

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6th May 2009

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

S/0215/09/F - TOFT

Dwelling at 72 West Street for Dr & Mrs Richard B Horne

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 13th April 2009

Notes:

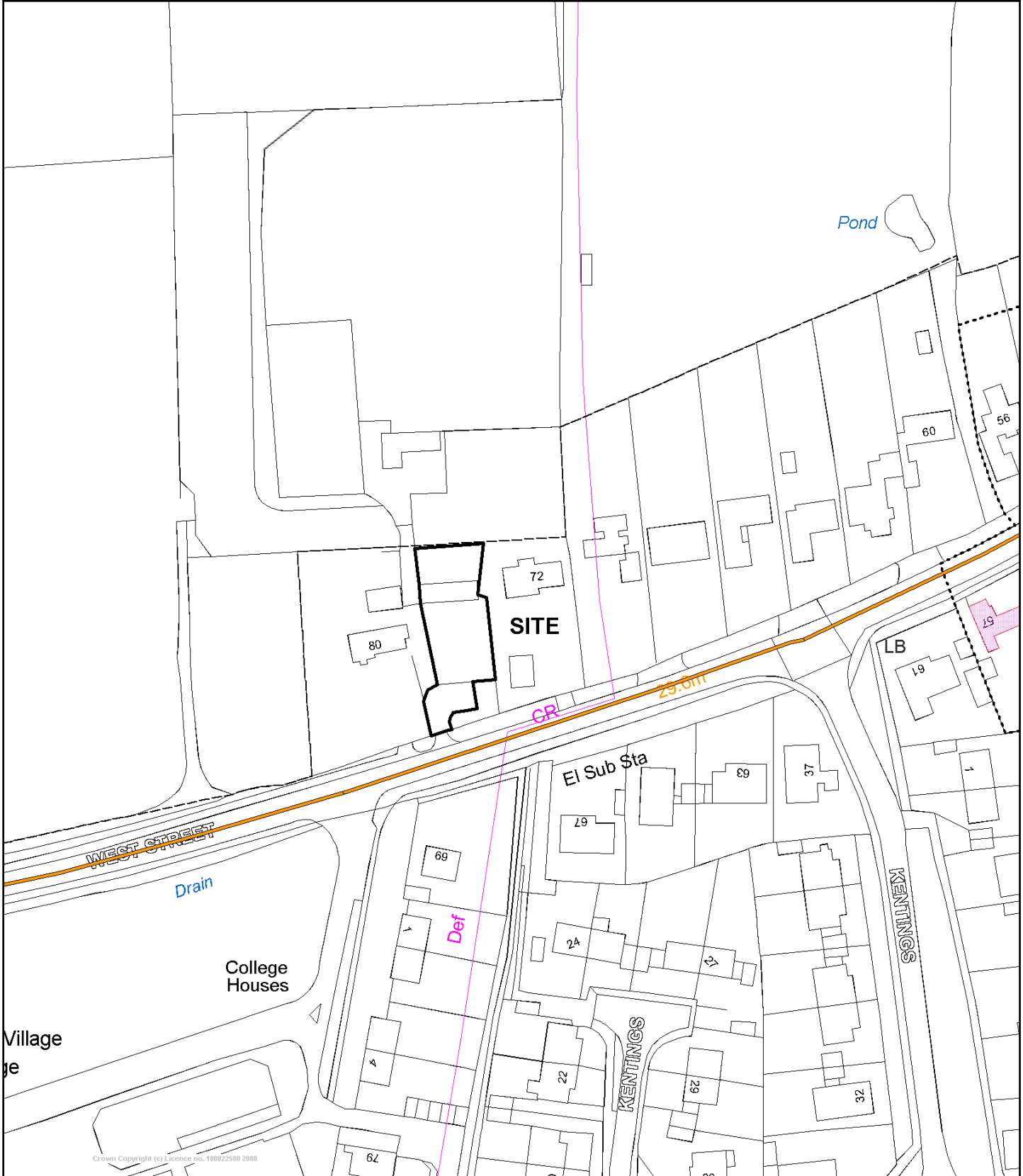
The application has been referred to the Planning Committee for determination by Chairman's Delegation meeting on 30th March 2009.

