

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4 August 2010

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

**S/0731/10/F – GIRTON
Dwelling at Land to the South East of 1 High Street
for Mr Nick and Mrs Kate Hawksworth**

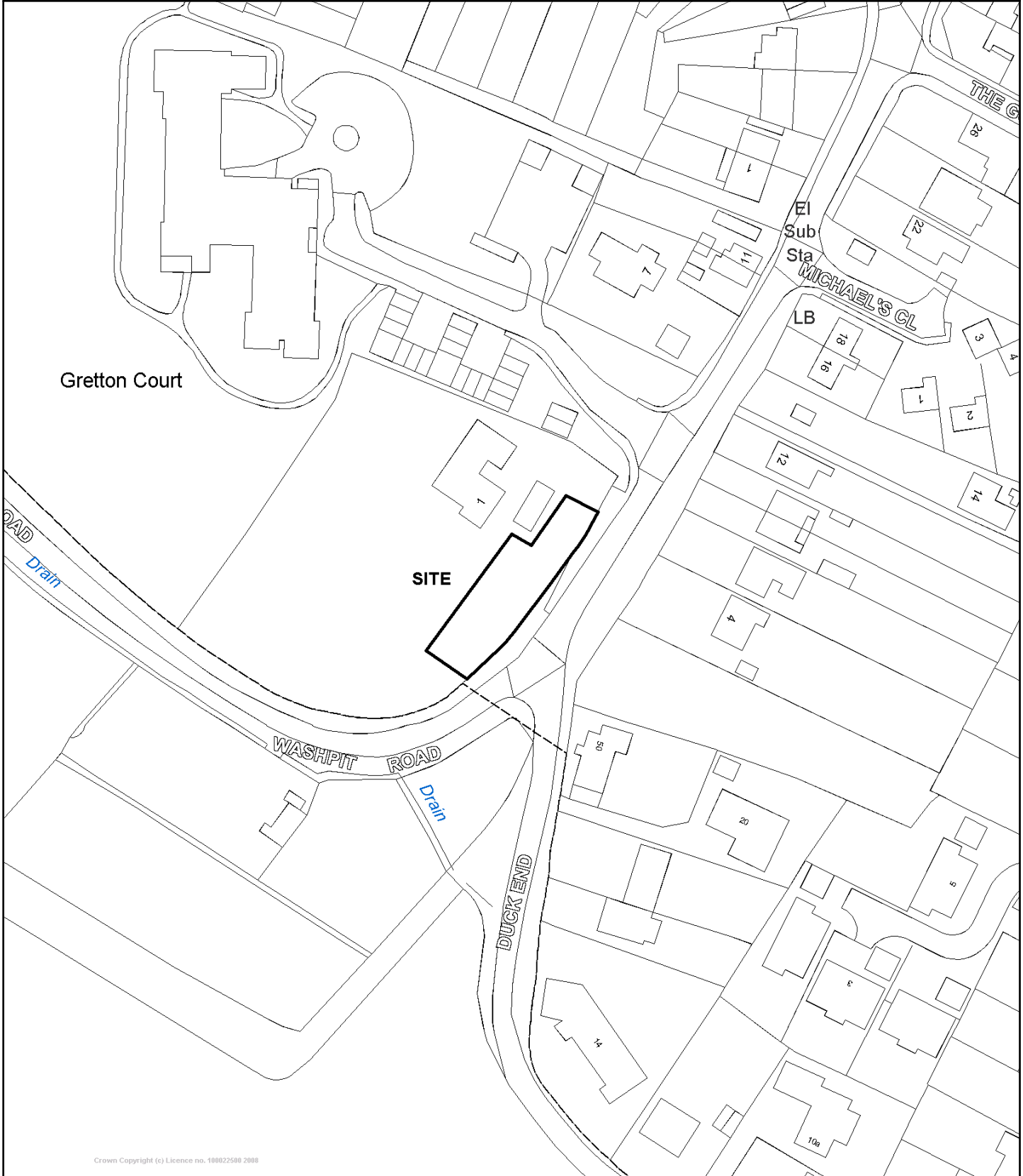
Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 2 July 2010

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination at the request of Councillor Tom Bygott.

