

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2 December 2009

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager – Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/1465/09/F - HAUXTON

16 Affordable Dwellings at Land to the West of 33 High Street for Wherry Housing Association

Recommendation: Delegated approval

Date for Determination: 7th January 2010

A. Update to the report

Agenda report paragraph number 4 – Site and Proposal

A Water Conservation Strategy has been submitted on 26th November 2009 and forms part of the application proposals.

Agenda report paragraph numbers 12, 17, 22, 23, and 25 – Consultation

Hauxton Parish Council – supports the principle of more social housing being provided in the village but objects to the scheme proposed. The reasons for this objection are:

i) Flood risk

The car park at 33 High Street and parts of this proposed development land have flooded in the last ten years. It is inappropriate to build on land liable to flood. The plans propose using existing drainage ditches to take water off the site. There will be less surface water drainage available if the development goes ahead, which will increase the volume of water going into the ditches. These ditches are part of a network which already reaches capacity. Any additional water could result in flooding, especially in the Riddy Close/Ash View area. These areas have been on flood stand-by in previous years when the awarded drainage ditch reached its full capacity. A full Environment Agency flood risk report is needed.

ii) Access

The proposed access is on a stretch of the High Street with limited visibility for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Traffic regularly exceeds the speed limit at this point. A recent police check recorded one driver who slowed down to 38mph in the 30mph zone at this point. There is no safe pedestrian crossing point. With no pavement on this side of the road, pedestrians, including children, would be forced to cross the High Street at this area of limited visibility. Any additional parking on the High Street will further reduce visibility for both drivers and pedestrians.

iii) Parking

There is inadequate parking on site, especially when some homes are designated as six-person properties. The designer called them “lifetime homes” but the current parking provision only allows for 1.5 cars per property. A six-person property could need six parking spaces, as children grow and need their own transport. There is inadequate parking for visitors and deliveries. Drivers will park on the High Street,

further reducing visibility. A designated deliveries parking area could be included on site. The supporting documents state that the village had “good bus links” to Cambridge and neighbouring villages. This is incorrect. Hauxton has little public transport – with no public transport after 6.30pm. There is no public transport for village college students wanting to do after-school activities. Hauxton has little employment, and no general shops, doctors’ surgery, youth clubs etc, so cars are needed.

iv) Hedge

The hedge should be retained and protected. Despite the supporting documents stating that the “hedge is worthy of retention”, a large stretch of hedge will be removed if this plan goes ahead. Unless the hedge is protected, householders could break sections to allow access to their properties. It is important for the hedge to be maintained to ensure good visibility and clear passage for all road users.

v) Orientation of Plot 8

Access to this property should be from the new road, not the High Street. The property should not have windows overlooking the properties across the High Street.

vi) Density/Housing mix

The housing density is still too high, especially for homes which will house four, five and six people. There are no bungalows on site for people with restricted mobility. There are no shared-ownership houses proposed, despite evidence that these properties are in demand.

vii) Bomb shelter

The survey failed to identify an historic bomb shelter, which exists in the plot three.

viii) Storage

The bin storage is designed for two wheeled bins and a box. If SCDC opts for a three-bin and box system, this will be inadequate. There is no provision for cycle storage to encourage greener forms of transport.

The supporting documents provided by The Design Partnership state that these proposals have been “brought forward with the support of... Hauxton Parish Council.” This is inaccurate and misleading. The parish council was only informed of this application after it had been submitted to SCDC. Circle Anglia/Wherry also did not attend a public meeting to answer residents’ and the council’s concerns.

Contaminated Land Officer – “The application included a Site Investigation Report undertaken by Delta Simons for Scott Wilson Group dated 17th October 2007. The site investigation included analysis of soil samples and indicated that there was no contamination present. Further to confirmation from the Environment Agency that they are satisfied with the report, I am therefore satisfied that the site is suitable for above proposed use and does not require a condition relating to contaminated land”.

Conservation Officer – Recommends refusal of the application on the basis of the position of Plot 8, the width of the opening in the frontage and the forms, designs, details, hierarchy and cramped, urban appearance of the proposals, which would harm the rural character and settings of the adjacent Listed building and Conservation Area, contrary to CH/4 and CH/5. If there is scope to negotiate, the applicant should be asked to address the position of Plot 8, the extent of opening in the hedge and hard-surfacing, and the design issues noted above. There are also still issues about headroom over the staircases such as to Plot 8, which may result in

later requests for the increase in height of the buildings and should be resolved at this stage.

Urban Design Team – “Advice has been given to the case officer on previous occasions on the design layout mainly concerning the play space and parking provision on the site. The amended layout has successfully taken on board the suggested changes to provide a view through to the field beyond from the site access and to locate the play space in a more central location to the previous layout, which now provides the scheme with much better visual connection and surveillance over the play space. This layout has been amended further to reduce private parking courts and encourage on-curtilage parking to give a feel of shared surface and an integrated development. We understand the importance of keeping the hedge as a feature along the frontage of the High Street, and therefore accept the layout without any active frontages along the High Street”.

