

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4th February 2009

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

S/1811/08/F - LANDBEACH

**Erection of 8 Affordable Dwellings and 4 Market Homes,
Walnut Farm Yard, High Street, for Cambridgeshire County Council
and One Hundred Homes**

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 10th February 2009 (Major Application)

Members will visit this site on 4th February 2009.

Notes:

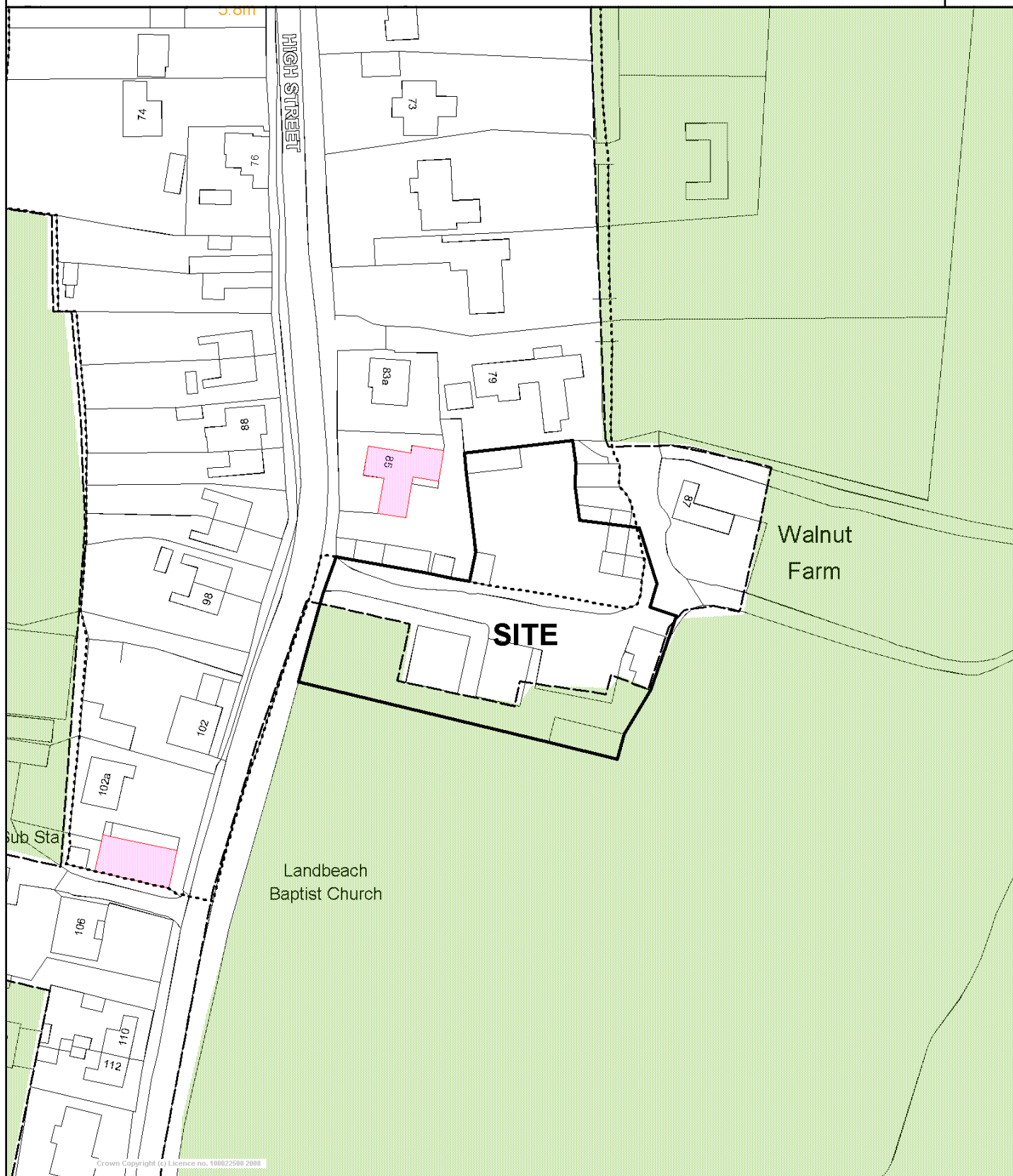
This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee, as it proposes affordable housing but is a departure to the Development Plan.