Site and Proposed Development

1. The application site is part of the garden land of No. 1 High Street, Girton. The existing property is a large, two storey detached house set within substantial gardens. The existing house is close to the northern boundary of the site, and this boundary and the western boundary are shared with Gretton Court, a large care home. The Care home is set back significantly from the High Street to the north west of No.1, although there is a garage block adjacent to the common boundary, close to the northern corner of the house. The other boundary which runs along the frontage of the site on the High Street and around onto Washpit Road, is enclosed by a mature hedge and trees. Part of the hedge around the boundary is designated as being Important Countryside Frontage. One of the trees, a mature Ash, on the northern side of the existing drive entrance is protected by a Tree Preservation Order. There are several other mature Cypress trees adjacent to the boundary with the High Street and the area close to the boundary also contains several small fruit trees. A yew hedge separates this area from the main house and there is a large lawned area including grass tennis court to the south west of the house. No. 1 is served by a vehicular access at the north east corner of the site which runs parallel to the northern boundary up to a parking courtyard and garage attached to the house. There is a timber outbuilding to the east of the house adjacent to the northern end of the Yew hedge. The land levels on the property generally slope down to the south. The southern boundary of the site with Washpit Road forms the boundary of the Development Framework and to the south of Washpit Road the countryside is also designated as Green Belt.
2. The application site itself is a fairly linear plot located to the south east of the existing house, alongside the existing hedgerow and trees which form the boundary of the wider site with the High Street. The land levels on the proposed site slope down towards the southern side and there is a relatively flat portion of land in the central section of the plot. A pond area is located further south of that section. The plot is opposite the junction of Duck End with the High Street and the most southerly portion of its boundary with the Washpit Road forms part of the frontage designated as Important Countryside Frontage.
3. The planning application seeks permission for the erection of a single two storey dwelling with detached carport and associated parking and an access off the existing vehicle access to the north east. The house has twin gabled wings, slightly splayed towards each other on the south west facing elevation which are linked with



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August 2010 Planning Committee

a slightly lower central element. There is a single storey element proposed to the eastern side and first floor balconies are proposed to the south west (rear) elevation. A detached car port and store is proposed to the north side of the dwelling and this would be accessed from a new section of drive linking to the existing access to the north. The access point with the High Street would remain unchanged although the existing drive would be widened to 5 metres at the point where the new drive would branch off it.

Relevant Planning History

4. **S/2010/83/O** – Outline Planning permission was granted for a single dwelling in the south eastern corner of the garden of No. 1 but no Reserved Matters application was submitted and the Outline permission lapsed in 1988.

Planning Policy

5. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 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

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

HG/1 – Housing Density

CH/7 – Important Countryside Frontages

NE/1 – Energy Efficiency

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

SF/11 – Open Space Standards

Circulars

6. **Circular 11/95** (The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions) – Advises that conditions should be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.
7. **Circular 05/2005** (Planning Obligations) – Advises that planning obligations must be relevant to planning, necessary, directly related to the proposed development, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind and reasonable in all other respects.

Consultation

8. **Girton Parish Council** – has recommended approval commenting that it was the type of infill development it likes to see in that it was radically different to standard infill housing. It noted the potential for parking congestion during construction.
9. **Local Highways Authority** – does not object to the proposed development and requests conditions regarding the widening of the vehicular access, its construction, the implementation of the turning area, the surfacing and drainage of the access and turning area, the internal dimensions of the carport and the provision of 2.4 x 70 metre visibility splays at the access point.

10. **Trees Officer** – is content that the dwelling could be erected without any adverse impact on the mature trees adjacent to the boundary.
11. **County Council Archaeologist** – comments that records indicate that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential and important archaeological remains likely survive on site. The County Archaeologist therefore requests that a condition be applied to any permission, requiring a program of archaeological work be undertaken prior to development in accordance with a scheme of investigation to be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority.

Representations

12. Two written representations have been received in support of the proposed development from the owners of 1 The High Street and 16 The High Street. In addition, Councillor Bygott has also submitted detailed comments on the application.
13. **No. 1 High Street** – The current owners of the application site point out that the subdivision of the garden and consequent boundaries of the site are determined by the need to retain the existing Yew hedge which is an important feature of the garden and will form the boundary dividing the two homes forming a natural screen. In addition, they believe it is a well designed home fit for its location. They note the energy efficiency of the design.
14. **No. 16 High Street** – The owner supports the application stating that it is a thoughtful design and would be an exemplary building in the village.
15. **Councillor Bygott (Girton)** – has requested that the application be considered by the Planning Committee and has commented that the site, whilst prominent, is suitable for a landmark building which takes the approach of enhancing the local area.

Planning Comments

16. The main planning considerations in this case are the principle of the development, the impact on residential amenity of neighbouring properties, parking and highway safety, impact on the Green Belt and impact on the character of the area and archaeological impacts. The development would also need to address its impact on the infrastructure of the village.

