

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee 2nd September 2009
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/0851/09/F - WHADDON
8 Affordable Dwellings with Associated Landscaping and Access
Land to the North-West of Rose Cottage, Church Street
for Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association (BPHA)

Recommendation: Refuse

Date for Determination: 26th August 2009

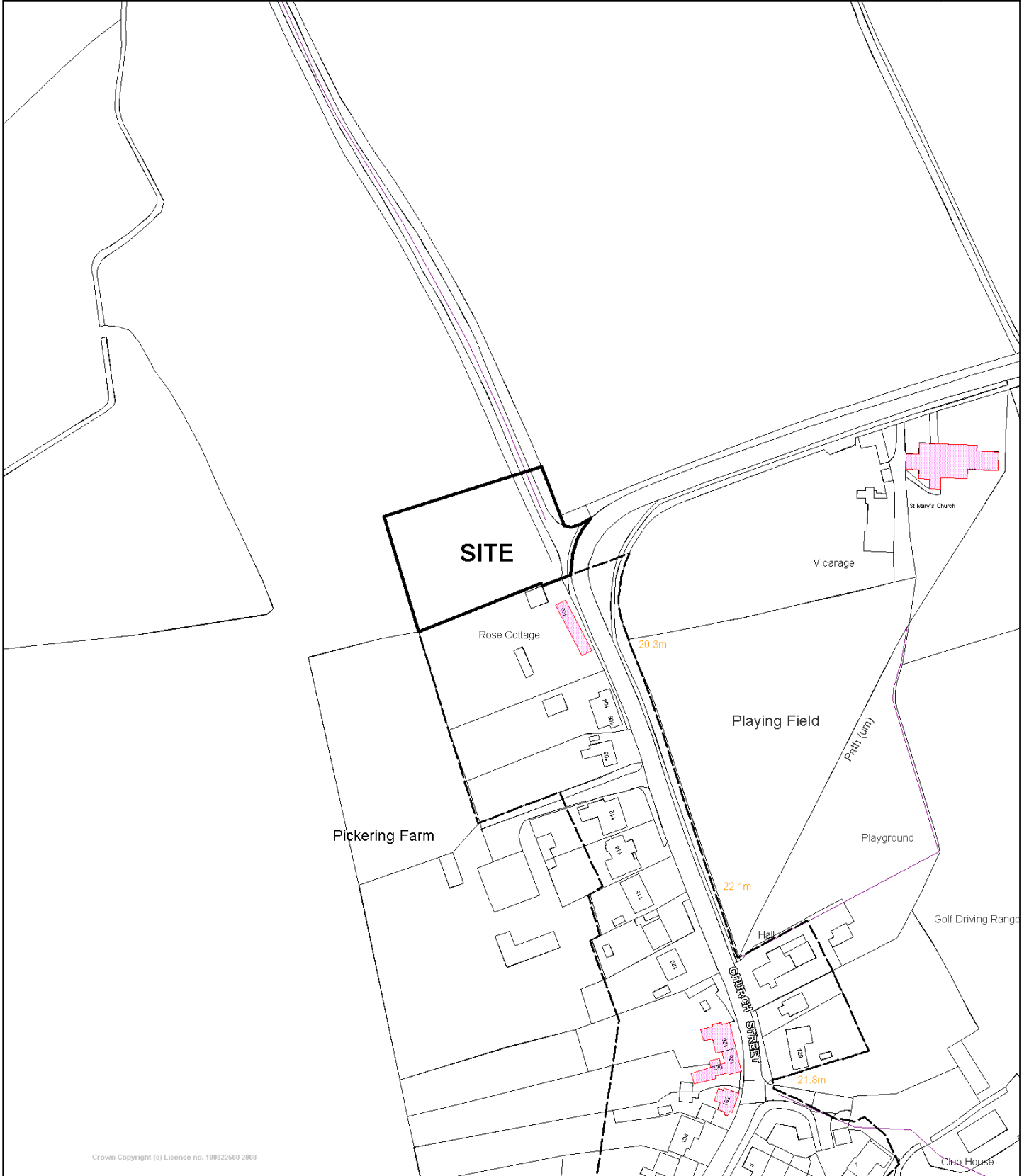
Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because it relates to an exceptions site for affordable housing.