Departure Application

Conservation Area

Site and Proposal

1. The site, a redundant County Council farmyard, comprises of an area of approximately 0.39 of a hectare. The site is located upon the southern edge of the village; its northern edge located within the village's development framework and Conservation Area, whilst its southern edge within the open countryside and Green Belt. The application site is also adjacent to a grade II listed building (no.85 The High St). Landbeach is a small village with a low range of services and facilities; it is therefore identified as an infill village by the adopted Core Strategy with residential development restricted in scale due to the village's unsustainable nature.
2. The site consists of a series of barn and outbuilding structures varying in size and condition and is accessed via the High Street by an un-surfaced track, which leads to the farmhouse to the east, which is not included within application site. The listed building to the north (no.85 High Street) has a curtilage-listed outbuilding, which runs adjacent to the sites access and appears to be used for storage. There is a prominent and mature hedgerow in situ along the southern boundary, which defines the physical boundary of the farmyard. Nevertheless, this boundary does not demarcate the village framework or Green Belt boundary. This part of the High Street mainly consists of a linear low density housing, with a mixture of semi and detached dwellings constructed in brick.
3. The application received 11th November 2008 proposes a residential scheme of 12 dwellings, 8 of which are affordable with the remaining 4, market dwellings. The affordable housing aspect of the proposal does therefore have the backing of a recognised registered social landlord (RSL).



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Scale 1/1250 Date 22/1/2009

Centre = 547818 E 264564 N

February Planning Committee

4. The proposed dwelling types are summarised below:

*Market Dwellings:

- a) 3-bedroom detached x 3;
- b) 4-bedroom detached x1;

*Affordable Dwellings:

- a) 3-bedroom semi-detached x 2;
- b) 2-bedroom semi-detached x 2
- c) 2-bedroom flats x2;
- d) 1-bedroom flats x 2;

Planning History

5. None

Planning Policy

6. *South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007:*

ST/7 Infill Villages limited to a development of two dwellings.

7. *Development Control Policies, adopted July 2007:*

DP/1 Sustainable Development

DP/2 Design of New development

DP/3 Development Criteria

DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments

DP/7 Development Frameworks

HG/1 Housing Density

HG/2 Housing Mix

HG/3 Affordable Housing

HG/5 Exceptions Sites for Affordable Housing

GB/1 Development in the Green Belt

GB/2 Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt

GB/3 Mitigating the Impact of Development Adjoining the Green Belt

SF/6 Public Art and New Development

SF/10 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments

SF/11 Open Space Standards

NE/1 Energy Efficiency

NE/2 Renewable Energy

NE/3 Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development

NE/6 Biodiversity

NE/9 Water and Drainage Infrastructure

NE/12 Water Conservation

CH/4 Development Within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building

CH/5 Conservation Areas

TR/1 Planning for More Sustainable Travel

TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards

TR/3 Mitigating Travel Impact

Consultation

8. **Landbeach Parish Council** – Makes no recommendation on these proposals but does highlight the following issues:
 - a) There is a need to provide trees and landscaping to the sites boundaries to soften the views from the south when entering the village;
 - b) The colour of brick must blend with that of the village, such as a soft colour and not harsh yellow;
 - c) There is a concern that the proposed car parking is inadequate and we would not wish to see overspill parking onto the High Street.
9. **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)** – The site contains numerous agricultural buildings and therefore it is recommended that no development approved shall commence until the appropriate ground contamination studies have taken place and have been agreed by condition.
10. **Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service** – Wished to view the application in order to ascertain if sufficient water supplies are required for this development. No further comments have been received.
11. **Trees Officer** – Tree protection as indicated in the arboricultural report to be installed prior to any demolition or construction work on site. No objection to the proposals. However, replacement trees of potentially large specimens should be sought to provide height and structure within the landscape.
12. **Environment Agency** – Any planning approval shall include conditions requiring details of ground contamination studies and surface water drainage before development can commence.
13. **Anglian Water** has no objections. The foul drainage from this development will be treated at Waterbeach STW that at present has available capacity.
14. **Housing Development and Enabling Manager** – The housing team fully support this application and have been working with Hundreds Housing Association and the County Council for some considerable time. The scheme is for 8 affordable units. The proposed tenure split of 6 rented and 2 shared ownership is acceptable. The only issue of concern is the proposed 2-bedroom flats. The housing needs survey (2003) did not identify a need for 2-bed flats. Whilst we are confident that the units could be let or sold, it does not correlate with our findings. There is a greater need for 2-bed houses and if this could be accommodated on site, this would be of preference.
15. **Negotiating S106 Officer** – Should the developer wish to abstain from Public Open Space provision they should at least contribute towards public open space maintenance whilst also providing funds for bus stops as outlined in the Design and Access Statement. The Parish Council is keen to seek enhancement of the existing public transport infrastructure within the village, but does feel that they have adequate public open space provision. The approximate required sum for public open space provision for the proposal would be £60,061.20.
16. **County Council Education** – There is sufficient education capacity to support this proposal. Therefore the County will not be seeking an education contribution;
17. **Local Highway Authority** - Prior to commencement of the development visibility splays with dimensions of 2.4 metres by 70 metres as measured from and along the