Principle

17. The site area measures approximately 600 sq.m., meaning that the scheme equates to a net density of approximately 15 dwellings per hectare, well below the minimum net density of 30 dwellings per hectare required by Policy HG/1 – Housing Density. The proposed dwelling is therefore contrary to the intentions of Policy HG/1. However, given the linear shape of the site, the fact that much of it is undevelopable due to existing mature trees which contribute to the character of the area, its close relationship with the existing property and the benefits of utilising the existing access in terms of minimising the impact on the local area, it is considered that the provision of more than a single dwelling on the site, as currently defined, is likely to be problematic. The additional requirement for hardstanding for parking and turning and wider/further access points associated with multiple dwellings would likely cause unacceptable harm to the character of the area. Notwithstanding the significant concerns regarding the impact of the proposed single dwelling on the character of the area, expressed below, it is considered that multiple dwellings on the plot would only exacerbate that harm.

18. In addition, the Government's recent decision to re-write PPS3 – Housing, removing the minimum density requirement of 30 dwellings per hectare is considered to have material weight in this case. Local Authorities are now encouraged to consider a range of densities across plan areas which takes into account various factors including the character of the area. It is considered that the relatively low density of housing in the immediate area indicates that adopting a lower requirement in this case is a reasonable approach.
19. It is therefore considered that, given the practical constraints of the site and the relaxation of national requirements for density and the advice to give more weight to local character in deriving density targets, that the failure to meet the density targets set out in Policy HG/1 is justified in this case.
20. The site is located within the Development Framework and the proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of Policy DP/7 – Development Frameworks. The principle of the proposed dwelling is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Residential amenity

21. The proposed dwelling would be situated approximately 12 metres from No. 1 and it is not considered that it would cause any significant overshadowing, visual intrusion or loss of light to the property. The single window at first floor level in the facing elevation of the proposed dwelling would serve a bathroom and could be conditioned to be obscurely glazed to protect privacy. Further windows in that elevation could be restricted by condition. Windows in the north east facing elevation would overlook the proposed car port and existing outbuilding and are not considered to cause any significant harm to the amenity of No. 1. The south west facing balconies would have views over the tennis court area of garden of No. 1, however this is something which the owners of No. 1 are aware of and have not objected to, and would not be likely to cause any loss of privacy to the areas of the garden more closely associated with the dwelling. There is potential for overlooking of some of those areas closer to the house from the balcony closest to the common boundary, however this could be addressed though the use of an obscure screen on the west side of the balcony.
22. The windows in the south east facing elevation of the dwelling would face properties on the other side of the High Street, however this would be at an overall distance of approximately 30 metres. This is not considered to be likely to cause any harm to the neighbouring properties by way of loss of privacy
23. The proposed dwelling is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity in the area.

Parking and Highway Safety

24. The proposed dwelling would share the existing access with No. 1 and turning facilities in its curtilage would provide the ability to exit the site in a forward gear. This would result in the same level of visibility for the vehicles associated with the new dwelling as for those associated with No. 1. Given the traffic survey which indicates that traffic along the lower part of the High Street and Washpit Road is light and relatively slow, it is considered that the existing level of visibility is adequate in terms of highway safety. The potential conflict between cars leaving and entering the site is increased somewhat, however the widening of the access to 5 metres at a point 7 metres into the site is considered to mitigate this. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety.

25. The proposed parking layout would allow two cars to be parked and turned on site. This is in accordance with the Council's parking standards and is considered sufficient to provide for the needs of a three bedroom dwelling.

Impact on the Green Belt

26. The proposed dwelling would be approximately 90 metres from the boundary of the Green Belt to the south west and would be separated from it by mature planting adjacent to the boundary of the garden of No.1 High Street with Washpit Lane. It is not considered that the proposed dwelling would cause any adverse impact on the Green Belt and no additional mitigation of its impact is considered necessary in that regard.

