

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

6 October 2010

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

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### **S/0233/10/RM – MELDRETH**

**Submission of Reserved Matters in Respect of Approving Siting, Design and External Appearance of Buildings, Means of Access and Landscaping of Outline Planning Permission S/1543/02/O for the Erection of 20 Houses (including 6 Affordable Dwellings) at Land to the North of Chiswick End Meldreth for C. Holland and Sons, T. Dash and JS Bloor (Sudbury) Ltd**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval/Refusal subject to agreement on outstanding issues relating to Housing Mix**

**Date for Determination: 18 May 2010**

#### **Notes:**

**This application has been reported to the Planning Committee, as it is a Major application and a Departure from the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007.**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. The site is located in the village framework for Meldreth and outside of the designated Conservation Area. It is currently used for industrial purposes with one large works building and several smaller buildings, which lie to the rear of gardens to properties along Whitecroft Road. It is accessed along a track off Whitecroft Road, which has agricultural land to its north side and the garden to No. 69 Whitecroft Road to the south. There is a mature tree at the southern side of the junction of the track with Whitecroft Road that is protected by means of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). There is a line of Beech trees at the southern end of the site. The western part of the site is characterized by overgrown scrub, grass and bramble.
2. The reserved matters application, registered on 16 February 2010, and amended on 9 September 2010 seeks the approval of the siting, design and external appearance of buildings, means of access and landscaping of outline planning permission S/1543/02/O for the erection of 20 houses (including 6 affordable dwellings). The application site is approximately 0.84 ha (2.1 acres) in area including the access track from Whitecroft Road. Excluding this track the site area is approximately 0.66ha (1.63 acres) resulting in a housing density of approximately 30 dwellings per hectare.

#### **Relevant Planning History**

3. **S/0271/89/F** – An application for extensions to form offices and a storage building was withdrawn in 1992.
4. **S/1543/02/O** – Outline planning permission was granted by Members at Planning Committee in 2007 for the erection of 20 houses including 6 affordable dwellings.

5. **S/1643/09/O** – Erection of 20 houses (including 6 affordable) – An application to extend the time limit for implementation of the earlier application is still outstanding.

### **Planning Policy**

6. The site once formed a substantial part of the Housing Allocation Meldreth 1 (1.01ha/2.5 acres in total) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 1993. This allocation is now removed but the submission of the scheme as a reserved matters application means that the provision already granted under the outline consent still applies. Any future outline or full application for residential development on this site will need to be considered under **Policy ST/6** of the Core Strategy (adopted 2007) which refers to 'Group Villages' where development may exceptionally consist of up to 15 dwellings where this would make the best use of a single brown field site.
7. A S106 agreement secured the affordable housing and an education contribution at the outline stage in the 2002 application. The Council are unable to request any further contributions towards infrastructure that are not already in place.
8. South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD, adopted July 2007:  
**DP/1** - Sustainable Development, **DP/2** - Design of New Development, **DP/3** - Development Criteria, **DP/6** - Construction Methods, **DP/7** - Development Frameworks, **HG/2** - Housing Mix, **SF/1** - Protection of Village Services and Facilities, **NE/1** - Energy Efficiency, **NE/3** - Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development, **NE/6** – Biodiversity, **NE/12** – Water Conservation, **TR/1** - Planning for More Sustainable Travel, **TR/2** - Car and Cycle Parking, Standards, **TR/3** - Mitigating Travel Impact, **TR/4** - Non-motorised Modes
9. Supplementary Planning Documents:  
**District Design Guide** – Adopted March 2010.
10. **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.
11. **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 respect.

### **Consultations**

12. **Meldreth Parish Council** recommend approval along with the following comments:

“The Parish Council understands Anglian Water has given assurances to the developers that there is sufficient capacity in the sewage system to accommodate the development. Giving the flooding of foul water in 2006 in Chiswick End and the acknowledged poor state of the sewerage pipes in the area of Whitecroft Road, the Parish Council would like reassured assurances that Anglian Water are able to meet their statutory obligations or have committed resources to do so. The Parish Council is also concerned that the route (s) for the outflows from the Chiswick End ditches are poorly understood (or poorly described) and would seek reasoned assurances from both SCDC and CCC that the development would not impede drainage from the Chiswick End ditches to any material extent to cause a repeat of the 2006 flooding problems. The north and south eastern boundaries -

the current landscape is not part of the development but is important to provide screening and should be maintained.”

