land is relatively flat. The site is within and adjacent to the village framework, which follows the northern and part of the eastern site boundaries. Beyond the site to the north and east is Green Belt land.
2. Within the site area there is relatively little by way of landscaping. A conifer hedge runs along the western edge of the site boundary with no. 37 Impington Lane.
3. The site currently has access for vehicles off Impington Lane.
4. This full planning application, received on 1st August 2008 seeks approval for 35 dwellings including 14 affordable units at 40% of the provision. The scheme comprises two 3-storey blocks of flats totalling 14 units and 21 two-storey houses at a density of 31.8 dwellings per hectare (dph). It includes the following mix of private residential units:

3 x 5 bed houses	14.3
10 x 4 bed houses	47.6%
4 x 2 bed flats	19.05%
4 x 1 bed flats	19.05%
21	100%

The following is a breakdown of the mix between the 14 units proposed as affordable units:

4 x 2 bed houses
4 x 3 bed houses
3 x 2 bed flats
3 x 1 bed flats
14



Crown Copyright (c) Licensor No. 100022500 2008



Reproduced from the 2008 Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's stationary office (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Scale 1/1500 Date 16/9/2008

Centre = 544302 E 263490 N

October Planning Committee

The houses are between 8 – 9.5 metres high, while the blocks of flats will be between 9.1 – 10 metres high. The designs are to be of a contemporary style and materials.

5. Within the development site there will be 51 car parking spaces, 4 of which are proposed for disabled persons. 20 secure cycle parking spaces within two shelters are proposed adjacent to the blocks of flats with further potential for provision on plot of 1 within garages and sheds.
6. Landscaping is indicated as including the retention of existing planting where possible and additional planting comprising a roughly 5-metre wide landscape buffer to the north and eastern boundaries, open space and play requirements, and incidental areas.
7. The scheme includes three linked areas of public open space consisting of a formal square where seating and public art can be sited, a green including an equipped play area play area and informal open space south and west of blocks A and B on the western area of the site adjacent to rear gardens of nos. 37 and 45 Impington Lane.
8. 10% of the site's energy requirements will be met through the inclusion of PV panels to the two blocks of flats and solar panels to all the houses. Units are to be constructed to Local Government Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3. Water will be conserved through the inclusion of water meters, dual flush WC cisterns, low flow spray taps for hand wash basins, 9-12 litre/minute low flow shower heads, user manual for water usage for residents and water butts for gardening use.
9. The application is accompanied by:
 - (a) Planning and Design Statement, including Design and Access Statement, Public Art Statement, Sustainability Statement, Planning Policy Assessment.
 - (b) Planning Statement.
 - (c) Flood Risk Assessment.
 - (d) Planning Obligations Paper covering affordable housing, maintenance of the completed development, education, public art, public open space and Northern Corridor Area Transport Plan (NCATP).
 - (e) Renewable Energy Report and Water Conservation Statement.
 - (f) Geoenvironmental Assessment Report.
 - (g) Geotechnical / Contamination assessment by way of a Desk Study.
 - (h) Transport Assessment.
 - (i) Landscape Statement.
 - (j) Water Conservation Statement
 - (k) Ecological Appraisal.
 - (l) Utilities Assessment Report.
 - (m) Waste Management Plan.

Planning History

10. Outline planning permission was sought under ref. **S/0321/05/O** residential development on this site. It included details of access, with all other matters reserved, although it was later agreed at appeal that this would be a reserved matter. In reaching a decision to dismiss the appeal, the Inspector noted two principal concerns, the unacceptable loss of employment land and whether the proposal would suffer an unacceptable level of risk of flooding.
11. On the first point the Inspector noted: "...the marketing information necessary to demonstrate that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue, in accordance with policy EM8, has not been provided. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would result in an unacceptable loss of employment land" (paragraph 16).

12. On the second reason, the Inspector noted that proposals for dealing with flood risk had been tabled at the Hearing. However, he did not consider these in reaching his decision, noting that it was impossible to conclude with the necessary degree of certainty, at that time, that the site could not be developed without an unacceptable risk of flooding, particularly on the western part of site allocated for housing.
13. Members may recall a recent application (ref. S/0146/08/F) considered at Planning Committee on 2nd April 2008 (item 9) for this site and land to the west of it for residential development of 113 dwellings (including 46 affordable) was refused on grounds, summarised below, of:
 - (a) Form, scale and massing of development on the village edge – particularly 3 and 4 storey buildings.
 - (b) Failure to provide a satisfactory layout and design.
 - (c) Insufficient information relating to biodiversity.
 - (d) Poor distribution of affordable units across the site.
 - (e) Insufficient public open space provision on account of the area proposed also serving as part of the surface water drainage system proposed.
 - (f) Failure to adequately demonstrate that the part of the site previously in employment use met the criteria of Policy ET/6 (see paragraph 31 below for description).
 - (g) Poorly designed junctions, accesses and parking areas.
 - (h) Prejudicing the development of neighbouring land that forms part of the Impington 1 housing allocation – due to the form of development proposed.

Following this refusal discussions with officers have continued to establish the appropriate parameters for a re-submission. This application seeks to address the above reasons for refusal, in so far as they relate to the eastern portion of that site and in particular the issue of loss of employment land, contrary to policy EM/8 (now Policy ET/6 of the Local Development Framework 2007).