nearside edge of the carriageway shall be provided on both sides of the access in full. The area within each splay shall be kept clear of any obstruction exceeding 600mm in height at all times.

18. Two 2.0 x 2.0 metres pedestrian visibility splays should be provided and shown on the drawings. The splays are to be included within the curtilage of the new dwelling. One visibility splay is required on each side of the access, measured to either side of the access, with a setback of two metres from the highway boundary along each side of the access. This area shall be kept clear of all planting, fencing, walls and the like exceeding 600mm high.
19. The Highway Authority will require the landowner to deposit a letter stating that the applicant will not be seeking adoption and thus prevent any future attempts by other parties to seek adoption of this site.
20. An access width of 5 metres should be provided for a minimum distance of ten metres from the highway boundary and retained free of obstruction with 2 metre footway either side.
21. The applicant should remove the proposed rumble strip at the entrance to the site as this will result in additional disturbance to neighbouring residents.
22. The vehicular access should be constructed using 6 m radii kerbs.
23. The applicant must show the dimensions for the proposed car parking spaces, which should be 2.5m x 5m with a 6m reversing, space.
24. The applicant should provide a method statement relating to the process of demolition and any effects this may have on the adopted public highway. In particular reference should be made to control of debris, mud & dust, pedestrian & vehicle movements and the control of contractors parking.
25. **Ecology Officer** requests a scheme of nest and bat box erection (including a barn owl box).
26. **Conservation Officer** – “Walnut Tree Farm is within the Landbeach Conservation Area and adjacent 85 High Street, which is a grade II listed building and originally a farmhouse.

The site is on the edge of the village and currently occupied by twentieth century farm buildings. As the farm buildings are of no special interest, their demolition may be acceptable but a Conservation Area Consent application will be required.

I would recommend refusal of the application on the basis of harm to the Listed building and Conservation Area by means of the position, bulk, scale, spans, design and materials of the proposed buildings.

Subject to Conservation Area consent for demolition of the existing buildings, some rural needs exception development may be possible subject to the provision of open space around the Listed building to a similar level as the existing, and a design that provides buildings of a scale and design more appropriate to this context.”

27. **Affordable Housing Panel** -The affordable housing panel met to discuss this application on 15th January 2009. The merits of its departure to the relevant planning policy were explained as were affordable housing Policies HG/3 and HG/5. The

conclusion of the panel was that it supported the scheme in principle, as it would deliver much needed social housing provision to the village.

The officers' views towards the application as a whole were noted. However, a concern was raised that, should more be asked of the developer, then the implementation of the proposals may be put in doubt.