13. **The Local Highways Authority** has requested the following:

- (a) The Highway Authority would request a survey of the area showing the trees and hedges on site to confirm that the visibility splays of 2.4 x 215 to the North and 2.4 x 120 to the South are achievable.
- (b) The carriageway width shall be a minimum width of 5.5m.
- (c) A footway of 2m is required both sides of the carriageway within the development and not just one side as shown on submitted drawing MELD/Sk3.
- (d) Prior to the first occupation of the development the vehicular access where it crosses the public highway shall be laid out and constructed in accordance with the Cambridgeshire County Council construction specification.
- (e) Temporary facilities shall be provided clear of the public highway for the parking, turning, loading and unloading of all vehicles visiting the site during the period of construction.
- (f) The access shall be constructed with adequate drainage measures to prevent surface water run-off onto the adjacent public highway, in accordance with a scheme submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority.
- (g) Prior to the commencement of use of the site, the approved wheel washing facilities shall be provided to the written satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.
- (h) No unbound material shall be used in the surface finish of the driveway within 6 metres of the highway boundary of the site.

14. **The Environmental Health Officer** raises no concerns from an environmental pollution or noise viewpoint.

15. **Urban Design Team** comments as follows:

The uniformity of the proposed elevational design (submitted in June 2010) was that of a ‘anywhere’ house; with more ‘urban’ manifestation of ‘vertical’ emphasis, which greatly contrasted with the local ‘vernacular’ character. The facades lacked any depth or interest making the street scene rather bland and uninteresting.

Responding to the existing context and variety in building design has been a key challenge on this scheme. Further revisions to the design, primarily to reflect the distinctive character and identity of Meldreth were requested by officers post the June meeting.

The current elevations have been revised to respect the context in terms of heights, detail of façade and have resulted in imparting a subtle but varied character to the scheme. Significant improvements have been made to the elevations of House type 06.4211, 06.2B4PF, 06.4215B, 06.5302B, 06.2B4PG, S3352 in terms of building heights, scale and proportions of the openings and details like window reveals, projections, sills etc to create an exciting façade. The elevations propose different roof heights, which positively address the streetscape

to create the required variation at a rural scale. We advise that the materials be conditioned, at this stage to positively inform the variety of built form and the character, later.

However we are still concerned about the overlooking and proximity of the units on the current layout. To increase active frontage we feel rotating the middle block (units 14 to 17) will help create positive frontage on the access road and therefore define the public spaces better. To maximise the use of space we advise shifting the residential units slightly further from each other in order to bring car parking closer to properties, improve usability and increase distances between properties to avoid overlooking.

16. **Cambridgeshire Police Architectural Liaison Officer** comments have not been received since amendment was submitted.
17. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** comments that should the Planning Authority be minded to grant approval, the Fire Authority would ask that adequate provision be made for fire hydrants, which may be way of Section 106 agreement or a planning condition.
18. **Environment Agency** comments have not been received since the amendment was submitted.
19. **Anglian Water** comments have not been received since the amendment was submitted. However, their comments on the outline application S/1643/10/O received in January 2010, are as follows:
  - (a) The foul water flows from the development can be accommodated within the foul sewerage network system that at present has adequate capacity.
  - (b) The site of this development lies within an area where there are no public surface water sewers within the locality. Therefore the applicant will either need to construct its own surface water sewers and submit those for adoption by Anglian Water or requisition the provision of a public surface water sewer for the locality under Section 98 of the Water Industry Act 1991. Alternatively, the applicant will have to find an alternative method of surface water drainage, which will then need to be agreed with the local planning authority following consultation with the Environment Agency.
  - (c) The foul drainage from this development will be treated at Melbourn Sewage Treatment works that at present has available capacity for these flows.
20. **Cambridge Water Company** comments have not been received since the amendment dated 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010
21. **Ecology Officer** has not commented since the amendment dated 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Previous comments read as follows:

I would be in agreement with the statement that once the replacement planting matures it should provide an adequate level of biodiversity enhancement. The choice of trees along the entrance road could include a higher number of fruit tree to reflect Meldreth extensive fruit growing past.

The spec for the management of the wildflower seed mix is not quite right (see page 82 of the D&A statement). In the first year after the seed going down it should be mowed at least monthly to allow even growth of all species. In subsequent years the wildflower area should be kept mown until mid May, then

uncut until mid August. From mid Aug it is allowed to flower again until mid Oct when the area is cut before the winter. All cutting to be raked off and piled at the base of newly establishing hedge.

The biodiversity statement along with the landscaping measures states that bird boxes can be provided; we should seek the final scheme via condition if acceptable with the applicant (was it in the outline?). No vegetation removal should take place within the bird-breeding season.

