

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3rd December 2008

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

**S/1840/08/F - COTTENHAM
Erection of Twelve Dwellings at Land North of Orchard Close
For Hundred Houses Society**

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 19th January 2009 (Major Application)

ADDENDUM

Consultations

1. **Cottenham Parish Council** recommends approval of the application subject to:
 - (a) A second speed cushion being installed on the bend to the access road just before plot 1, in order to improve road safety, especially in light of the 5 car parking spaces opposite no. 42 Orchard Close which will see vehicles exiting in reverse onto the highway. This second speed cushion is vital to restrict vehicle speed in both directions.
 - (b) Concerns are raised in regard to the garden area which is to be offered to the owners of no. 73 Rampton Road. It asks that this purchase be part of conditions set within any planning permission given and that a specific agreement must be made prior to any building works taking place in order to ensure that this small parcel of land does not become 'left' to become neglected and potentially an area for the youth of Cottenham to gather with the real possibility that this could cause anti-social behaviour and loss of amenity for residents. It also asks that this land has its development rights removed in order to ensure that it stays garden land.
 - (c) At a prior meeting with the architect it had asked that the existing footpaths leading through the residential area be looked at to see how they could be altered to discourage use by new residents from the proposed development in order to minimise its impact on existing elderly residents and to protect their amenity.
 - (d) It recommends that a minimum of 50% of the proposed housing be available as rented accommodation.
 - (e) It expects that all of the proposed housing be offered to residents of Cottenham, as a recent housing needs survey identified 57 Cottenham residents as needing accommodation.

2. The **Local Highway Authority** commented that it requires amended plans removing 'serving existing Orchard Close properties' and 'parking for no. 42' from parking spaces which are to be within the public highway as these will be available for all road users, and removal of 2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays to the rear access gates serving no. 73 Rampton Road, as these are also in the public highway. If these were to be provided they will require a Road Traffic Order and the works will be carried out by the County Council at the developers expense. If these are provided it is satisfied that the proposal will have no significant adverse impact upon the public highway.
3. It recommends planning conditions and informatives, if approved covering the provision and retention of parking spaces and pedestrian visibility splays, and no unbound material within 6m of the public highway.
4. The **Ecology Officer** has commented that he has no objection, subject to a condition securing a scheme of bird boxes to ensure some biodiversity enhancement is achieved.

Representations

5. The agent has confirmed on behalf of the applicant that:
 - (a) A contribution towards off-site provision of public open space will be met, although it is concerned that, due to the likely size of the sum required, it places pressure on a scheme for which there is only limited funding available.
 - (b) The society is committed to providing public art. Its preference being for a piece on site, rather than making a financial contribution.
 - (c) Although limited funding is available for the scheme, the applicant will provide 10% of the energy required through renewable sources, most likely solar water heating, as this is the most affordable way.
6. Councillor Nigel Bolitho, a Local Member for Cottenham, has commented that '...while the development plans are an improvement on the previous ones, they still don't go far enough. Specifically:
 - (a) SCDC owns the car park through which access to the site is required and a tree on the pavement. While I am quite happy to support the principle of affordable housing, I also have to support existing residents who will be disadvantaged by this new development. I don't believe that SCDC should give away "ransom strips" without conceding some sort of Section 106 Benefit to offset the disadvantage to existing residents of the new development. I understand that a new sewer pipe is planned for the new development. One benefit to existing residents in Orchard Close, who complain about the existing sewer pipe, would be for the developers to lay a new and enlarged sewer pipe for both communities;
 - (b) This is a retirement area and older and disabled people like peace and quiet. I would be much happier if the proposed dwellings were all properties suitable for retired people. Then there would be much less possibility of noise, ball games and lots more vehicles disrupting the

peace and quiet which existing residents not only appreciate but have benefited from for many years;

- (c) I am Tree Warden of Cottenham and so am particularly annoyed that no efforts have been made by the SCDC Planning Department or the developer to save the tree. According to the architect, Simon Ward, it is not actually necessary to cut down the tree although it might be a bit misshapen after the houses have been built. Surely it would be a much better idea to save the tree and then decide whether to cut it down at a later date depending on its condition. There is a 27' gap between the tree trunk and the path through which diggers and bulldozers could pass. That is surely a big enough roadway. As the attached note on trees indicates, Acacias are one of the top five carbon-capture trees in the UK and I don't think the fine specimen in Orchard Close should be cut down willy-nilly'.

