

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3rd December 2008

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

S/1614/08/F – BASSINGBOURN-CUM-KNEESWORTH Erection of 20 Affordable Dwellings, The Causeway for Circle Anglia

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 18th December 2008 (Major Application)

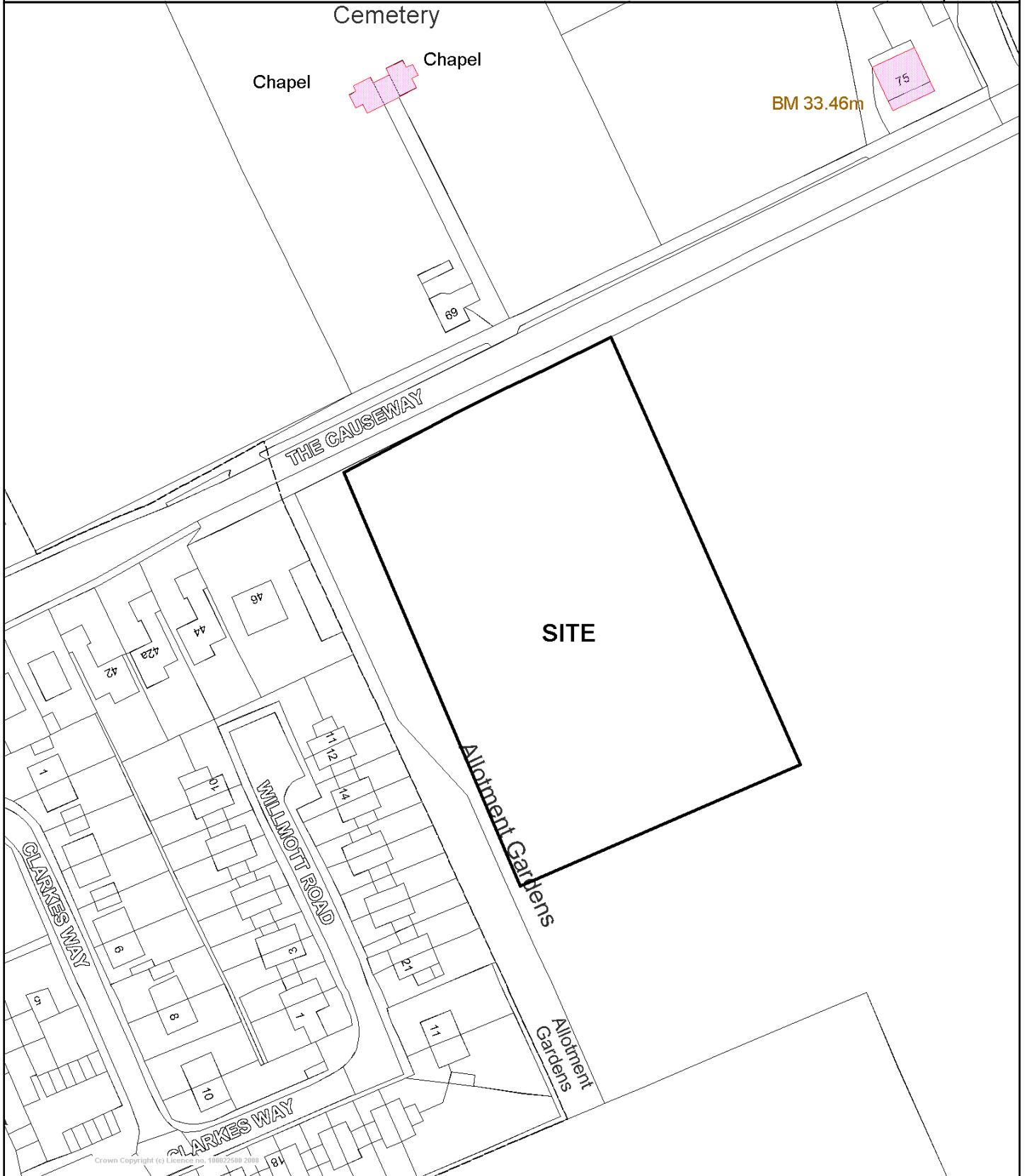
Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the application is for affordable housing on an exception site outside the village framework.