Members will visit this site on Wednesday 2nd September 2009

Site and Proposal

1. This full application, received on 1st July 2009, proposes the erection of 8 affordable dwellings with associated landscaping and access, on a 0.28ha area of land located on the outside of a right-angle bend on the west side of Church Street. The site was formerly part of a larger area of agricultural land which is now separated from the larger field by a recently planted hedge.
2. The application site includes a section of the Harcamlow Way, a public bridleway which continues to the north of the site.
3. To the south of the site is Rose Cottage, a Grade II Listed Building fronting Church Street. There is some existing planting on part of the north boundary of Rose Cottage with the application site.
4. To the west, north and north west of the site is agricultural land. To the east of the site, on the opposite side of Church Street are the grounds of the Vicarage beyond which is St Mary's Church, a Grade I Listed Building.
5. The application proposes 5 two-bedroom and 3 three-bedroom houses, which take the form of three semi-detached pairs and two detached units. All 8 dwellings are to be for rent. Parking spaces are provided on plot for five of the houses.
6. The proposal involves a widening of the existing metalled carriageway on the outside of the bend in the road to provide a new access into the development incorporating part of the existing Harcamlow Way. There is a short section of adoptable roadway with turning head leading into the site, which is to be block paved. There is a private driveway leading off the new section of adoptable road which serves development in depth.



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Scale 1/2000 Date 18/8/2009

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September Planning Committee 2009

7. Three of the plots are sited at the front of the site facing onto the Harcamlow Way, with the other five plots behind facing north and south. The height of the proposed dwellings ranges from 7.7m to 8.2m. A range of materials will be used including brick, render and weatherboarding with clay plain tile roof.
8. The development will comply with Code for Sustainable Homes 3.
9. The density of the scheme is 35 dph.
10. The site is outside the village framework however the south boundary abuts the edge of the framework.
11. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Heritage Statement, Affordable Housing Statement and Ecological Appraisal and Badger Survey.

Planning History

12. There is no relevant planning history for this site.

Planning Policy

13. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework – Core Strategy – adopted January 2007:**

ST/7 – Infill Villages

14. **South Cambridgeshire District Council – 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 Development

DP/7 – Development Frameworks

HG/1 – Housing Density

HG/3 – Affordable Housing

HG/5 – Exceptions Sites for Affordable Housing

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

SF/11 – Open Space Standards

NE/1 – Energy Efficiency

NE/2 – Renewable Energy

NE/4 – Landscape Character Areas

NE/6 – Biodiversity

NE/9 – Water and Drainage Infrastructure

CH/3 – Listed Buildings

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

15. **Open Space in New Developments SPD** adopted January 2009 expands on open spaces policies in the adopted LDF and provides additional details on how they will be implemented.

Consultation

16. **Whaddon Parish Council** recommends approval.

“The Parish Council approve the planning application and ask for the following to be considered:-

1. Is the access to Harcamlow Way sufficient for large farm machinery e.g. combine harvesters? Could this be brought to the attention of the Highways Agency?
2. Plot 1 faces the road and may get headlights/taillights shining into their living accommodation. Could this be alleviated by rotating the property by a few degrees?
3. The proposed garden fencing is a little ‘urban’ in nature. Could an alternative type be considered?”

17. The **Conservation Manager** recommends that the application be refused due to the location, position, bulk, form, spacing, hierarchy, design, materials and potential loss of trees which would result in harm to the rural character and setting of listed buildings.

The submission says that the site is hidden from view by a slope of ground, however from the site the traffic on the A1198 can be seen and therefore the site would be visible from the road.