Representations

28. 4 letters of representation have been received from the residents at 79, 94, 96 and 102 High Street, the content of which is summarised below:
- (a) The erection of a 3-bed dwelling within close proximity to the boundary of no.79 High St would result in a loss of light and solar gain;
 - (b) The proposed market dwelling within close proximity to no.79 High St would result in an enclosed environment to the garden currently enjoyed by its occupants;
 - (c) Views out across the open countryside from the rear of no.79 would be interrupted by the proposed market dwellings, which would have a negative impact upon the value of the property;
 - (d) The southern edge of the site is within the Green Belt and the roots of a prominent poplar tree no doubt extend into the development area; damage could occur;
 - (e) There is Roman ditch within close proximity to the site; has an archaeological survey been carried out?
 - (f) The village already struggles to support its social club and there are no shops or amenities; it is therefore questionable to how the village could support further residential dwellings;
 - (g) The local bus service is dwindling with no service out of the village before 09.30hrs; how could this support additional residents needing to get to work;
 - (h) The village is currently undergoing means to restrict traffic speeds, additional dwellings will not aid this matter;
 - (i) The surrounding farmyard is actively managed from this site with the barns used for storage; there is no mention to how the farm will continue to be used and accessed;
 - (j) Walnut Farm House has remained unoccupied for a year and there is affordable housing within the Arbury Park development, therefore is there a need for low cost housing?
 - (k) There are owls and possibly bats that use the current barns;
 - (l) The site provides a rural charm that echoes that of the rest of the village, the proposed houses would not conform with this setting;
 - (m) The surrounding houses to the site are not pre-war and the proposed housing designs would not gel with there surroundings;
 - (n) The site is within a Conservation Area and therefore the development should sit well with its surroundings;
 - (o) The parking is insufficient and would lead to residents parking on the High Street, this will lead to highway conflict; the proposed access is also upon a blind bend;
 - (p) Within the current economic climate there will be no market for these houses and it will be a waste of time, money and wildlife habitat;
 - (q) The proposal does not conform with the Council's Green Belt policies;
 - (r) The proposal would jeopardise the rural character of the village due to the sensitive village edge location;
 - (s) The proposal would jeopardise the rural character of the village due to the sensitive village edge location;

- (t) Landbeach is an infill village and has no schools, shops, or employment opportunities; The proposal departs from the threshold of 8 dwellings as identified by Policy ST/7;
 - (u) There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would instigate car sharing initiatives;
 - (v) The proposal would not adhere to Planning Policy Statement 1 in that it would not be appropriate in its context, as it would fail to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions;
 - (w) The new housing would result in more car use, it would not help sustain existing public transport;
 - (x) Very few residents have requested the provision of affordable housing within the village, there is a concern over new builds;
 - (y) The existing site is not considered an eyesore;
 - (z) Other preferable alternatives could have been explored, such as alternative sites that would have less of an impact;
 - (aa) The application suggests moving the green belt boundary to suite the development, this cannot be defensible in planning terms;
 - (bb) The development sees buildings within close proximity to the footway in order to squeeze more dwellings onto the site;
 - (cc) The first floor window of the end affordable dwelling would be positioned to overlook dwellings opposite the High St;
 - (dd) If allowed this development would set a precedent for similar development, which would erode the character of the village;
29. **Disability Forum-** Has raised the following issues:
- a) Visitor parking should contain disabled spaces;
 - b) Level access from dwellings into gardens is required;
 - c) Down stair toilets are to have outward opening doors;
 - d) Level access into market dwellings from road;

Planning Comments – Key Issues

Housing

30. The proposal for 12 dwellings in total would be a departure to policy ST/7 “Infill Villages” as this policy only allows minimum infill housing development of 2 dwellings. In exceptional circumstances this policy would allow slightly larger development of up to 8 dwellings where the development would lead to the sustainable recycling of a Brownfield site resulting in a positive benefit to the village. In this instance the application is a Greenfield site. The proposal for 4 market dwellings does not therefore comply with this Policy.
31. The development would result in an approximate residential density of 31dph, which is considered reasonable as it is at the lower scale of the requirements of policy HG/1. The site would provide 8 affordable units in total, of which only 6 would be definitively outside of the village framework and in the Green Belt. As a result only 6 of these units could be secured by S106 legal agreement to be allocated to Landbeach residents. The remaining two dwellings would have to be offered to residents on a district wide basis. The Parish Council and Housing Officer support the number and tenure of proposed affordable housing as it meets the housing needs for the village. Notwithstanding this the mix of affordable units does not accord with the housing need survey in that there is a requirement for 2-bedroom family dwellings and not 2-bedroom flats. In that regard the proposal does not comply with Policy HG/5.

32. The proposed market housing does not provide a suitable “housing mix” in accordance with Policy HG/2. These units should provide at least 40% (2) 1-2 bedroom dwellings, 25% 3-bedroom and 25% 4 or more bedroom dwellings. There is an identifiable need for small-scale housing within the District as a whole. No justification has been provided as to why smaller scale market housing cannot be provided on this site.
33. As the application site is identified as a Greenfield site, the provision of 4 market houses is not supported by local or national planning policy. As a departure to Policy ST/7 a 100% affordable housing exception development could be supported due to its benefit to the local community, but no justification has been provided to suggest that the viability of the scheme as a whole relies on the provision of 4 market dwellings.