Members will visit this site on Wednesday 3rd December 2008

Site and Proposal

1. This full application received on 18 September 2008 and amended by drawings received 11 November 2008, proposes the erection of 20 affordable dwellings for rent on a 0.67ha area of land to the south of The Causeway at Bassingbourn.
2. The site is part of a larger area of agricultural land on the south side of The Causeway, to the east of properties in Willmott Road, Clarkes Way and a dwelling which fronts The Causeway. The west boundary of the site is currently bounded by a permissive path and the extended rear gardens of residential properties. To the south and east is agricultural land and these boundaries are currently undefined. There is a hedge on the front boundary of the site, with a filed access at the western end. Opposite the site are a residential property and the cemetery.
3. The application proposes a single point of access from The Causeway serving all properties in a cul-de sac development. The development comprises ten 2-bedroom houses and ten 3-bedroom houses, with a maximum ridge height of 8.7m. Materials proposed are red brick and rendered walls with plain tiled roofs.
4. An area of public open space and a local area for play (LAP) are provided within the site. A 5m wide landscaping strip is proposed along the east and south boundaries. The existing hedgerow is to be retained on the front boundary, except at the point of access and a new section planted across the existing field access. A 1.8m high close boarded fence is proposed on the east boundary. The submitted drawing does not make provision for the existing permissive path.
5. The density of the development is 30dph.
6. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement.



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Scale 1/1250 Date 17/11/2008

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Planning History

7. There is no relevant planning history for the application site although planning permission was granted in 2008 for the change of use of a strip of land to the west of the site to additional garden land to properties in Willmott Road (Ref: **S/1557/07/F**)

Planning Policy

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007 and Development Control Policies, adopted July 2007

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007

8. **Policy ST/6 – Group Villages** identifies Bassingbourn as a Group Village and states that residential development and redevelopment up to an indicative maximum scheme size of 8 dwellings will be permitted within the village framework. Development may exceptionally consist of up to about 15 dwellings where this would make best use of a single brownfield site.
9. **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.
10. **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.
11. **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. village character and residential amenity.
12. **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.
13. **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.
14. **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
15. **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.

16. **Policy HG/5 – Exception Sites for Affordable Housing** states that 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.
17. **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.
18. **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.
19. **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.
20. **Policy NE/12 – Water Conservation** states that development must incorporate all practicable water conservation measures. All development proposals greater than 1,000m² 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.
21. **Policy NE/17 – Protecting High Quality Agricultural Land** states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless the land is allocated for development in the Local development Framework or sustainability considerations

and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land.

22. **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.
23. **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.
24. **Policy TR/3 - Mitigating Travel Impact** requires applications for major residential development to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment.
25. **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.
26. **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.
27. **Policy SF/11 Open Space Standards** defines the minimum standards for outdoor play space and informal open space.

Consultation

28. **Bassingbourn Parish Council** recommends approval subject to the following conditions:
 - (a) "That houses are retained for local people with a strong connection to the village.
 - (b) The highest building code regulations are used and the design guide adhered to.
 - (c) Parish Council involvement with the Section 106 Agreement
 - (d) Traffic calming introduced on The Causeway to accommodate the development.
 - (e) A hedge is planted inside the development (backing onto Willmott Road) next to the permissive footpath.

The Parish Council were disappointed to see the lack of renewable energy highlighted on the plans for the houses".

29. The **Local Highway Authority** requires visibility splays of 2.4m x 120m to be shown. Visibility splays to individual properties should be shown. A condition should be attached to ensure that the proposed manoeuvring area is maintained free from any

obstruction. It requests that the applicant provides a method statement relating to the process of construction and any effects this may have on the adopted public highway.