Impact on the Character of the Area

27. The proposed dwelling would be situated within approximately 2 metres of the existing boundary hedge along the frontage with the two storey element set back approximately 1.5 metres further. The eaves height of the two storey element is approximately 4.5 metres and the ridge approximately 7 metres in height. When viewed from the street this means that approximately 1.5 metres of the upper storey wall as well as the roof would be visible above the existing boundary hedge.
28. The site and its immediate setting, particularly to the west of the High Street, has a village edge character with an unkerbed highway, unmown verges in front of high dense hedging and mature trees. Whilst the street to the north of the access point is much more residential in character, the proposed site is considered to contribute to the transition of the village character into that of the countryside (the Development Framework boundary of the village is immediately to the south of the site). The site is also prominent, given its location opposite the junction of the High Street and Duck End and is obvious on the approach north west along Duck End. Given the proximity of the dwelling to the front boundary and its proposed height above the existing boundary screening, it is considered that the dwelling would have a significant visual impact on the streetscene. The impact of the dwelling would be to erode the current open and undeveloped character of the land south of No. 1, which would be to the detriment of the semi-rural character of the immediate streetscene, particularly when viewed from the south east.
29. The submitted Design and Access Statement (available in full on the Council website) notes that whilst designations of Important Countryside Frontage have been applied to the southern boundary of the wider site, they have not been designated in the area immediately adjacent to the dwelling. As one of the aims of Policy CH/7 – Important Countryside Frontages is to protect land where it provides a significant connection between the street scene and the surrounding rural area, the conclusion is drawn that the dwelling would not impact on the land which forms that important transition of village to countryside. However, the fact that the boundary immediately adjacent to the dwelling is not designated as ICF is not considered to be a definitive indication that the character of the immediate area is not semi-rural nor that it could not be harmed by the introduction of a two storey dwelling in close proximity to it.
30. The Statement also seeks to establish a precedent for the erection of a two storey dwelling in a village edge location, by citing a previous Planning Inspectorate decision to overturn a refusal for a dwelling of a similar scale at 15 Duck End, Girton. The Inspector in that case took the view that the dwelling on the village edge could be successfully incorporated into the village by additional planting, noting that even a single storey dwelling would be visible above the existing hedge. However, it is not considered that this decision sets a direct precedent for this application site. The site at 15 Duck End was not situated opposite a junction and was therefore significantly less

prominent, being seen more obliquely by those travelling along the street. The dwelling proposed in this application would be viewed both obliquely and directly and given its height and bulk positioned close to the boundary of the site, is considered to harm the character of the local area.

31. The Design and Access Statement also seeks to justify the need for a two storey house, rather than a less prominent single storey dwelling, due to the desire to provide a sustainable form of development with a limited impact on climate change which would be energy efficient due to its location, layout, orientation and design. This level of energy efficiency requires a limited footprint and consequently a two-storey dwelling. The Design and Access Statement cites compliance with policies DP/1 – Sustainable Development, NE/1 – Energy Efficiency as being of particular relevance. Although the provision of sustainable, energy efficient dwellings is considered to be a laudable aim, in balancing the objectives of the applicable planning policies, it is not considered that this can or should outweigh the need for development which preserves or enhances the character of the local area. Any dwelling built on the site would have to meet increasingly stringent Building Regulations which seek to conserve energy and it is not considered that the additional 'Green' credentials of the proposed dwelling, over and above this requirement, balance out the harm to the character of the area.
32. The proposed dwelling is therefore considered to be unacceptable in terms of its impact on the visual amenity of the area.

Archaeological Impacts

33. The County Archaeologist is of the view that there are likely to be important archaeological remains surviving on site, as it is within an area of high archaeological potential with several medieval ridge and furrow areas surrounding the site. The development has the potential to harm such remains and the County Archaeologist therefore requests a condition requiring the applicant to undertake a program of archaeological work prior to development in accordance with a scheme of investigation to be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority. Given that the site appears not to have been developed previously, this is considered to be a reasonable request and the imposition of such a condition would appear to be sufficient to mitigate any harm to the historic archaeological record.

Impact on Village Infrastructure

34. The applicant does not object to entering into a S106 Legal Agreement to provide a scheme for the provision of informal open space and play space, community facilities and household waste receptacles in accordance with Policy SF/10 – Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments and DP/4 – Infrastructure and New Developments. This infrastructure is necessary to mitigate the additional burden the development would place on local facilities. In the event of the granting of planning permission, a pre-commencement condition could be applied requiring the applicant to enter into such an agreement.

Recommendation

35. Taking all relevant matters in to consideration it is recommended that the application be refused Planning Permission for the following reason(s):
36. The proposed dwelling would occupy a visually prominent location opposite the junction of Duck End. By virtue of its height and visual bulk in close proximity to the existing boundary hedge the dwelling would be out of character with the immediate streetscene which is currently a semi-rural green lane close to the edge of the village framework. The dwelling would therefore cause harm to the character and

appearance of the streetscene by failing to respond to its local context and the distinctive character of the area contrary to Policies DP/2 and DP/3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007.

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

- East of England Plan 2008
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- PPS3 – Housing (Amended June 2010)
- Circular 11/95 Circular (The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions) and Circular 05/2005 (Planning Obligations)

Contact Officer: Dan Smith - Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713162