Infrastructure

34. The Local Highway Authority has not raised any formal objections to the proposed development. This detail included revised plans showing both pedestrian (2m x 2m) and vehicular visibility splays (2.4m x 70m). Whilst it is considered that these splays are obtainable they have not been shown in full upon the site layout plan. Given the proposed splays the visibility of the access in both directions is deemed acceptable in terms of highway safety. The removal of the rumble strip within the access has also been requested due to its close proximity to proposed habitable rooms.
35. As proposed, the access would be 5m width, which would allow vehicles to pass one another. However, there is insufficient space to provide 2m footpaths either side of the access. This is due to the proposed landscaping and the positioning of the building lines of the affordable units. The Highway Authority has made it clear that it does not wish to adopt the access road and therefore its standards need not apply to what would be a private approach road. The development does provide footpaths further within the site but none, which would link to the external footpaths within the High Street.
36. The development would provide 25 formal car spaces in total. This would consist of 2/3 spaces per market dwelling (11 in total) and 14 spaces for the affordable units. At 1.5 spaces per dwelling the affordable units would have an acceptable provision of off road car parking in accordance with the maximum standards set out by Policy TR/2 and would provide 2 additional visitor spaces. All parking spaces meet the required dimensions and have sufficient turning areas. Given the unsustainable nature of Landbeach the higher end of the maximum parking standards is considered appropriate in this instance.
37. This application is classified as a major development and as such the scheme should provide suitable infrastructure in accordance with policies SF/6, SF/10, SF/11 and DP/3. The Design and Access Statement makes reference to the fact that in light of the existing provision of open space within the village, on site provision of space should be waived. They also request that public art contributions are waived on the basis that this would divert funds away from the delivery of additional affordable homes. Whilst it is acknowledged that Landbeach benefits from the provision of adequate sports recreation space it have a shortfall of play space. In light of this it is considered that the development should provide on site provision for play space in the form of a locally equipped area of play. This would be required to serve what would be a sizable development of 12 family homes, which would not be well related to the existing facilities within the village. The provision of play space would also

soften the impact upon the adjacent Green Belt and contribute to the enhancement of the Conservation Area and setting of a grade II listed building.

Green Belt

38. The southern tip of the site lies within the Green Belt with the majority of the site being situated directly adjacent to the Green Belt. The range of proposed affordable units along with unit 9 of the market dwellings would all in part be situated within the Green Belt. Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 states that the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is inappropriate unless, amongst others it provides limited affordable housing for local community needs. The proposed development does not meet with these criteria and is therefore by definition inappropriate development within the Green Belt, contrary of Policies GB1, GB2 and PPG2.
39. Despite the above, the provision of an exception site within Landbeach would provide significant community benefit to the village and as a consequence could comply with Green Belt policy in principle. Notwithstanding this, in its current form the application fails to justify this fact and simply refers to the existing landscaping in situ arguing that this demarks the village edge and is sufficient mitigation towards any potential impact on the Green Belt. This is not the case and the positioning of a market dwelling within the Green Belt cannot be justified.

Historic Environment

40. The grade II listed building (no.85) "The Limes" which fronts the High Street was once a farmhouse and was most likely the main house serving Walnut farm. It has been altered over the years with a notable Victorian addition to its front elevation. Nevertheless, the setting of this listed building arguably once extended beyond its current residential curtilage into the farmyard beyond. The site is characteristic of a semi-rural farm site with soft landscaping and a transition of a simple utilitarian built form that extends northwards from the village edge.
41. The introduction of high-density urban form within close proximity to this building and its setting would be detrimental to its setting as it would isolate it from its rural surroundings and context. The present proposals would result in bland house type designs that bare little to no relevance to the distinctive character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the context of the site as a whole. The spans of the proposed buildings significantly exceed the traditional narrow spans of the adjoining buildings and result in overlarge roofs, poor proportions, and increased bulk, which is at odds with the modest buildings and proportions of surrounding buildings. The housing types are common designs that could be upon any housing estate within the country. They would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed building. The proposed materials, specifically the concrete roof tiles and dark stained joinery would also not be sympathetic to the adjacent buildings.