It comments that it seeks the provision of a Traffic Regulation Order to extend the existing 30mph speed limit to encompass the entrance to the site and also a footway link, which should be a minimum of 2.0m wide, not 1.5m as shown on the application drawing, from the development to the village of Bassingbourn.

30. **Cambridgeshire Archaeology** comments that its records indicate that the site lies in an area of some archaeological potential to the east of the medieval village core and therefore considers that the site should be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation to be secured through a negative condition in any planning consent.
31. The **Ecology Officer** has no objection to the application subject to a condition being attached to secure ecological enhancement via a scheme of nest box and bat box provision.
32. The **Housing Development and Enabling Manager** fully supports the application. The split in property mix is ideal in terms of meeting the local needs that have been identified and is prepared to support any application for Social Housing Grant via the Housing Corporation.
33. The **Affordable Housing Panel** supports the application. The meeting stressed the need for the use of good quality materials.
34. The comments of **Anglian Water** and the **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)** will be reported at the meeting.

Representations

35. The occupier of **3 South End** hopes that the scheme will meet with local approval provided that there no overbearing or urbanising road works at the junction and consideration is given to the surface water drainage so that it does not put further strain on the barely adequate existing system.
36. The occupier of **15 Willmott Road** objects to the development. It will disrupt the peacefulness of the area; there will be light escaping polluting the area and also noise pollution.

The site is outside the village framework. Provisions have been made to develop affordable housing within the framework but have not been pursued. Other areas such as Spring Lane have been applied for and refused in terms of size. The proposed development does not seem to have been justified in the application. If it is needed why could it not happen as per the Bassingbourn policy and South Cambs statements and policies?

The surface water drainage system in the village is poorly maintained and there have been many instances of flooding. The application refers to soakaways for surface water. The drains in The Causeway discharge into the River Rhee or Cam and the pipe runs underneath the footpath for some way before it discharges into the river as it exits from The Limes. It is not believed that the river would be able to cope with the additional surface water. The sewerage system has also caused a number of problems in the village, evidenced by blocked sewage pipes and a constant smell of sewage next to the Cemetery entrance and the proposed development will

exacerbate this. If approved what provision would be made to lay new sewage pipes? If permission is granted without this requirement who would be accountable for the inevitable problems?

The application contravenes all policies and statements made by the Council and Bassingbourn policy, what justification is there to seek a development of this nature on agricultural land?

37. The occupier of **11 Willmott Road** objects. Policy Bassingbourn 1 refers to an allocation of 0.76ha (residue) site to the north of High Street. It is part of a larger development which has been completed and therefore access to The Causeway exists. The site is available and abandonment of this partially completed allocation would be a departure from the Local Plan. The policy states that where affordable housing is proposed a legal agreement is required however this is not mentioned in the application. There is a requirement for a range of housing types but no one-bedroom units are proposed.
38. The occupier of **21 Willmott Road** objects stating that the application contravenes many of the policies in the Local Plan 2004 and LDF 2008. The application is outside the village framework and erodes the space between Bassingbourn and Kneesworth. The road layout allows for further development which would further erode this space. There is a reserved site for such a development, why is this not being used? Why is the District Council supporting development outside the village framework contrary to its own policies? There is no legal agreement submitted with the application – should this not be required? Do the houses fit the criteria of affordable dwellings and what restrictions would be placed on who could buy them? There is no survey accompanying the application to justify the need for the development. Would the application be considered if it were not for affordable housing?

The Causeway is already a busy road at peak times and there have been fatalities at the point where this proposed development would enter The Causeway. What proposals are there in place for protecting pedestrians and road users?

There will be overlooking from the development into the bedroom window of No 21 and there is the potential of light pollution from security lighting. In addition there will be noise pollution.