There are concerns about the cramped and urban nature of the development, which is at odds with the spacious siting of the existing buildings and the rural character of the countryside. Although the Heritage Statement notes that there was other development north of the listed building, Rose Cottage, which has now disappeared, the historic maps supplied with the application confirm that there was no development on this site or in the immediate setting north of Rose Cottage and that therefore its rural setting is historic.

Because of the curve in Church Street this site is very prominent in the streetscape and its open countryside character, modest rural access land and trees all contribute to the setting of the group of listed buildings. The proposed hardsurfacing and buildings extend over more than half of the site and the wide access and urban block paving contribute towards a hard character, at odds with its edge of village location. The existing trees are part of the rural character but because there are too many houses proposed for the site, the gardens are so small that those adjacent Rose Cottage will be dominated by the trees on the boundary. This would potentially lead to future demands for the loss of the trees, which are important to the rural character of the setting.

The application houses exceed the dimensions of Rose Cottage. They are up to a third deeper than the listed building and up to a quarter taller. Their designs are also vertical in proportion, whereas the listed building has a horizontal emphasis, increasing the apparent difference in height. The application notes that the proposed houses are set further back than the listed building to reduce the apparent height difference, but the effect this has is only relevant to certain positions. Viewing the group from other locations will show the difference in height and bulk.

The proposed houses are not characteristic of local development. For instance black weatherboarding is characteristic of barns and outbuildings, not of houses; half windows, half dormers are not traditional dormers nor traditional windows and result in numerous downpipes, more than indicated on the drawings; there should not be a mix of dormers and rooflights on a single pitch roof and the elevations give undue attention to the central rooflight; the mix of catslide dormers and pitched roof dormers is unconvincing; the pitched roof dormers have an overly large roof; there are too numerous rooflights facing Rose Cottage in rows; the chimney is too thin for most of its length; and the roof pitch of the attached garage is too slack for the use of plain tiles. The detached garage has a different roof form on plan and on elevation and that shown on elevation looks truncated as it has too short a ridge. The attached garage also has too short a ridge compared with its depth.

The fenestration looks too small in proportion to the walls and looks top-heavy because upper windows are larger than lower windows, contrary to traditional hierarchy, and there appears to be too much wall between upper and lower windows. The fenestration is partly symmetrical and partly not, making it appear inconsistent and unbalanced.

18. The **Local Highways Authority** objects to the application in its current format, although it comments that a minimal re-design would alleviate the concerns.

It has requested that the applicant provides drawing showing the visibility splays of a vehicle waiting to turn right into the site from Church Street.

It requests that the applicant designs the access so that agricultural vehicles that also use the access are able to overrun the new verge area as the proposed access would be too constrained for any large vehicles to negotiate. A change in surface material will be required as pavers are not appropriate for use by large farm machinery or equine use.

A footway should be shown on the submitted drawing to provide a pedestrian route from the proposed site to the centre of the village.

The Highway Authority comments that it would not seek to adopt the development and requests that the developer deposits a letter and drawing showing the site confirming that the site will not be offered for adoption now or in the future.

If permission is granted it requests that conditions be attached requiring the provision of visibility splays, drainage, temporary parking facilities during construction and maintenance of the footpath.

19. The **Countryside Access Team, Cambridgeshire County Council** comments that the proposed development directly affects Public Bridleway No.3 Whaddon and as such the Team has some concerns regarding the application, and points out that the effect of development on a public right of way is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The block-paved spur running north-eastwards from the main site access, adjacent to the front garden of Plot 8, is partially within the width of the bridleway. The presence of this spur will encourage occupants/their visitors to park cars and other vehicles on the bridleway. The applicant is reminded that the public's right of way extends across the full width of the bridleway and that it is an offence under Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 to obstruct a right of way.

The proposed surfacing of the south end of the bridleway is also a matter of concern. The applicant is reminded that no alteration of the bridleway's surface is permitted without prior consent. Block paving is an unsuitable surface material for use by horses. In addition, the block paving extends over only half the width of the bridleway and there is concern that the difference in surface material between this area and the rest of the bridleway might imply to members of the public that their right to pass and repass is only over the unpaved side of the route. The public right of way is actually across the full width of the bridleway, between any physical boundaries present on the ground.