Cambridgeshire Archaeology – “Our records indicate that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential. The site lies in a landscape that was extensively settled throughout the prehistoric and Roman periods. Two large cropmark complexes showing settlement remains dating from the Neolithic to Roman periods are located to the north-east, and are considered to be of national importance (Scheduled Ancient Monuments 28 and 73, Historic Environment Record Numbers 04503, 04496). Aside from the above, several areas of cropmarks showing ditches and enclosures have been recorded in the vicinity (HER 09631, 09633, 09628). It is considered likely that important archaeological remains survive on the site and that these would be severely damaged or destroyed by the proposed development.

We would strongly recommend that the site is subject to an archaeological evaluation, to be commissioned and undertaken at the expense of the developer, and carried out prior to the granting of planning permission. The evaluation results should allow for the fuller consideration of the presence/absence, nature, extent, quality and survival of archaeological remains within the development area. An informed judgement can then be made as to whether any planning consent will need to include provisions for the recording and, more importantly, the preservation of important archaeological remains *in situ*. It is standard practice for this office to provide a design brief for such an evaluation and this was produced and issued last year.

The results of a geophysical survey were recently presented to this office and we await the presentation of a specification of works regarding the physical evaluation of the area”.

Agenda report paragraph number 30 - Representations

Two additional letters have been received from neighbours objecting to the application on the grounds of flood risk, lack of on-site car parking, the lack of sustainability measures such as a CHP plant using wood fuel and cycle storage, highway safety, loss of the hedge, and inadequate bin storage areas.

Agenda report paragraph number 38 – Planning Considerations- Character and Appearance of the Area

The proposal, as submitted, is considered to damage the setting of the adjacent listed building and harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The site is on the south-eastern edge of Hauxton Village and Conservation Area. It also affects the setting of The Old House, which is listed Grade II. It forms the transition between countryside and village in the rural approach to the village and, on this side of the road, mature native hedging appears continuous until the Old House and the bridge are reached. The existing houses on this side of the road and within the Conservation Area generally follow the road edge but are set back behind hedging, railings and walls, with walls more prevalent in the centre of the village and more rural materials at the edges. Views of open countryside, fields and trees can be glimpsed through the mature frontage hedge and the site provides an important visual context of the village in the rural landscape.

This is a sensitive position at the edge of the settlement and any negotiation has been to ensure that the site retains as much as is possible of this rural and transitional character, and of the prominent mature hedge. However there has been no prior opportunity to comment on the application scheme.

The submission also fails to address the impact on the settings of the Listed building and adjacent Conservation Area. The Design and Access Statement fails to mention the Listed building at all and the relevant policies quoted within it exclude those relating to Listed buildings and Conservation Areas. The illustration of the street elevation of the High Street fails to include any adjacent building, so does not show how the buildings relate to their context. It is disappointing, as we have consistently referred to the need to consider the impact on these throughout the consultation process.

Previous concerns remain about the urbanisation of the site and the relationship of the frontage buildings to the listed building and historic buildings in this part of the village. The proposed house at the entrance (Plot 8) is orientated more appropriately parallel to the street, but is too close to the road edge, causing a significant length of hedged frontage to be lost. The extent of new opening in the hedgeline would therefore extend some 22 metres, emphasising the urban character of the proposal. The prominent high wall to Plot 10 increases this inappropriate urban appearance in this rural location.

Some elements of the design have been improved, such as the spans of the most prominent buildings (Plot 8 and 10), which have been reduced to 6 metres. These are more appropriate in the context of traditional spans on this side of the road and more traditional elements such as curved arches are indicated on some elevations. However, there are elements of the design that are unsympathetic to the context and the traditional basis of the design. These include poor quality materials, such as artificial slate, non-traditional and awkward design elements and details, such as roof materials unrelated to roof types and pitches, window recesses unrelated to materials, unbalanced elevations, duality issues, heavy gable details and top-heavy

Amendments have been sought to address the above issues.

The proposal is considered acceptable in urban design terms such as character, continuity and enclosure, ease of movement, and legibility.

Agenda report paragraph number 48 – Other Matters

The proposal is not considered to adversely affect an important archaeological site in relation to Policy CH/2 of the LDF, subject to a condition on any consent to ensure that an archaeological evaluation of the site is undertaken prior to development.

The land is not believed to be contaminated and would not therefore cause a risk to the health and safety of its future occupants.

Each dwelling would have access to its rear garden for the storage of bins and cycles. The provision of small buildings to provide undercover and secure cycle parking would be a condition of any consent.

The development would need to provide at least 10% of energy requirements through renewable technologies such as solar panels and/or wind turbines. This can be secured through planning conditions.

Comments on the suitability of the Water Conservation Strategy are awaited.

Agenda report paragraph number 55- Recommendation

Delegated approval, subject to the awaited comments of the Drainage Manger, Ecology Officer, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue and Building Control, and receipt of amended plans that satisfactorily address the issues raised above.

Additional Condition:

Sc72- Archaeological Work (Rc72)

B. Further Information received after publication of the agenda report.

All information should be in the public domain for five clear working days before the meeting. Under certain circumstances, the Chairman can agree to admit late information if:

- Unforeseen circumstances exist (this does not include administrative inconvenience), or
- it is urgent, or
- delay in taking the decision (in the light of all appropriate facts) could seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests.

Additional Background Papers: the following background papers (additional to those referred to in the agenda report) were used in the preparation of this update:

None.

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