Planning Policy

East of England Plan 2008:

14. **Policy H1** - Regional Housing Provision 2001 to 2021 - requires Local Planning Authorities to: manage the supply of housing in accordance with PPG3 and LDFs and facilitate the delivery of housing over the next 15 years.
15. **Policy ENV7** - Quality of Built Environment - requires new development to be of a high quality that complements the distinctive character and best qualities of the local area and promotes urban renaissance and regeneration.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:

16. **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.

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007:

Core Strategy

17. **Policy ST/3** - Re-Using Previously Developed Land and Buildings is central to the approach to delivering sustainable development.

18. **Policy ST/4** - Rural Centres - identifies Histon and Impington and states development and redevelopment without any limit on individual scheme size will be permitted within village frameworks, provided adequate services, facilities and infrastructure are available or can be made available as a result of development.

19. **Policy ST/8** - Employment Provision aims to ensure sufficient employment land is available to enable further development of high technology clusters and meet local needs.

Development Control Policies:

20. **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.

21. **Policy DP/2** - Design of New Development - states all new development must be of high quality design and, inter alia:

- (a) Preserve or enhance the character of the local area.
- (b) Conserve or enhance important environmental assets of the use.
- (c) Include variety and interest within a coherent design.
- (d) Provide higher residential densities, and a mix of housing types including smaller homes.
- (e) Provide high quality public spaces.
- (f) Include high quality landscaping compatible with the scale and character of the development and its surroundings.

22. **Policy DP/3** - Development Criteria - states:

All development proposals should provide, as appropriate to the nature, scale and economic viability, inter alia:

- (a) Affordable housing.
- (b) Car parking, with provision kept to a minimum.
- (c) Safe and secure cycle parking.
- (d) Outdoor play space.
- (e) Safe and convenient access for all to public buildings.
- (f) Screened storage and collection of refuse, including recyclable materials.
- (g) A design and layout that minimises opportunities for crime.
- (h) Financial contribution towards the provision and, where appropriate, the maintenance of infrastructure, services and facilities required by the development.
- (i) It also states planning permission will not be granted where the proposed development would have an unacceptable adverse impact, inter alia:
 - (j) Residential amenity.
 - (k) From traffic generated.
 - (l) On village character.
 - (m) On ecological, wildlife and archaeological interests.
 - (n) On flooding and flood risk.
 - (o) On recreation or other community facilities.

23. **Policy DP/4** - Infrastructure and New Developments - states planning permission will only be granted for proposals that have made suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms. Contributions may be necessary, inter alia, for the following:

- (a) Affordable housing
- (b) Education

- (c) Public open space
 - (d) Community facilities
 - (e) Landscaping and biodiversity
 - (f) Arts and cultural provision
24. **Policy DP/5 - Cumulative Development** – states that development will not be permitted where it:
- (a) Forms part of a larger site where there would be a requirement for infrastructure provision if developed as a whole.
 - (b) Would result in a piecemeal, unsatisfactory form of development.
 - (c) Would prejudice development of another site adjacent or nearby.
25. **Policy DP/6 - Construction Methods** - states where practicable, development which by its nature or extent is likely to have some adverse impact upon the local environment and amenity during construction and/or is likely to generate construction waste should, inter alia:
- (a) Recycle construction waste.
 - (b) Prepare a “Resource Re-use and Recycling Scheme” to cover all waste arising during the construction.
 - (c) Be bound by a “Considerate Contractors Scheme” or similar arrangement, including restrictions on hours of noisy operations.
26. **Policy DP/7 - Development Frameworks** - states redevelopment of unallocated land and buildings within development frameworks will be permitted, provided that:
- (a) Retention of the site in its present state does not form an essential part of the local character.
 - (b) Development would be sensitive to the character of the location, local features of landscape, ecological or historic importance, and the amenities of neighbours.
 - (c) There is the necessary infrastructure capacity to support the development.
 - (d) Development would not result in the loss of a local service or facility.
27. **Policy GB/3 - Mitigating the Impact of Development Adjoining the Green Belt** - requires that any adverse impact on the Green Belt must be taken into account and that development on edges of settlements surrounded by Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality in order to protect the purposes of the Green Belt.
28. **Policy HG/1 - Housing Density** - states that residential developments will make best use of the site by achieving average net densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare unless there are exceptional local circumstances that require a different treatment. Higher average net densities of at least 40 dwellings per hectare should be achieved in more sustainable locations close to a good range of existing or potential services and facilities and where there is, or there is potential for, good local public transport services.
29. **Policy HG/2 - Housing Mix** - states residential developments will contain a mix of units providing accommodation in a range of types, sizes and affordability, to meet local needs.
30. **Policy HG/3 - Affordable Housing** - states proposals for housing developments will only be permitted if they provide an agreed mix of affordable housing. The amount of affordable housing sought will be 40% or more of the dwellings for which planning permission may be given on all sites of two or more dwellings. Within individual

developments, the proportion and type of affordable housing will be the subject of negotiation with applicants. Account will be taken of any particular costs associated with the development (e.g. site remediation, infrastructure provision).