22. **Trees and Landscape Officer** - Plots 8-12 will have no useable garden due to the shading created by the existing hedge line. Previously (at outline stage) only one plot was affected; however, my previous comments have been ignored and include more dwellings, which will be shaded significantly placing post development pressure on reducing this significant line of trees.
23. **Landscape Officer** comments on the amended proposals that approval of the site layout should exclude the front garden walls in plots 4 and 6. Boundary and landscape conditions should be applied on the whole development.
24. **S106 Officer** comments have not been received since the amendment dated 9 September 2010.
25. **Housing Development and Enabling Manager** comments have not been received since the amendment dated 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Previous comments read as follows:

This application provides 6 affordable dwellings. The tenure split is not defined within the application but we would be seeking 70% rented and 30% shared ownership. It is not clear from the application whether or not the developer is expecting any grant input from the Homes and Communities Agency to assist in the delivery of the affordable units. It is important to establish early on through discussion with Registered Providers, as the current size of the units do not meet the minimum design and quality standards outlined by the Homes and Communities Agency in order to qualify for grant. The minimum floor area for a 2-bed house should be 72sqm and a 3 bed 85sqm.
26. **Scientific Officer (Contaminated Land)** advises that there is a need for remedial measures prior to any development and has requested a condition is placed on any future consent for further land contamination assessments prior to development commencing.
27. **Environmental Services Manager** comments have not been received since the amendment dated 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

### **Representations**

28. One email representation has been received from the occupier of 63 Whitecroft Road who raises concern about the existing buffer between No. 63 Whitecroft Road and the application site and questions its retention.

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

29. The key issues to consider in determining this application relate purely to the reserved matters – i.e. siting, design and external appearance, access and landscaping of the site.

## **Siting**

### *Permeability*

30. The scheme is limited in permeability. There is only one way in out of the development site for both pedestrians and vehicles. The opportunity to allow for better permeability is restricted by the existing neighbouring land uses. It looks like there are opportunities for pedestrian linkages though these have been explored and proved unfeasible. However the design has tried to create active frontages along road 2 and also aims to create an access road that respects its wider surroundings through appropriate landscaping. Additionally the roads have been designed to avoid creating potential 'rat runs' by including gentle curves in the road that also creates visual interest.

### *Road Layout*

31. The majority of the footpaths and roads are to be adopted by the LHA allowing for a mixture of surfaces that will need to meet highway specifications. The LHA has not raised any highway safety concerns regarding the access onto the site subject to meeting certain conditions regarding visibility splays and road width.

### *Building layout*

32. The building layout is very different to the approved outline layout though this plan was indicative and the application was approved with all matters reserved. The new layout does not include any public open space within the developable area. This too was discussed at outline stage though it was considered that because the development was for less than 21 dwellings, it was part of a phased development due to the remainder of the allocation that was presumed to come forward at a later date. It was considered that the amount of open space on the indicative plan largely conformed to the then policy and as part of the overall allocation the provision was a satisfactory proportion. However this was not secured by way of a condition or through a S106 Agreement. Given that 20 dwellings have already been approved, it would not be possible for officers to try and achieve the required open space at reserved matters stage and the Authority is likely to be challenged if we did.
33. The building layout has been thought out in relation to the road layout. In every vista into the site, focal points and positive fascias have been encouraged. This is apparent in the building layout where frontages look over shared spaces or public footpaths. It is considered by officers that private gardens back onto each other from adequate distances to allow for natural surveillance rather than promoting overlooking.
34. Space is provided around each plot for private amenity, bin and cycle storage. Each space is adequate to provide for additional planting by future owners.
35. The affordable units in the layout have not been pepper potted throughout the site however, they are centrally located and are apparent along the main development route looking over road 2 and several have views onto open countryside. Whilst this is not ideal and policy suggests affordable dwellings are pepper potted throughout development sites it is not considered that the siting of the affordable units will be in conflict with the aims of the policy to create mixed and sustainable communities.
36. Off road parking is provided for all units using both garaging and off road parking bays. The off road provision is sufficient when assessed against adopted standards. Some of the distances between properties are short. Pre-application

discussions sought a 20m back-to-back distance between elevations. Some of these fall marginally short of this requirement, however, the inclusion of appropriately sited garaging and landscaping seeks to address some of these shortfalls. Of particular concern is the relationship of plots 5 and 6 to plot 7 and between plots 2 and 4 and plots 1 and 3. Nonetheless it is considered that on balance these relationships are acceptable given that the number of dwellings has already been predetermined at the outline stage.

### ***Design and External Appearance***

37. The design and external appearance of buildings has been significantly improved since the involvement of the Councils Urban Design Team. I am now satisfied that this aspect of the proposal.

### ***Landscaping***

38. Detailed landscaping for this scheme is marked on the layout drawing showing trees to help separate building plots and to improve privacy. There is adequate space on individual sites to allow for planting and in the green spaces provided. From the comments made by the Landscape Officer the scheme is generally acceptable subject to the omission of the front garden walls in plots 4 and 6.