Site and Proposal

1. The application site is a broadly rectangular parcel of land measuring 0.0441 hectares in area, with a frontage of approximately 15m and depth of 44m. It lies inside the Comberton village framework, although it falls within the Parish of Toft. It currently represents an area of garden currently used by the occupiers of no. 72 West Street. This dwelling is a two-storey structure, incorporating dormer windows in the roof, with a double garage located to its frontage. No. 80 West Street, to the west of the site, is set further forward in the building line, and has a barn located to its rear. Currently on the application site is a single storey outbuilding, which would be demolished. There is a stable block and associated paddock land and a ménage on land to the rear, which is accessed via a drive, along the western boundary of the application site.
2. This full application, submitted on 16th February 2009, seeks consent to erect a detached two-storey, four bedroom dwelling on the land to the west of the existing dwelling. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement.
3. The scheme equates to a density of approximately 22.6 dwellings per hectare (dph).

Planning History

4. Outline Planning Permission (**S/2437/89/O**) was granted on 2nd January 1990 for a dwelling on land between Nos. 72 and 80 West Street.
5. Application reference **S/0761/08/F** sought consent for the erection of a single, detached, dwelling on the site, featuring an identical design to the dwelling currently proposed. The scheme varied from the current submission in that the dwelling was to be located marginally closer to the existing dwelling at 72 West Street, benefitted from a larger proposed curtilage and also proposed a detached double garage, to be located in front of the proposed dwelling. The scheme equated to a density of 21 dwellings per hectare, and was refused on the grounds that it constituted an inefficient use of land and did not represent a sustainable form of development, contrary to Policies HG/1 and DP/1 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007 and Policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan 2008.



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May 2009 Planning Committee

Planning Policy

6. Relevant policies are listed below.

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy:

Policy **ST/7** of the LDF identifies Toft as an Infill Village.

Policy **ST/6** identifies Comberton as a Group Village.

Local Development Framework, Development Control Policies, adopted July 2007:

Policy **DP/1** – Sustainable Development,

Policy **DP/2** – Design of New Development,

Policy **DP/3** – Development Criteria,

Policy **DP/7** – Development Frameworks,

Policy **HG/1** – Housing Density

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

East of England Plan 2008:

Policy **ENV7** – Quality in the Built Environment - requires new development to be of high quality which complements the distinctive character and best qualities of the local area. Amongst other criteria it should make efficient use of land and achieve the highest possible net density appropriate to the character of the locality and public transport accessibility.

Central Government Advice

7. **Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS 3) Housing:** Sets out to deliver housing which is: of high quality and is well designed; that provides a mix of housing, both market and affordable, particularly in terms of tenure and price; supports a wide variety of households in all areas; sufficient in quantity taking into account need and demand and which improves choice; sustainable in terms of location and which offers a good range of community facilities with good access to jobs, services and infrastructure; efficient and effective in the use of land, including the re-use of previously developed land, where appropriate. The guidance states that proposed development should be well-integrated with, and complement the neighbouring buildings and local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access (Paragraph 16). The guidance states that local planning authorities may wish to set out a range of densities across the plan area rather than one broad density range. 30 dwellings per hectare is set out as an indicative minimum. Paragraph 50 states that the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment.

Consultation

8. **Toft Parish Council** – recommends approval, with no further comment.
9. **Comberton Parish Council** – recommends refusal and comments that “we have concerns about the height of the roof ridge compared to adjoining properties”.
10. **Local Highways Authority** – raises no objection to the development, but seeks conditions regarding surface finish of the driveway, timing of the construction of the access, and method of surface water drainage to prevent run-off onto the public highway. Also raises comments in respect of the requirement of the applicants to secure the permission of the Highway Authority for any works in the public highway.