31. **Policy ET/6** - Loss of Rural Employment to Non-Employment Uses – states: The conversion, change of use or re-development of existing employment sites to non-employment uses within village frameworks should be resisted unless one of the following criteria is met:
 - (a) It is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand. Applications will need to be accompanied by documentary evidence that the site is not suitable or capable of being made suitable for continued employment use. Evidence would be required that the property has been adequately marketed for a period of not less than twelve months on terms that reflect the lawful use and condition of the premises; or
 - (b) The overall benefit to the community of the proposal outweighs any adverse effect on employment opportunities and the range of available employment land and premises; or
 - (c) The existing use is generating environmental problems such as noise, pollution, or unacceptable levels of traffic and any alternative employment use would continue to generate similar environmental problems.
32. **Policy SF/6** - Public Art and New Development - states in determining planning applications the District Council will encourage the provision or commissioning of publicly accessible art, craft and design works. The Policy will apply to residential developments comprising 10 or more dwellings.
33. **Policy SF/10** - Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments - states all residential developments will be required to contribute towards Outdoor Playing Space (including children's play space and formal outdoor sports facilities) and Informal Open Space to meet the additional need generated by the development in accordance with the standards in **Policy SF/11**.
34. **Policy SF/11** - Open Space Standards - states the minimum standard for outdoor play space and informal open space is 2.8 ha per 1000 people, comprising:
 - (a) Outdoor sport 1.6ha per 1000 people.
 - (b) Children's Playspace - 0.8ha per 1000 people.
 - (c) Informal Open Space - 0.4ha per 1000 people.
35. **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.
36. **Policy NE/3** - Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development - states all development proposals greater than 10 dwellings will include technology for renewable energy to provide at least 10% of their predicted energy requirement.
37. **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.

38. **Policy NE/8** - Groundwater – restricts development that will pose an unacceptable risk to the quality of the underlying groundwater from the chalk aquifer to the south and east of Cambridge.
39. **Policy NE/11** - Flood Risk - states that in relation to flood risk, applications for planning permission will be judged against national policy (currently in PPS25).
40. **Policy NE/12** - Water Conservation - Requires that development must incorporate all practicable water conservation measures. All development proposals greater than 1,000 m² or 10 dwellings will be required to submit a Water Conservation Strategy prior to the commencement of the development to demonstrate how this is to be achieved.
41. **Policy CH/2** - Archaeological Sites – requires that archaeological sites will be protected in accordance with national policy (currently PPG16).
42. **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.
43. **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. Cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the minimum standards.
44. **Policy TR/3** - Mitigating Travel Impact - requires applications for major residential development to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment.
45. **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.

Consultation

46. **Impington Parish Council** strongly recommends refusal. Comments are summarised below, the full version can be found at Appendix A to this report:
 - (a) Loss of an employment site:
 - i. As a rural growth centre the village requires a sustainable mixture of residential and employment development. The loss of the only remaining site within the framework for employment undermines the sustainability of Histon and Impington as a Rural Centre.
 - ii. Inadequate marketing of the site as there is no additional or recent data. The site has only be marketed as it was (buildings are now partially demolished),

and it has not been marketed as a small 'start up' business site, for which there is a considerable need. It is unsurprising that there was a lack of interest.

- iii. The proposals are contrary to employment policies.
- (b) Complete destruction of the "heritage" buildings to the western edge of the site, which were acknowledged in the previous application as being of importance to local history and culture.
- (c) Poor design as the materials proposed are totally at odds with the street vernacular.
- (d) The five dwellings fronting Impington Lane are out of keeping with the style and character of the area, which is a rich mix of housing styles, set well back from the road at varying distances. The proposals in contrast are identical in design and height – uniformity, bulk, and proximity to the road edge. The design quality is also questionable.
- (e) The scheme is five houses deep from Impington Lane, as opposed to the current two level streetscape. In the absence of definite proposals for Impington 1, this would be unacceptable if implemented on its own. This development would then be visible across the green belt from the Impington Conservation Area.
- (f) Lack of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) - the developers note one is not required as the site is outside of the floodplain, however paradoxically, the scheme proposes to use the open grassed area as a flood containment measure. This is undoubtedly included to serve the adjacent housing allocation. Gardens on the northern side of Impington Lane are known to get waterlogged during winter months. The drainage from across Impington Lane into the ditch at the western edge of the site often backs up and locally floods. The proposed development will increase the speed of run-off and exacerbate this situation. The area cannot therefore be included in the assessment of public open space as it will be unusable in periods of heavy rainfall due to waterlogging. Full compensation for off-site provision should be required.
- (g) No archaeological assessment has been provided, despite the site being known to be of interest archaeologically.
- (h) The traffic assessment submitted uses the same survey data as the previous application but is simply re-dated. No new data has been included and is collected on a day which was outside of the school term-time and when Park Lane was closed, resulting in considerably less traffic volumes through the village.
- (i) Unacceptable traffic measures are proposed:
 - i. Dangerous offset junction.
 - ii. Width of pavement is too narrow for the volume of pedestrian traffic at peak times.
 - iii. Narrowing the throat of the vehicle entrance will encourage "cross lane" driving in order to accelerate out and filter into the traffic flow, which already backs up past this junction from the B1049 traffic lights.