7. The occupier of 67 Rampton Road has objected on grounds that:

- (a) The road is extremely narrow and never intended for use as a proper road which caters for much traffic.
- (b) Increase in noise and pollution from extra traffic.
- (c) Impact upon properties on Rampton Road that use the existing access from their properties.
- (d) In the past there has been much lying water on the site which, if houses are built on it, could cause drainage problems.
- (e) Loss of a particularly fine Norwegian Maple and impact on wild birds nesting habitat.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

Affordable housing

- 8. An Affordable Housing Panel was held on Friday 28th November 2008. The key points arising from the discussion were:
 - (a) The Parish Council wish to seek support for an additional speed bump and will liaise direct with the County Councillor.
 - (b) The issue of the garden land assigned to no. 73 Rampton Road was discussed. It was explained that the change of use is part of the planning application. Other uses would require planning permission and as such it is not possible to condition this. The ownership of land is not a planning issue. It was noted that we can require the boundary treatment to be implemented, which would at least ensure the land is not publicly accessible. It was advised by officers that removing householder permitted development rights would be unreasonable, as no harm from these could be demonstrated. This was accepted.

- (c) The request that the footpath to Orchard Close be closed, to prevent pedestrian through traffic was raised. Officers thought that this would possibly result in an extinguishment of a public right of way that would have to be agreed to by Cambridgeshire County Council. The County Council will be asked confirm if this is definitely the case. The view was also expressed that this would prevent existing residents from accessing parking spaces being re-provided. The Parish will also follow this up with the County.
- (d) The need for affordable housing to meet the needs of Cottenham residents was agreed. The housing register currently identifies 49 households as waiting for accommodation, mostly for two-bedroom units. The Parish referred to a recent survey by ACRE, which showed a need for 60. This figure is thought to be higher than the Council's as this is based on direct interviews and some of these will not yet have applied for housing. The only other affordable housing planned at present in Cottenham is for 6 units to the rear of Oakington Road (approved under planning ref. S/1979/07/F). The mix was agreed as being in accordance with identified local need.
- (e) The tenure mix was agreed as being at least 50% rental, although in practice it is for the Council to decide this. It is usual practice to seek a split between shared ownership and rental on sites. It was noted that the planning application form is incorrectly completed, stating that 100% rental is proposed, in contradiction to the Affordable Housing Statement. This will be corrected.
- (f) It was confirmed that as this is an exception site the units would be secured as affordable in perpetuity for Cottenham residents, in accordance with policy HG/5.
- (g) The tree that is to be removed in order to provide the access road was discussed. Officers advised that this was looked at under the previous application and its loss found to be unavoidable in order to achieve the road layout and replacement parking spaces. While it is not desirable the benefit of gaining affordable housing outweighs the harm.

Highways

- 9. Amended drawings will be sought to address the Local Highway Authority requirements. It is noted that the Parish has requested a second speed cushion, however, the view expressed by the Local Highway Authority's to officers is that this is not necessary and cannot reasonably be required. This will be resolved through further discussion with the Parish and Local Highway Authority.
- 10. The impact of noise and traffic pollution upon Rampton Road residents will not be significant due to the distance from the road and relatively minor increase in traffic levels.

Other matters

- 11. Bird boxes will be a condition of the planning permission, if approved.

12. The application is for affordable housing. While there may be a desire for housing specifically for elderly persons, this is not what the application seeks. The application has been considered based on what has been applied for, in accordance with adopted policy.
13. The issue of a potential ransom strip is not a planning matter. Notwithstanding, the Housing Development and Enabling Manager has advised that once the principle of planning permission has been established the matter will then be taken up through the Housing Portfolio Holder.
14. Drainage concerns have been addressed in the current scheme by changing the proposal to include an alternative connection to the public main drain. It is not possible to require improvements to the existing drainage system as it is not required to meet the increased demand from the development proposed. If improvements are required these should be sought outside of the planning framework.