39. The occupier of **19 Willmott Road** objects. The proposal contravenes the policy that requires the separation of Bassingbourn and Kneesworth to be maintained. The policy states that only infill development will be allowed and this application contravenes that policy and proposes development outside the defined framework. The submitted plan shows a hammerhead which has clear potential for access to extend to the east into what could be a subsequent development phase. The nature of the policies which this application seeks to overturn are of a nature that they are a departure from the Development plan and the application should deal with it accordingly. If the Planning Authority intends to support the application then to date it will have failed to comply with this policy.
40. The occupier of **13 Clarkes Way** objects. The site is outside the development framework and there are already sites allocated for development within the framework that have not been completed. If agreed it would be contrary to policy and leave it open for more developments to be agreed outside the village, narrowing the gap between Bassingbourn and Kneesworth, which is again contrary to policy. There are already drainage problems in the village, surely this development will make those

worse. What is determined as affordable housing? How are these calculations made? There are no one-bedroom units which is a breach of policy.

41. The occupier of **46 The Causeway** objects. The site is unallocated and outside the village framework and therefore development is contrary to policies of both the Local Plan 2004 and Local development Framework 2008. Policy Bassingbourn 1 refers to the allocation of 0.76ha (residue) on the northern side of High Street/The Causeway which should be developed before any other similar sized site is considered. That is part of a larger site allocation, the rest of which has already been completed and an access road is in place. The abandonment of this site would be a departure from the Local Plan.

Policy requires that where affordable housing is proposed a legal agreement is required. No mention of this is made within the application.

Policies require a mix of dwellings but there are no one bedroom units proposed.

Policy Bassingbourn 1 refers to the traffic implications arising from the allocated site but no mention is made in this application for such provisions even though the scale of developments are comparable. The policy also refers to the reasons for the village framework boundaries and the need to prevent the coalescence of Bassingbourn and Kneesworth. This application contravenes that policy.

The policy also states that infill development only will be permitted. Not only does the application contravenes that policy but also proposes development outside the village framework and would set a precedent. The site plan shows a hammerhead that could be used to access adjacent land.

The letter refers to paragraphs from the Local Plan 2004 in respect of Housing and Environment, and the obligation to make decisions in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise. The letter points out the need to advertise any departures.

Reference is made to text from the Local Plan 2004 which states that development on Greenfield land outside settlements will only be permitted where it is shown that there are no suitable brownfield sites available. The letter points out the selection criteria for Rural Growth Settlements but even here development should be within village frameworks. Reference is made to the Area of Restraint (Local Plan 2004) and Important Countryside Frontages.

The letter points out that Policy NE17 (Local Plan 2004) states that the District Council will not grant permission for development that would lead to the reversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless the site is allocated for development. This is not an allocated site and a site on the other side of The Causeway and further into the village was refused allocation. The site is contrary to DP/7 as the site is outside the village framework.

In respect of Policy HG/5 a similar size development was refused in South End on the grounds that it was not a 'small' development. This proposal is of a similar size.

42. The occupier of **20 Willmott Road** objects. The site is contrary to Policy SE8 as the site is outside the village framework. The plan states that this policy is there to ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment on the edges of villages and to help guard against incremental growth in unsustainable locations. The application does not acknowledge the need for highway improvements as required in

the Plan. The surface water drainage system in the village is poorly maintained and there have been many instances of flooding, will the drains be able to cope if this development goes ahead? The applicant states that all properties will have security lighting which will result in environmentally damaging light pollution.