- iv. The junction is too narrow and will require heavy vehicles to mount the pavement in order to access the site; the entrance is narrower than the previous scheme which was refused on this ground.
 - v. Bus stops will, at ten minute intervals, shield visibility for cars leaving the site.
 - vi. Four individual crossings on Impington Lane could be re-sited to the rear and enable retention of the mature frontage hedge which is an important feature of the street scene.
 - vii. The Local Highway Authority should comment on the scope and / or restrictions for any further development on the Impington 1 site being fed from this access.
 - viii. The distribution of car parking will lead to inappropriate on-road parking, as has been found at the Arbury Park development.
- (j) In order for a refuse truck to reverse one of the parking bays must be empty.
- (k) Lack of evidence to support the positive implementation of recommendations in the Ecological and Environment Statements:
- i. Loss of hedgerow.
 - ii. Lack of ecological appraisals of wildlife – remedial action should be taken before any activities are undertaken e.g. changes to drainage will affect existing habitats supporting water voles.
 - iii. Insufficient detail of planting schemes i.e. Proportions, locations and quantities of species are required.
 - iv. Insufficient detail relating to the landscaped buffer to the Green Belt – hedgerow with smaller stock rather than mature plants with larger feature trees sited within the site itself.
 - v. Lack of evidence relating to the “increased opportunities for greater biodiversity” referred into the Landscape Statement. New habitat could be created within the site, such as a pond, in the flood plain area and adjacent to the brook indigenous planting and open grassland would significantly enhance the biodiversity within the site.
 - vi. The existing laylandii hedge on the western boundary should be removed and replaced with native species such a willow due to its proximity to the ditch and flood plain.
- (l) Lack of commitment relating to renewable energy approaches.
- (m) Inadequate cycle storage – proposals show the bare minimum, which, due to the under-provision of car parking, is unacceptable. It wishes the Cambridge City standard of one space per bedroom up to three bedrooms to be applied.
- (n) It is not clear which homes have been designed to Lifetime Mobility Standards.
- (o) Had the application been submitted for the full site a FRA would be required and this is reflected in the drainage proposals.
- (p) The traffic assessment and junction design could severely restrict the number of dwellings that would be acceptable on the rest of the site, or require re-design.

- (q) Without prejudice to the above comments, if SCDC decides to approve the application it requires that a number of planning conditions be applied:
- i. External finishes to be agreed in consultation with the Parish Council.
 - ii. Definitive proposals for renewable energy.
 - iii. Construction traffic must not use Burgoynes Road, Clay Close Lane, Milton Road or New Road to access the site.
 - iv. Restrict construction traffic entering or leaving the site to outside the hours of 7:30 – 9:00am and 3:00 – 4:30pm to avoid conflict with pedestrian and cyclist traffic related to schools.
 - v. A contribution towards improvements to the public drain, especially where it passes under the B1049.
 - vi. A section 106 with the Parish Council to secure its reasonable legal bills, contribution towards off-site recreation and open space, a contribution towards community facilities, and a contribution towards public art.
 - vii. Vehicular access to frontage properties to be from the rear and not off Impington Lane.
 - viii. Widen footway on the southern side of Impington Lane, together with whatever necessary alterations are necessary to the north side to maintain road width.
 - ix. Provision of a bus bay.
 - x. Re-design the access road to improve pedestrian safety, including a formal crossing facility.
 - xi. Detailed planting scheme for landscaping.
 - xii. Retention of the existing hedge adjacent to the buffer zone.
 - xiii. Retention of trees and hedges to the site's frontage.
 - xiv. Creation of new habitat such as a pond and installation of suitable bat and bird nesting sites.
 - xv. Provision of a full Archaeological and Heritage Report.
 - xvi. Full Ecological and Environmental Reports including impacts and action plans.

47. **Histon Parish Council** – strongly recommends refusal. Full comments can be found at Appendix B to this report. It supports the comments of Impington Parish Council. In addition to points covered in Impington Parish Council's representation (see above), it notes:

- (a) Lack of FRA due to subdivision of the site – the local Parish Councils have records demonstrating that the impact of flooding on the villages over the last decade appears to be at odds with the 'three in a hundred years' scenarios proffered by the Environment Agency and the developers. Removing further areas of soil will exacerbate the problem and move it westwards into Histon.

- (b) Impington Lane is a rat run; this has not been taken into account in the Traffic Assessment. No account has been taken of the expected increase in traffic from the Park and Ride site in Butt Lane.
- (c) The Guided Busway is outside of walking distance from the site. The Citi7 service normally runs every 10 minutes during the day and at peak times is standing room only. Expansion of these services is limited by delays on Histon Road, which is already overloaded and at capacity.
- (d) The traffic signals at the Green are at the optimum sequence and cannot be altered further. Additional traffic will have to use New Road.
- (e) The development does nothing to alleviate existing shortages of public open space.
- (f) Increased pressure on village infrastructure such as drainage and transport.
- (g) "There is little point to the arguments of the District Council that Histon and Impington is designated as a Rural Growth Settlement, if they then remove one of the only two industrial areas within the village envelope. As we have seen with retail provision, it is easy for developers to argue that they cannot find users, when they let the present facilities deteriorate. Similarly, when a developer pays a premium price for industrial land on the basis that they know that they can persuade the Planning Authority to rezone it, little if any attempt to provide units that are in demand (and that can be afforded) make sense.

There is evidence that, as a result of the threat of charging for traffic entering Cambridge, there is a demand for small units outside the City. In particular "start-up" units, either similar to the "E-Space" concept run by East Cambridgeshire District Council, or "artisan" units where work is usually separate from living accommodation in the same building. We argue that the District Council should be encouraging this type of rural centre sustainable development".

48. Policy ET/6 seeks to retain employment in villages, as a scarce resource. If the tests contained within the policy were not complied with, it would need to be considered whether there are any material considerations that indicate why an employment use should not be maintained.