20. The **Housing Development and Enabling Manager** comments that 'officers at SCDC and officers at BPHA have been looking to try and secure a suitable exception site in Whaddon for some time now. This work indicates that this site is the most suitable site, which is available to meet the housing need.

"A Housing Needs Survey was completed in 2004 by Cambridgeshire ACRE, and it indicated a need for 11 affordable homes over the five year period. In addition to these findings we have also obtained some up to date results from our own Council waiting List and this also indicates a need for 11 affordable homes in Whaddon. All of these applicants meet the local connection criteria and would therefore satisfy the exception site rule in that only applicants with a local connection to Whaddon would be eligible to bid for these units when they are completed.

The property type and unit mix of 5x2 bed and 3x3 bed houses all for rent are acceptable.

The Housing Development and Strategy team fully supports this application. These units will be built in accordance with the Design and Quality Standards which are determined by the Homes and Communities Agency and in addition to this all these homes will meet Code Level 3 for Sustainable Homes."

21. **Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Cambridgeshire County Council** comments that its records indicate that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential. It therefore recommends that the site should be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation, undertaken at the expense of the developer, which can be secured through the inclusion of a negative condition.
22. The **Architectural Liaison Officer, Cambridgeshire Constabulary** comments as follows:

Plot 1 – The use of an enclosed carport that has no means of surveillance from within the dwelling leads to a higher crime risk. There are no dwellings opposite that can effectively provide a natural surveillance into the carport. In addition the access gate to the rear garden is via the carport, such position allows criminals to attack this gate with little risk of being observed. A solution would be to enclose the carport with a garage door to the front or to remove the carport with car parking to the side of the dwelling. It would be necessary to include a window in the side gable wall (kitchen) to give the necessary surveillance of this space. A side window could not be accepted within the carport as this provides the same scenario as with the rear gate. A 1.8m high fence needs to be erected between the front corner of the carport securing the boundary of this plot with Rose Cottage, a gate could be included in this fence.

The railed fencing to the northern and western perimeters should be to a height of 1.5m, as the planting will not reach maturity for some years. The hedging will not deter casual permeability for a number of years.

A key issue with new developments is a lack of surveillance, in particular surveillance of car parking spaces. Of concern in this particular proposal is the use of rear parking courts for Plots 6,7 and 8 effectively shielded by the inclusion of an enclosed carport for Plot 8 and easily accessed not only from within the development but also via the field to the north. Ideally parking for Plot 6 should be similar to that for Plot 5, parking for plots 7 and 8 being achieved by extending the rear gardens for these properties and providing curtilage parking space with rear gardens.

23. The comments of the **Affordable Housing Panel** and the **Environment Operations Manager, Urban Design Team, Ecology Officer** and **Trees Officer** will be reported at the meeting.

Representations

24. The occupier of **Rose Cottage, 100 Church Street**, objects to the application. The letter states that the site is outside the village envelope and it is hard to believe that there are not more appropriate locations within the village for such housing. Surely it is more socially acceptable to integrate affordable housing rather than clump it together in the form of an estate and hide it away on the edge of the village. The need for the amount of development proposed is questioned and whether it can be guaranteed that it will be locals who benefit from it.

There is concern that the development and its access, being as it is on a notorious corner, would lead to potential safety hazards. On numerous occasions cars have come down Church Hill overshooting the corner and ending up where the proposed development is located. Add this to the amount of extra traffic that will be slowing down and waiting on the corner to gain access to the new estate along with large farm machinery looking to gain access to Shingay Lane (The Harcamlow Way) and there is likely to be problems.

The corner, being as it is at the bottom of two hills, has on numerous occasions been caused to flood during heavy rain. At present during such events the water escapes down Shingay Lane but this may not be the case after the road layout is changed.

The proposal in layout and location, both in itself and relation to the adjoining property, spaces and views, is inappropriate and unsympathetic to the appearance and character of the local environment.