43. The occupier of **14 Willmott Road** comments that the development is outside the village framework. There is no specification as to how affordable the dwellings will be. There is no one bedroom accommodation which would be the most affordable to a first time buyer and as required by planning policy. The primary school is already over-subscribed and people moving into the village have not always been able to get a place. There is already land designated for affordable housing in the Parish plan which has not yet been built on, which is infilling and not outside the village framework. Other sites are close to local amenities which would reduce traffic. The District Council has a policy of infill only which would be contravened. The heavily used permissive path to the rear of houses in Willmott Road is missing. No hedging is provided on the boundary with the path which would be needed to prevent the development being unsightly. The existing mature edging along the boundary of properties in Willmott Road is significant environmentally and has produced a moth (Buttoned Snout *Hypona Rostralis*) which is on the Nationally Scarce B list. The plans do not show land recently brought by Willmott Road residents and shows the new development to be 12m away rather than 2m which is actually the case. There will be light obstruction from the new development and this will affect the growth of a hedgerow which adjoining residents have been asked to plant bordering the permissive path. A recently proposed development in South End was refused as it was not considered to be small scale; this proposal is of a similar size.
44. The occupiers of **12 Clarkes Way** are concerned that the submitted plans do not show the true boundary of properties in Willmott Road and Clarkes Way following the purchase of a strip of land and its change of use to garden land. This therefore gives the impression that the development will leave a sizeable gap between the existing gardens and the new ones whereas it would only be 2m, which has to be left due to the location of the public footpath.

The drawings show a roadway that could be extended to enlarge the development at a later stage. Although 20 dwellings does not change the village size significantly this development will set a precedent for further development of this area potentially leading to the joining of Bassingbourn and Kneesworth, which it is believed contravenes one of the village planning policies.

There is no evidence in the application that the need for affordable housing has been proven.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

45. This application should be considered against the criteria in Policy HG/5 as an exception site for affordable housing. This policy accepts that such development can be outside village frameworks.
46. Policy HG/5 requires that exception schemes should be on 'small' sites. Whilst the policy does not define what is considered to be small, officers have taken the view that schemes of up to 20 dwellings for affordable housing in Group Villages such as Bassingbourn could be considered as small. This scheme is for 20 dwellings.
47. Any site is required to be well related to the built-up area of the settlement and the scale of the scheme should be appropriate to the size and character of the village. I

consider that the site meets the this part of the policy as the site is well related to the built-up area of Bassingbourn, being immediately to the east of the village framework and the scale of the scheme is appropriate to the size of the village as a whole. In my view the site is well related to facilities and services within the village, particularly when compared to other properties along The Causeway.

48. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager supports the scheme. All of the properties are proposed for rent. A Section 106 Agreement will be required to ensure that the properties are brought forward at an affordable rent in perpetuity and that priority of occupation is given to qualifying people from Bassingbourn. Nomination rights will also need to be agreed. A planning condition can secure these matters as part of a scheme prior to commencement of development. The Legal Officer will be instructed to prepare a draft agreement.
49. Although the development will break into what is presently a long stretch of undeveloped land on the south side of The Causeway, east of the village it will not in my view, providing the development is appropriately landscaped, damage the character of the village or the rural landscape. A significant area of undeveloped land would remain to the east. The layout of the development and the provision of the hammerhead could allow access into adjacent land for further development. However any such proposal would have to be considered on its merits against relevant policies at that time.
50. Bassingbourn 1 is a 'saved' policy from the Local Plan 2004. It maintains the allocation for housing of a 0.76ha area of land to the north of High Street/The Causeway, which represents the residue of an originally larger housing allocation from the 1993 Local Plan, the substantial proportion of which has now been developed as Elbourn Way and Kefford Close. If a planning application were to be submitted for the remaining part of the allocated land, and assuming a density of 30dph, it might bring forward in the region of 22/23 units. Policy HG/3 would require that a minimum of 40% of these units should be affordable dwellings, which would represent about 10 dwellings. However as this site is within the village framework there would be no local preference given to the occupation of the affordable dwellings and would not therefore satisfy the proven local need which has been confirmed by the Housing Development and Enabling Manager. The allocation would be unaffected by the determination of this application. In my view the need for an exception site can be supported.
51. Policies Bassingbourn 2 and 3, which are referred to in the letters from local residents and relate to substantial development being dependant on the improvement of the A1198/The Causeway junction and the restriction of development in Kneesworth to infilling, partly in order to maintain the separate identity of the two settlements, are not 'saved' policies. They are not therefore material considerations in their own right in the determination of this planning application although Members will need to have regard to the comments/requirements of the Local Highway Authority in the normal way, along with an assessment of whether the proposed development will damage the character of the village or rural landscape, as required by Policy HG/5. The junction of The Causeway with the A1198 was improved, partly with the benefit of financing from the now developed part of the allocated site on the north side of the road.
52. The Local Highway Authority has not objected to the application, although it requires revisions to the visibility splays and an increase in width of the proposed footpath which would link the entrance to the site to the existing footpath in The Causeway to the west. It states that it would seek to move the existing 30mph sign to the east