49. **Planning Policy Manager** – comments as follows:

"Policy ET/6 seeks to retain employment in villages, as a scarce resource. If the tests contained within the policy are not complied with, it would need to be considered whether there are any material considerations that indicate why an employment use should not be maintained.

Histon and Impington have a significant amount of employment provision, and are particularly accessible to the employment opportunities on the northern fringe of Cambridge and the wider city.

An Employment Land Review prepared for the Council has concluded that to meet the East of England Plan 2026 job forecasts that 412,000 – 462,000 sq.m of 'B' use class floorspace will be required in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire but that almost twice this amount of floorspace is currently available with planning permissions and land allocated in plans (844,750 sq.m). Much of this surplus is located in South Cambridgeshire.

The East of England Plan and the South Cambridgeshire Core Strategy both aim to increase the supply of houses in and close to Cambridge as a means of reducing commuting. Given the circumstances described above, losing an employment site such as this to residential development will have the same effect. It is therefore considered that material considerations exist to warrant an exception to policy.'

50. **Environment Agency** – has provided preliminary comments only due to problems accessing the FRA. Further comments will be reported verbally however it's draft comments are summarised below:
- (a) The application falls within flood zone 1 and is for development of more than 1ha.
 - (b) The Agency recommends that the application be *deferred* until such time as the FRA has been fully assessed.
 - (c) Notwithstanding the above, the Agency's Groundwater and Contaminated Land team has reviewed the MLM Desk Study Document Ref. DMB/722111/R1/F dated July 2008 and MLM Geotechnical Assessment Document Ref. DMB/722111/R1/F dated July 2008 and make DRAFT comments and recommendations including conditions relating to:
 - i. A detailed land contamination scheme
 - ii. Restrictions on piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods except for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater
 - iii. Restrictions and further study relating to dewatering is likely to be required during construction works. However groundwater sampling has demonstrated that there is hydrocarbon contamination within the groundwater. Therefore prior to it being discharged to ground or into nearby watercourses this groundwater will require treatment.
 - iv. No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground other than for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to controlled waters, to prevent the increased risk of contamination to groundwater.
 - v. As demonstrated by the site investigation report groundwater levels at the site are shallow varying from approximately 0.8m – 2m below ground level. As the reports states the nature of the groundwater levels on site could be 'flashy' and therefore are likely to be very responsive to sudden increases in groundwater/infiltration. Under its current groundwater protection policy it recommends that a minimum of 1 m of unsaturated zone lie between the base of the soakaway and the highest recorded groundwater level. Based on this, it would indicate that this site would not be suitable for soakaways.
 - vi. Similarly with the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, (SUDs), it also recommends that the base of infiltration structures are at least 1 metre above the highest seasonal water table.
51. **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)** – recommends, having considered land contamination matters, that as localised hotspots of contamination have been identified, a condition requiring further investigation of contamination as set out in MLM's report.

52. **Old West Internal Drainage Board** – notes that the site is outside of its catchment and makes no comment therefore, other than to recommend consultation with the Environment Agency.
53. **Anglian Water** has commented that it is keen to support the spatial planning process across the region and suggests specific informatives. Adequate capacity exists within the foul sewerage network and at Cambridge Sewage Treatment Works to accommodate the flows from the development.
54. **Drainage Manager** – no comment received. Members will be updated verbally or by way of a written addendum to this report.
55. **Building Control Officer** – Minimum floor levels should be as recommended in the Environment Agency's letter dated 4th April 2008.
56. **Local Highway Authority** – comments awaited and will be reported verbally.
57. **Highway Agency** – is satisfied that the proposed development will not have a material impact upon the capacity of the Histon Interchange or A14 mainline. It encourages the developer to investigate the possibility of implementing a Residential Travel Plan for a successful sustainable development.
58. **Cambridgeshire Archaeology** – an evaluation of this site was carried out in 2005, which revealed mediaeval features surviving on site. It now advises that the site should be the subject of a programme of further archaeological work, to be secured through a negative condition, as per PPG16 (para.30).
59. **Conservation Officer** – This proposal does not directly affect any conservation areas and no comments are offered.
60. **Urban Design Officer** - no comment received. Members will be updated verbally or by way of a written addendum to this report. However following pre-application meetings and verbal reports the scheme is likely to be supported.
61. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** – no comment received. Members will be updated verbally or by way of a written addendum to this report.
62. **Cambridgeshire County Council (Education)** – requires a contribution of £73,500 towards the provision of 8.75 primary school places required for the development due to a shortfall in places locally. There is sufficient surplus capacity at secondary school level.
63. **Trees and Landscape Officer** – No objection, however there needs to be a comprehensive and well thought out landscaping scheme to accommodate trees which will develop into tall, mature specimens. This will require the buildings to be designed to accommodate mature trees. A landscaping scheme must be submitted.
64. **Landscape Design Officer** – comments awaited and will be reported verbally. However, following discussion, it is likely that some revisions to the detailed landscaping will be required and a maintenance and management agreement required via Section 106.
65. **Ecology Officer** – having assessed the potential restoration of the ditch on site he comments that:
 - (a) The leylandii conifers on the right bank of the ditch are in extremely poor cover on the conifers at the lower level. They are top heavy and visually poor.

Trees of this size do not produce fresh growth at the lower level and they should be removed.