Representations

11. Councillor Harangozo comments:

“In general I support the district council policy on density and provision of affordable housing. In this case, however, I am sympathetic to the applicant because a) a single dwelling will likely fit in better with the existing pattern of development (all single detached houses along north side of West Street) with a semi thus likely to look out of keeping and b) the awkward shape of the plot which will I think make an acceptable scheme here difficult, especially with the close proximity of the existing house on the east elevation. I think it is preferable to keep gaps between houses as great as possible here and thus keep the footprint of any new build as small as possible and avoid a crowded appearance, especially at this more rural end of the village.

I note that the village college on the south side of West Street presents an urban-like street scene whereas the much more rural nature of the north side currently benefits from the lower density and more sparse nature of the housing. Some loss of amenity will I think occur if we insist on a higher density in this particular location.”

Planning Comments

12. I consider that the main issues for Members to consider with regard to the current proposals are as follows:

- a) Density of Development
- b) Character of the Area
- c) Design and External Appearance of the Dwelling

Density of Development

13. The Outline Planning Permission of 1990 (see paragraph 4 above) has lapsed. No minimum density requirements were applicable at that time. Policy HG/1 now seeks residential developments to make the best use of sites by achieving densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare, or higher in more sustainable locations close to a good range of services and good transport services. This end of Comberton is directly opposite the Village College, and the village does have some local facilities, and an hourly bus service between Longstowe and Cambridge. It is considered a sustainable location, capable of supporting two dwellings, which would then invoke the need for affordable housing under Policy HG/3 of the adopted LDF. Given that the development constitutes a density of 22.6dph, the proposed scheme would therefore fail the objectives of this policy.

Character of the Area

14. Notwithstanding the above point, however, Policy HG/1 does go on to state that there may be exceptional local circumstances that require a different treatment to the density of development on any given site. The applicant has stated that the plot size matches other plot sizes in the locality, and that a pair of semi-detached properties would be out of place.
15. Whilst the proposed plot may be similar in size to that of those surrounding the site, the LDF policy does not take this into account. Additionally Paragraph 50 of PPS 3 states that “the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment.”

16. With the above in mind, it is important to consider that a pair of semi-detached dwellings could be designed to appear in keeping with existing dwellings that surround the site on this side of West Street, most particularly featuring a design that could be very similar to that of the current proposal. Parking for two dwellings could be achieved using the current site layout, which incorporates four parking spaces into the area in front of the proposed dwelling. The covenant on the land, which is referred to in the Design and Access Statement, is not a material planning consideration.

Design and External Appearance of the Dwelling

17. There are no direct concerns relating to the proposed dwelling itself, which is identical to that proposed under the earlier, refused, scheme (application ref. S/0761/08/F). It features design characteristics and proportions similar to that of no. 72 West Street, although the submitted street elevation shows it would be slightly taller in height (8.2m and 7.4m respectively to the ridge), but less than the two storey element of No. 80 (8.5m to ridge). No alien design features would be introduced to the street scene by the proposed development. The position of the proposed openings would not create any unacceptable amenity issues to the neighbouring properties. Although no. 80 West Street is set forward, conditions can control locations of openings and, because of the rear barn, the dwelling would not appear overbearing from the rear elevation or rear garden, and no loss of privacy would occur.
18. Notwithstanding the above, this is not considered to compromise the ability of the site to contain two semi-detached dwellings. This would achieve a more sustainable use of the land, and also create additional benefits to the community through the creation of two smaller units of accommodation in the village and a contribution to affordable housing.

Other Matters

19. The comments of the Local Highway Authority are noted. Should the scheme be considered to be favourable, the issues raised could be reasonably controlled by the imposition of appropriate planning conditions to protect users of the public highway.

Recommendation

20. Refusal of the application for the following reason:

The proposal for one dwelling on this site fails to make the best use of the land and does not represent a sustainable form of development. No exceptional local circumstances have been given to overcome the requirement to achieve such densities on sites within village frameworks. The application would therefore be contrary to Policy HG/1 of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (LDFDCP) 2007 which states 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, Policy DP/1 of the LDFDCP 2007 which states development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that it is consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and should make efficient and effective use of land and achieve adaptable, compact forms of development through the use of higher densities, and Policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan 2008 which seeks new development to make best use of land.

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

- Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007
- Planning files Ref. S/0215/09/F & S/0761/08/F

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