The development, adjoining Rose Cottage as it does, will instantly give not one but four new neighbours, which will lead to a loss of privacy and certainly impact on the peaceful enjoyment of the house and garden.

In the application much has been made historically of the two cottages to the north of Rose Cottage, that were demolished some 50 years ago, but these were two small adjoining cottages, not an estate of eight dwellings and were at some distance with no common boundary and did not project beyond the building line.

25. The occupier of **Town Farm, 146 Church Street** comments that he has been living in the village for over forty years and is interested in its past, present and future, especially with regard to housing for the younger, local people who would like to continue to live in the village. With this in mind he finds it quite amazing for a site to be chosen that appears to clash with so many better positions.

The letter lists the objections to this site being that it is next to an extremely old listed house; the site is below the existing sewerage system, thereby necessitating sewage to be pumped up hill. The area has had a sewage overflow in the past; it is on a 90 degree bend on the road through the village; it will spoil the view from Church Road onto open farm land; there are several sites in the village which are more central and are owned by the Council or other land owners amenable to selling. These sites are on top of the sewerage system, therefore saving costs and access developments.

The letter includes a plan suggesting alternative sites.

26. The occupier of **19 Serby Avenue, Royston**, who states that he lived in the village for many years, objects to the application stating that the look and feel of the development is inappropriate for this location. There are more appropriate locations for such housing, which should be spread out rather than being in one location. Adding eight houses, each probably with several vehicles, to an already dangerous corner is hazardous without the use of a roundabout. This corner has flooded on many occasions so there is concern that the new development might contribute to this existing problem.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

27. The key issue for Members to consider in this case is whether the proposal accords with Policy HG/5, having taken into consideration the matters that have been raised during the consultation process, including the impact on the setting of Rose Cottage and highway safety.
28. Policy HG/5 accepts that, as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Development Plan, schemes of 100% affordable housing which are designed to meet identified local housing needs on small sites within or adjoining villages can be granted so long as five criteria are met.
29. The Housing Development and Enabling Manager has confirmed that the scheme accords with the local housing needs survey for Whaddon. Although this survey was conducted in 2004, and is therefore not as up to date as I would normally expect for this purpose, the need for 11 dwellings is supported by the Council's Housing Waiting List and it is confirmed that the applicants on that list meet the local connection criteria. The applicant has indicated a willingness to enter into a Section 106 Agreement which would ensure that all dwellings secured as affordable housing in perpetuity for those in housing need, and would give priority of allocation to qualifying persons from Whaddon.
30. I am therefore of the view that the proposal satisfies the first two criteria of Policy HG/5.
31. The third of the criteria requires the site to be well located to the built-up area of the village, and the scale of the scheme to be appropriate to the size and character of the village. Whaddon is classified as an infill village however schemes for 100% affordable housing of this scale have been consented in such villages and I am therefore of the view that the scale of the scheme is appropriate in this respect.
32. I am of the view however that, although the site abuts the village framework on its south boundary, it is not well related to the built-up area of the village. There is a very distinct edge to the village at this point and the entrance to Harcamlow Way represents an immediate transition from the built-up area of the village into the open countryside beyond. When approaching the site from the east along Church Street,

there is no awareness of built development until a point close to the bend in the road, when views of the listed building, Rose Cottage and its garage are obtained. The unrestricted views across countryside which are currently gained will be lost as a result of this development.