- (b) Once removed there is much potential to re-shape the ditch and to deepen it to the point where it provides useful biodiversity habitat, a land drainage gain and an interesting landscape feature. The ditch shows signs of retaining water at times and an inflow pipe is present.
- (c) In order to facilitate the construction of the proposed houses a large amount of concrete hard standing would have to be removed. Whilst the activity is taking place there is no reason why it is not reasonable to request the opening up of the culverted watercourse in order to deliver its benefits for land drainage, biodiversity and landscape. Furthermore when the opened ditch is linked to the watercourse to the north a habitat linkage of 70m will be achieved, providing new habitat for the water vole population noted within the ecological assessment.
- (d) In light of the above he has a holding objection to the current scheme, as it has not given enough consideration to the potential to integrate the current landscape form with the potential for habitat restoration. It fails to meet the requirements of policy EN/6 or the key principle (ii) of PPS9, namely the need to enhance or restore biodiversity. Provision of a new length of ditch could provide for SUDS integration. Policy NE/4 also supports the enhancement of ditches as locally distinctive features.

66. **Cambridge Water, Environment Operations Manager, Housing Development Officer, Sustainability Officer and Arts Development Officer** – no comments received. Members will be updated verbally or by way of a written addendum to this report.

Representations

67. 13 letters of objection have been received from local residents. The issues raised are summarised below:

Car parking and access issues

- (a) Future development at Impington 1 should not be served from off Ambrose Way, as this would create a through-road.
- (b) Impact on safer routes to school and subsequent safety of children.
- (c) Increased noise and pollution resulting from extra traffic.
- (d) Increased traffic in Impington Lane which is already heavily congested at peak times, with queues back to new Road that block residents in especially if there is a problem on the A14 and due to increased use by HGVs due to the increased use of satnav.
- (e) The traffic assessment does not take into account new development i.e. the Milton Park and Ride and Mereway Business Park at Butt Lane.
- (f) Traffic assessment is inaccurate in that it does not acknowledge that there are frequent minor and serious accidents (including a recent fatality) at the junction of Impington lane and the B1049. There is a need to get accurate records from the police / local transport department.

- (g) The traffic counts should include the large numbers of pedestrians and cyclists, and school buses using Impington Lane.
- (h) Traffic surveys were carried out during school holidays and compared the former commercial traffic at the wrong times i.e. residential traffic is during peak times whereas commercial traffic will be spread more across the day.
- (i) Impact on the timing /capacity of the traffic lights at Glebe Way.
- (j) Access is too close to the Herewood Close junction, creating additional confusion for all highway users.
- (k) Car parking is well below the SCDC standard with likely consequence of on street parking in Hereward Close and Impington Lane.
- (l) The position of the existing bus stop restricts visibility at the site entrance.

Employment loss

- (a) Loss of the last remaining employment site in the villages.
- (b) Unwins previously employed 73 persons.
- (c) The site is still suitable for employment.
- (d) Further residential development on Impington 1 will increase the need for employment locally.
- (e) Anecdotal evidence is that sole traders and SMEs seeking capacity on the site were rejected and their expressions of interest have not been logged.
- (f) Histon is home to more than 200 businesses, many operating from homes. There is a need for small, affordable, start-up office space – which is poorly provided in the area.
- (g) If the site is developed it should be a mixed development.

Layout and design

- (a) Scale and height of buildings – mostly three storeys – are excessive and out of character due to proximity to the Conservation Area, Green Belt and village edge.
- (b) Existing properties would not be adequately screened.
- (c) Flats present large, blank, unattractive facades to Impington Lane.
- (d) Balconies and terraces will overlook existing dwellings, especially from Block A, which also has windows facing existing dwellings.
- (e) Loss of buildings of local historic significance due to the links to Unwins.
- (f) The scheme should reflect the vernacular and built pattern more closely.
- (g) There is no need locally for 5-bedroom houses.
- (h) The design is more appropriate to Arbury Park.

- (i) The scheme should include bungalows to minimise the impact on neighbours and the countryside.
- (j) Materials are out of keeping.

Flooding

- (a) Drainage and flooding problems are known to exist locally.
- (b) Properties in Impington Lane have been refused home insurance due to being in the floodplain;
- (c) The play area is within the area to be used in flood events.

Density and mix

- (a) Lack of need locally for so many 1 bedroom flats.
- (b) Lack of need for further housing in the villages.
- (c) Further strain on local infrastructure.

Other matters

- (a) If approved, conditions relating to retention of frontage trees and hedging; construction access via B1049 and Impington Lane only; and hours for construction traffic to be restricted to outside peak traffic hours.
- (b) Frontage trees should be protected by a TPO.
- (c) The development will dominate the skyline from the Conservation Area and village green.
- (d) The application is premature and sets a precedent for future development of Impington 1.
- (e) The site should be planned as whole, including Impington 1.
- (f) Lack of community provision.
- (g) Lack of sufficient publicity and consultation.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

68. There are number of key matters to consider in determining this application:
- (a) loss of employment;
 - (b) flooding, drainage, and contamination;
 - (c) density and housing mix;
 - (d) affordable housing;
 - (e) layout and design;
 - (f) neighbouring amenity;
 - (g) impact on the village edge and Green Belt;
 - (h) landscaping;
 - (i) traffic and access;
 - (j) car and cycle parking;
 - (k) renewable energy provision, water conservation;
 - (l) infrastructure and local services including education, Northern Corridor Area Transport Plan (NCATP), public art;
 - (m) public open space and community provision;

- (n) wildlife,
- (o) cumulative development,
- (p) archaeology, and
- (q) conservation area.

