

Planning application S/1356/08/F

Houses Impington Road, Impington.

Histon Parish Council object to the planning application S/1356/08/F and strongly recommend refusal on the basis that this application is premature; as it should consider the whole "Unwin" site and its effect on the flood plain, the siting of necessary recreational land and the impact of *all* the traffic likely to use the access road off Impington Lane. Further as a Rural Growth Settlement it is mandatory on the Planning Authority to ensure that adequate areas of industrial zoned land remain to meet current and future demand within the village envelope.

Histon and Impington are regarded as one settlement for planning purposes. This application has been dealt with by Impington Parish Council, as the proposed development is situated in Impington. Residents from both villages are however affected by amongst other things, employment within the villages, flooding, traffic, recreational facilities and other infrastructure developments. We therefore fully support the Impington Parish Council detailed response put together as a result of these consultations.

In addition, as the affect of this development will fall as much on Histon, as Impington, we would like draw to your attention to the following major potentially adverse issues we have with this development:

Flooding

We understand that by splitting the development site in two the Developer has cleverly avoided the need for a flood risk assessment. However, it is already accepted that drainage is a major infrastructure issue in the villages. Histon and Impington Parish Councils have placed on record with the District Council documentary evidence of the impact of flooding on the villages over the last decade that appear 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 that can absorb water and replacing it with concrete only exacerbates the problem and at best, probably moves it westwards into Histon.

Traffic

The increased traffic on Impington Lane that will be caused by this development gives us grave concerns. The traffic "survey" is identical to the previous one carried out for this site during half term holidays, except that the date has been changed. This leads us to suspect the developers are being disingenuous. Also, as a major route to and from our junior and senior schools, traffic flow and the safety of our children is of paramount importance, especially given the narrowness of the road and one of the pavements. No account is taken of rat run traffic between Girton/Oakington and Milton along Impington Lane, as Gatehouse Lane, which takes the Girton/Oakington/bar Hill traffic, was also closed at the time by the County Council Highways Department. No account is also taken of the expected increase of traffic once the Park and Ride system in Butt's Lane becomes operational.

Alternative forms of transport? The Guided Bus station is outside walking distance. The City7 service runs at ten minute intervals during the day and is normally full at peak times through the village. In returning from Cambridge, the 5pm to 5.30pm buses are normally standing room only. The service, running at these levels has little room for expansion, especially as they and the new guided bus system has to traverse the already overloaded Histon Road. When the Guided Bus service starts the Citi7 will take even longer, as it has to wait for traffic queuing on the B1049 and also for the amount of time Station Road will be closed at Histon Station to allow the Guided Bus peak traffic to cross.

The B1049 is already at capacity at peak times. Thus, as the A14 "rat run" /traffic calming measures showed when introduced a couple of years ago, you can move traffic inter and intra the local villages but it does not reduce the total volume that flows. Like water, it finds the path of least resistance.

The County Council traffic light engineers spent months fiddling with the traffic lights sequence at the Green and finally admitted that they cannot be modified any further to alleviate congestion. As a consequence, any extra traffic generated will probably have to go down New Road past the Village College to join the traffic queues on the B1049 closer to the A14 junction. This then just lengthens the traffic queues and brings back into play the old rat run routes through the villages.

Finally the proposed junction, between the development and Impington Lane and its proximity to the present junction at Hereward Close will create another "offset junction". The already known hazards of this type of junction will be added to by the narrowness of the pavement opposite and its use as a major school thoroughfare.

We see little improvement to the junction from previous plans and certainly safety is still a major concern for us.

Design/Density

We welcome the proposed reduction in density. However the units fronting Impington Lane need to be of a more individual design in keeping with the character the rest of Impington Lane as an unregimented mixture of individual character bungalows and houses.

Open Space

The village is already well under the open space requirements specified by the District Council for communities in its LDF. This development does nothing to alleviate this.

Infrastructure

Villages designated as Rural Centres have to have the necessary infrastructure in place to cater for their status. This development provides little relief to the deficits already in place and is in fact likely to increase the pressure on particular areas such as transport and drainage.

Change of Use

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.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we think this proposed development owes more to what is missing than what is evident. As such we urge the District Council to refuse this application based on its lack of a suitable traffic impact study and lack of evidence that a change of use is necessary for any reason than the price paid by the developer for the land.

Planning Conditions

Should the District Council be minded to accept this development then the planning conditions listed by Impington Parish Council are noted and supported.

Histon Parish Council

September 2008