edge of the development under its Traffic Regulation Orders. No other highway improvements are sought. Visibility at the proposed entrance to the site is good. Amended drawings have been requested.

53. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager has supported the application in terms of identified local housing need and housing mix/tenure. The provision of one-bedroom dwellings is not normally sought as part of an affordable housing scheme due to the lack of flexibility of such a unit. A Section 106 Agreement will secure that the dwellings are brought forward at an affordable rent and that preference is given to local qualifying persons when allocating the properties.
54. In my view the distance of the new development from existing houses is sufficient to ensure that there is no unreasonable loss of light and overlooking. In coming to this view I have had regard to the recent extension of the gardens to these properties. A condition can be attached to any consent ensuring that no further openings are inserted into elevations of the new dwellings at first floor level facing the adjoining houses.
55. An area of open space and LAP is provided in accordance with the requirements of Policy ST/10. Its provision, maintenance and other required financial contribution to formal play space provision can be secured through the Section 106 Agreement.
56. Although the application is not in a location or of a size which would automatically attract a requirement for a flood risk assessment (FRA) the Environment Agency has advised that, given the comments from local residents about local surface water drainage problems, a FRA should be sought. This had been requested from the applicant. It is likely that any matters raised can be dealt with by a suitably worded condition.
57. Anglian Water has been consulted on the application and its comments on the ability of the existing foul water drainage system to cope with the additional demands that will result from the proposed development will be reported at the meeting. It did not raise an objection to a recent application for a similar number of dwellings in South End, Bassingbourn.
58. The land the subject of the application is classified as Grade 2 agricultural land, however the size of the site is below that where consultation with Defra is required. Policy NE/17 states that the District Council will not grant permission for development that would lead to the irreversible loss of Grade 2 land unless the site is allocated for development or sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land. In this case I am of the view that the need to provide affordable housing to meet a proven local need should outweigh the loss of a 0.67ha area of Grade 2 agricultural land.
59. The Ecology Officer has not objected to the application subject to a condition requiring the provision of nest boxes and bat boxes. I have forwarded a copy of the letter from the occupier of 14 Willmott Road, which raises the issues of the Buttoned Snout moth, to the Ecology Officer and will report any further comments.
60. The submitted plan does not recognise the recent extension to the garden land of properties in Willmott Road and Clarkes Way, nor the route of the permissive footpath, which currently runs immediately to the east of these gardens. I have requested a revised plan which addresses these issues, and confirms that the permissive path is to remain.

61. Policy HG/5 allows for permission to be granted, as an exception sites for affordable housing outside village frameworks. Therefore provided a proposal meets the various criteria set out in that policy it would not be a departure from the Development Plan.
62. The development will comply with Code Level 3 in terms of sustainable homes. Conditions should be attached requiring schemes in respect of energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy technologies and water conservation strategy.
63. I am of the view that the scheme satisfies the criteria in Policy HG/5 and can be supported.

Recommendation

64. That, subject to the receipt of satisfactory amended plans, delegated powers of approval be granted subject to safeguarding conditions.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Ref: S/1614/08/F

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