Loss of employment

69. In considering the previous planning application the Council sought independent advice on the marketing of the site. As a consequence the assessment found that the marketing had been inadequate. The application was partly refused on this ground:

'The eastern part of the site is occupied by a number of commercial buildings, last used for employment purposes relating to a seed and bulb processing operation. The applicant's have sought to provide evidence of marketing to establish that it is inappropriate to continue employment use on that part of the site, having regard to market demand. The marketing fails to conclusively establish this on the basis that:

- a. The employment land was only marketed on the basis of the commercial buildings being available on a short-term lease without any indication of rental or terms quoted. Given the condition of the buildings, a long-term lease would be the more attractive option to potential occupiers due to the likely need for substantial repairs.
- b. The site was not marketed for sale, based on its existing lawful use, separate to the area allocated for housing.

It is concluded that the marketing fails to establish that this part of the site is no longer suitable or capable of being made suitable for continued employment use and has not adequately reflected the lawful use and condition of the site. The proposals are therefore, contrary to policy EM/8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework, 2007 which seeks to avoid the loss of rural employment sites due to their scarcity, need to reduce the pressure for the development of new employment sites for example in the countryside and to provide local employment opportunities'.

70. A statement that rebuffs this supports the application. No new evidence is provided. Therefore, further independent advice has not been sought. Further, the applicant argues that, due to changed circumstances in relation to the District's housing provision, criteria (b) of Policy ET/6 is met as the overall benefit to the community outweighs the adverse impact of losing this employment site on the grounds that the greater community need is for residential, rather than the employment use of the site. They refer to the current need for further housing sites to be identified in the LDF and the evidence, through the LDF process that there is a surplus of employment land across the District, and that there is low take-up of existing employment sites. This view is supported by the comments of the Planning Policy team.

Flooding, drainage and contamination

71. The site does fall outside of the Environment Agency's areas of medium and high flood risk. Subject to the comments of the Council's Drainage Manager, there is no evidence that the scheme will significantly increase the risk of flooding within the site or locally. A water conservation strategy has been put forward and can be the subject of a planning condition.
72. The comments of the Council's Ecology Officer are noted in relation to the drain, which runs along the site's western boundary. These have been put to the applicant for consideration. Should this not be possible they will be required to put forward

alternative, appropriate methods for the improvement of biodiversity of the site and area.

73. Subject to the detailed response from the Environment Agency, it is likely that matters relating to land contamination and groundwater can be addressed through planning conditions.

Density and housing mix

74. The density of the proposed scheme is lower than that previously proposed. At 31.8 dph, this is above the minimum required and is appropriate to the edge of village location. This is below the 40dph threshold for developments in more sustainable locations. However the balance is considered appropriate in this case due to the edge of village location and form of development in Impington Lane of larger houses on generous plots.
75. The market housing mix provides 38.1% 1 and 2 bedroom units, no 3-bedroom units and 61.9% 4 and 5 bedroom units. The proposal is for a major development and as such policy HG/2 simply requires that developments of this size provide '...a range of accommodation including 1 and 2 bedroom units, having regard to economic viability, the local context of the site and the need to secure a balanced community'. It is difficult to insist upon a revised mix in light of the policy requirement. Notwithstanding, the applicant has been asked to revise the scheme to provide a percentage of units with 3-bedrooms. If unwilling to do so they will be expected to demonstrate that other considerations referred to in the policy prevent them from doing so. A verbal update on this matter will be provided at the meeting.
76. It is not clear if any of the homes are to be to Lifetime Home standards.

Affordable housing

77. The comments of the Affordable Homes team are awaited at the time of writing, however the provision meets the 40% required and a mix of tenures has been proposed. The units are spread throughout the development. Final details of the scheme can be secured by way of a planning condition.

Layout and design

78. The layout and design has been the subject of pre-application discussion with officers. It is generally thought to be significantly better than the previous scheme and is likely to be supported, although the comments of the Council's Urban Design Officer and Police Architectural Liaison Officer are awaited.
79. The form of development reflects that of the local area, being one of larger dwellings in generous plots, set back from the road frontages. It provides clear routes through the site. The concept of providing a central focus through the square is welcomed and provides a clear link to the open space.
80. The design does not seek to provide a pastiche of existing development and will provide a strong example of modern architecture and usable, inviting public space. The concerns locally relating to materials are noted, however a condition will seek to ensure that officers are able to secure a palette that does reflect the vernacular, although in the context of modern design.
81. The scheme does still include 3-storey units, including flats. There are 3 storey residential buildings some 150 metres to the south west. In light of the comments of the Building Control Officer, the ground levels have been checked to ensure that the

dwellings will not have to be raised above that shown on the elevation drawings to meet the ground floor level previously required by the Environment Agency of 10.09AOD for flood protection. The levels along the northern boundary are within the region of 10.705 – 11.134AOD and as such this will not cause anything other than at worst very minor raising by not more than 20cm, which would not noticeably alter the impact when viewed from the countryside beyond the site. Should the Environment Agency provide comments that alter this requirement the situation can be reviewed. However planning conditions can be placed to ensure overall ridge heights above ground level are controlled.