33. The fourth of the criteria requires the site to be well related to facilities and services within the village. The site is diagonally opposite the recreation ground and church and is a short walk from the village hall. I note the comment made by a local resident about the site being below the existing sewerage system which may result in a need to pump however I am of the view that the site fulfils this criterion.
34. The fifth of the criteria requires that the development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape. I have already commented on the impact that the development of this site would have on these matters. In addition to the potential adverse effect on the village character and rural landscape when viewed from Church Street, there will be a significant impact on the views afforded of the edge of the village on the approach from the north along the existing public right of way.
35. At present the view of the edge of the village from this approach is of the gable wall of the listed building, Rose Cottage, its garage and planted boundary, with a sharp transition between this and the countryside beyond. The proposed development will in my view be very alien to this existing character as it does not reflect any existing pattern of development and will have a significant adverse effect on the character of this part of the village and the rural landscape. Although landscaping is proposed on the north and west boundary, and a hedge has already been planted, I am of the view that this will not offset the visual harm which would be caused by the development of this site.
36. The Conservation Manager supports the above concerns and is also concerned about the direct impact the development will have on the setting of Rose Cottage, both in terms of the principle of the development and details of the scheme. Although the scheme has attempted to site the new dwellings so that they will not directly block the existing views of the listed building when approaching the village along the right of way, the development will still have an adverse impact of the wider setting of the listed building from this view, as well as from Church Street itself. The alterations to the existing access, introducing additional tarmac and paver surfacing will add to this impact.
37. The Local Highway Authority does not support the scheme as submitted and has requested revisions, however it states should be able to be achieved with a minimal resign. The comments include the concerns of the Countryside Access Team about the surface treatment of a section of the public bridleway, and the query raised by Whaddon Parish Council regarding the suitability of the access for use by large farm machinery.
38. Although the access to the site is on the outside of a right angled bend visibility for vehicles exiting the site are adequate however the Local Highway Authority has requested that the applicant provides a drawing which shows the visibility splays for a vehicle waiting to turn right into Church Street.
39. The comments of the Local Highway Authority have been passed to the applicant with a view to submitting revised drawings.
40. The application does not propose an area of open space within the site itself, however the applicant accepts that there is a need to comply with Policies SF/10 and SF/11 and has indicated a willingness to provide an off-site contribution. Given the restricted size

of the site available, the desire to maximise the number of affordable units provided, and the proximity of the existing recreation ground and the desire to provide open space, I am of the view that this is an appropriate way forward in this case.

41. In terms of neighbour amenity there is only one dwelling directly affected by the proposed development and again this is Rose Cottage, the listed building to the south. The letter received from the occupier of this property makes general points about the suitability of this site for development and the impact it will have, which have been commented on above.
42. A condition can be imposed on any consent requiring an archaeological investigation of the site. Surface water drainage issues can also be dealt with by condition. It is proposed to dispose of surface water by soakaways.
43. The comments of the Architectural Liaison Officer and Conservation Manager on the details of the scheme have been relayed to the applicant's agent.
44. The comments of outstanding consultees will be reported at the meeting.
45. The applicant comments that various alternative sites have been explored by the Parish Council, including a site to the west of Church Street at its southern end, which is also owned by Cambridgeshire County Council, however it states that none are available.
46. Given that Policy HG/5 allows for sites to be developed as an exception to the normal operation of policies of the development plan, and that exception sites are normally outside the framework of a settlement where development would not otherwise be permitted, it is not unusual that there will be a potential impact of such developments on the character of a village and the surrounding countryside. This impact, and the ability to assimilate any new development have to be balanced with the need to provide affordable for housing local people.
47. Having balanced these issues, whilst I would like to support the provision of affordable housing in Whaddon I find that I am unable to support the development of this particular site, which in my view will cause significant harm to the character of this part of the village and the rural landscape, and detract from the setting of the adjacent listed building.

Recommendation

48. That the application is refused for the following reasons:
 1. Policy HG/5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework adopted 2007 states that planning permission may be granted as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the plan for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet the identified local housing needs on small sites within or adjoining villages, subject to those sites satisfying specified criteria. This site fails to satisfy the criteria set out on Policy HG/5 c. and HG/5 e. in that the site is not well related to the built-up area of the village and development will damage the character of the village and the rural landscape, particularly when viewed from Church Street and the Harcamlow Way.
 2. The proposed development of this site will have a significant adverse effect on the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building, Rose Cottage, 100 Church Street by reason of its location, bulk, form, design and the development is therefore contrary to the aims of Policy CH/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework adopted 2007.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework adopted 2007
- Planning File Ref: S/0851/09/F

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