Natural Environment

42. The supporting documentation submitted with this application is deemed sufficient in ensuring the retention and protection of the existing trees and hedgerows on site during demolition and construction. Nevertheless, it is considered that further landscaping works would be required to ensure the mitigation of the impact the development would have upon the Green Belt and surrounding countryside given this sensitive village edge location. In light of this a robust landscaping scheme would be

required with the inclusion of replacement tree planting of potentially large specimens, thus providing height and structure within the landscape.

Neighbour Amenity

43. The owner/occupier of No.79 High Street makes reference to the potential loss of light, outlook and claustrophobic environment that would result by the close proximity of unit 11. This property would be located to the south of this property at an approximate minimum back-to-back distance of 12m. The South Cambridgeshire Design Guide (DSPD 2005) states that a distance of 12m from a habitable bedroom window and a brick wall is acceptable in terms of daylight and sunlight, whereas a back-to-back distance of 18m is considered acceptable in terms of privacy. Another resident makes reference to the relationship of windows within the gable end of unit 1. The nearest property across the street from this unit would be at a distance greater than 20m. Unit 11 would be within close proximity to the dwelling to the north. In light of the above issues, it is acknowledged that, although with minor alterations these relationships could be improved, it is considered that the existing layout would not result in a detrimental impact upon the amenities that neighbouring residents currently enjoy.

Other Matters

44. Other letters of representation make reference to the right to a view and the detrimental impact that the proposed development would have upon the value of their homes. These are not material planning considerations and therefore cannot be taken into consideration in the determination of this application.

Recommendation

Refuse for the following reasons:

1. The proposal to erect four market dwellings on the site would be contrary to Policy ST/7 of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007, which limits development in Landbeach, which has a poor range of services and facilities, to not more than two dwellings. The proposal would not result in the sustainable recycling of a brownfield site and therefore there is no exceptional reason to allow a development greater than two dwellings.
2. The proposal would result in the introduction of built urban form within close proximity to the Grade II listed building No. 85 High Street, which would be isolated from its rural context to the detriment of its setting. Furthermore, the proposed housing types represent bland designs that bare little to no relevance to the distinctive character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Therefore the positioning, bulk, scale, span, design and materials of the proposed buildings would result in harm to the character and setting of the listed building and Conservation Area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CH/4 and CH/5 of the LDF Development Control Policies adopted 2007, which states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would adversely affect the curtilage or wider setting of a Listed Building and that would not achieve the preservation or enhancement of the special character and appearance of a Conservation Area.
3. Unit 09, a market dwelling, would be predominantly situated outside of the Landbeach development framework within the Green Belt. This would constitute inappropriate development as defined by PPG2 and would harm the character

and openness of the Green Belt. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy GB/1 of the LDF Development Control Policies DPD 2007, which seeks to maintain the purposes and openness of the Cambridge Green Belt.

4. The proposed market housing fails to provide an adequate mix of housing types and sizes with no provision of small-scale 1-2 bedroom units. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy HG/2 of the LDF Development Control Policies DPD 2007, which states that residential developments will contain a mix of units providing accommodation in a range of types, sizes and affordability, to meet local needs.
5. Units 5 and 6 of the proposed affordable housing would be situated within the development framework. As a consequence these units cannot be secured for Landbeach residents for occupation. Furthermore, units 1 and 2 do not meet local need as the Landbeach housing needs survey has identified a need for 2-bedroom houses and not 2-bedroom flats. The proposal would therefore fail to adhere to Policy HG/5 of the South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies DPD 2007, which requires development proposals to include secure arrangements for ensuring that all the dwellings within the scheme provide affordable housing in perpetuity for those in housing need and that the size of the dwellings are appropriate to, the strict extent of the identified local need.
6. Landbeach is identified as having a shortfall in play space of -0.55 hectares and a development of 12 family homes should entail the onsite provision of children's play space. The proposal fails to suitably justify why the need for public open space should be waived in this instance. It therefore fails to accord with Policies SF/10, SF/11 and DP/3 of the LDF Development Control Policies 2007, which seeks that 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.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007) and Development Control Policies 2007.
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 – Green Belt (2001) (PPG2)
- Audit of Outdoor Sport and Children's Play space in South Cambridgeshire;

Contact Officer: Mike Jones – Senior Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713253