82. The overall heights are such that these will be visible beyond the village edge. Following discussion with the Landscape Design Officer it is likely however that planting can be grouped to provide a green edge to the village, outside of back gardens, including trees that will soften the edge, although it will not be possible to entirely screen it. This should ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is also mitigated. It is noted that there are only long distance views of the village edge here from public vantage points.
83. If necessary the mix can be altered to remove the 3-storey houses (type D) from the village edge boundary and replace with smaller, 3 bedroom units of a lower height, although amendments would be required to the scheme. These units are sited where the boundary's landscaped strip is widest and therefore more significant planting, as described above, can be planted where it is most needed. An update on this matter will be given.
84. It is considered that, due to the distance of the site from the Conservation Area and village green (approximately 170m and 230m respectively) these units will not be visible within their skyline views.
85. It has been noted that there are a number of minor discrepancies in the drawings and corrected versions have been requested. Similarly, officers have expressed concerns that plots 12-21 have small north facing gardens, which do not provide adequate private amenity space and will put pressure on the planting to the northern boundary as well. The applicants have been asked to shift these units away from the boundary to ease this aspect of the scheme. The car parking space to plot 12 also blocks access for maintenance of the landscaped strip and will need to be revised.

Neighbouring Amenity

86. The proposed units will all be afforded reasonable levels of amenity. Unusually balconies are proposed on the majority of units, which due to careful design will not adversely affect neighbouring amenity either due to positioning or screen walls.
87. In terms of the existing properties on Impington Lane, the main concern is in relation to the two blocks of flats. Block A has a blank south elevation and therefore will not overlook no. 45 Impington Lane. The western elevation will provide oblique views at 18m from its rear boundary. In terms of Block B, it has windows in its south elevation facing over the open space, which are sited at a distance of 34m from the rear boundary of no. 45 and 16m from the northeastern corner of no. 37's rear garden. These blocks are 3-storeys. However given the distance and angles of potential views, these relationships are acceptable. At present the boundary conifer hedge also screens these adjoining properties.

Infrastructure and Local Services

88. The Villages of Histon and Impington, as a Rural Centre, have been identified as able to accommodate larger developments. Certain provisions are made for meeting increased demand where possible within the scope of planning e.g. through education and NCATP contributions. Although community facilities have been raised as a requirement locally, this is not something that is currently justifiable as there has been no SPD on this matter or information available about local requirements.

Public Open Space Provision

89. Relatively large areas of open space are proposed within the scheme. These are well sited and overlooked by dwellings, albeit not family units. Subject to appropriate detailing and securing these via a section 106 agreement, these meet the requirements for open space.
90. The main area on which play equipment is to be placed was previously within a proposed flood alleviation area. The use of such areas is not suitable for public open space and could not contribute towards the general needs for open space. The applicant has been advised this area will not be suitable for such use on further phases of development (Impington 1).

Traffic and access

91. The Highway Agency has not objected to this scheme. The comments of the Local Highway Authority are awaited and a verbal update on this subject will be provided. The Authority has also been asked to comment on the cumulative issue relating to Impington 1 access.

Car and Cycle Parking

92. There is slight shortfall in the car parking provision across the site of 5 spaces. This is not considered to be sufficiently poor as to warrant an objection, although the comments of the Local Highway Authority will be considered, as previously it had concerns relating to this. The scheme provides an appropriate level of disabled parking spaces.
93. Cycle parking is provided in excess of the Council's adopted standard and a condition would secure the provision on site, including within individual plots. It is not reasonable to require the higher standard applied by Cambridge City Council. However the applicant has been made aware of the suggestion and if it is possible to accommodate further spaces without detriment to the overall scheme, this will be sought.

Archaeology

94. Some assessment of archaeology on site has been undertaken and the comments of the Archaeology Office are noted, a condition would be applied if approved.

Renewable energy provision and water conservation

95. Schemes have been put forward to include solar and PV panels on the units to meet the 10% renewable energy requirement. Similarly, a water conservation strategy has been provided. Both matters can be secured via planning condition.

Wildlife

96. The requirement for bat and bird boxes can be met through a planning condition. If the drainage ditch improvements cannot be provided, negotiations, in consultation with the Ecology Officer, will be required to secure other ecological enhancements.

Departure

97. The proposal does not comply with Policy ET/6 in that the argument that the loss of employment and replacement with housing provides an important community gain is not entirely accepted. The benefit is to the District and not directly to the communities of Histon and Impington. Notwithstanding, in light of the advice received and changed circumstances in relation to housing targets, officers consider that permitting the loss of employment on this site will not be significantly detrimental to the objectives of the development plan.

Recommendation

98. A. Subject to the nature of outstanding comments and the receipt of revised plans, the Committee be minded to approve the application;
- B. That the application be referred to the Secretary of State as a Departure from the Development Plan, specifically Policy ET/6 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007;
- C. If the Secretary of State does not call the application in for her determination, the application be approved subject to safeguarding conditions and completion of necessary Section 106 agreement to secure public open space, affordable housing, maintenance of landscaping, public art and contributions to transport and education infrastructure.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- East of England Plan 2008
- Planning File Refs: S/0321/05/O, S/0146/08/F and S/1356/08/F
- Documents referred to in the report including appendices on the website only and reports to previous meetings

Contact Officer: Mrs Melissa Reynolds - Team Leader (East Area)
Telephone: (01954) 713237