### ***Other matters*** ***Housing Mix***

39. The scheme proposes 20 dwellings, 14 of which are market dwellings. The mix of market dwellings comprises 2 x 3 bed units, 8 x 4 bed units and 4 x 5 bed units.
40. For developments of more than 10 dwellings Policy HG/2 requires the market mix to provide a range of accommodation including 1 and 2 bed dwellings with, as a starting point, the target requirements of at least 40% of homes with 1 or 2 bedrooms, approximately 25% with 3 bed and approximately 25% with 4 or more bedrooms. Policy HG2 further states that the requirement for an appropriate mix will be assessed 'having regard to economic viability, the local context of the site and the need to secure a balanced community'. This results in a target mix of at approximately 6 x 2 bed units, 4 x 3 bed units and 4 x 4 or more bed units.
41. I am concerned that with so few smaller dwellings and a mix of predominately 4 + bed units the proposed market mix is far too heavily weighted in favour of large dwellings and at odds with the thrust of Policy HG/2 which is to provide more smaller dwellings to meet defined needs and help maintain a stock of cheaper housing that is accessible to more people wishing to get onto the housing market.
42. The developer is aware that supportive evidence is required in light of any variations to the HG/2 starting point and officers are informed that this will be submitted. It may need to be independently commissioned. At present the application fails to assess economic viability, the local context of the site and the need to secure a balanced community and therefore fails to justify the proposed mix. To this extent, the layout of the proposal fails to comply with Policy HG/2. Members will be updated on this issue at or before the meeting.

### ***Affordable Housing***

43. Of the 20 dwellings proposed the scheme comprises the development of 6 affordable units. The mix of affordable units must comply with the housing need and is proposed as 4 x 2 bed units and 2 x 3 bed units. The affordable housing number was confirmed at Outline application stage and 30% was considered to be acceptable based on the redevelopment of a brownfield site, in particular in

relation to demolition of existing buildings and possible decontamination of land. Details of tenure mix can be controlled through the section 106 agreement.

### ***Open Space***

44. The application does not provide any open space within the developable area, and nor are the applicants required to do so as this was not secured at Outline.

### ***Waste***

45. Details of the waste requirements were not present at the time of writing the report and Members will be updated accordingly prior to the meeting. It is unlikely that the council is able to request any further financial requirements for infrastructure that has not already been agreed at outline stage.

### ***Biodiversity***

46. Concern has been raised with regard to the biodiversity on the application site. Specifically the loss of shrubs and bramble, least disturbance to wildlife and a planting scheme prior to development commencing on site. The comments of the Ecology Officer have been received and he is happy with the proposed landscape buffer proposed along the entrance of the site (road 2), helping to alleviate the loss of existing bramble and shrubs on the existing site. Conditions have been suggested to ensure there is minimum disturbance to existing wildlife on site and a scheme of ecological enhancement required for nesting boxes.

### ***Water and Drainage***

47. Local residents have raised drainage as a major concern and this is being cross-referenced with both the Awards Drainage Manager and the Environment Agency. Anglian water has advised there is capacity in the existing system. The outline planning permission requires details of surface water drainage to be submitted and approved.

### ***Renewable Energy***

48. The level of detail included in the submitted Renewable Energy Statement is minimal. It is recommended that further information regarding the 10% on site renewable energy requirements should be submitted and should show much more detail; particularly as we have details of the different house types included in the scheme and the finer detail of each property. A commitment for 10% renewable energy provided on site by the range of different methods proposed should be made evident through the design layout.
49. It is required that Level 3 sustainable homes are provided across the site. This is a basic, standard level of energy efficiency that all house builders should be achieving within their developments. It is also suggested that the developers use the 'show homes' as an opportunity to promote sustainable living to potential buyers.
50. The access road (Road 1) is proposed to be enhanced by creating a new edge to the village boundary by additional landscaping and ecology enhancements. This part of the application site is not within the site edged red and cannot therefore be considered as a part of the reserved matters application. The applicants have attempted to provide a sinuous route flanked by landscaping and open space. In discussing where the Local Authority stand in the inclusion of this part of the application the Councils Legal team have advised that we can not secure this part of the development where it is outside of the site edged red. If we approve the



scheme it would have to be offered by the developers and secured by way of a new planning obligation.

### **Conclusion**

51. The site is allocated for residential development and the reserved matters application allows development for 20 houses on this site to proceed. The layout of the scheme is the result of ongoing discussions between officers and the applicants to ensure a high standard of design. It has been amended a number of times to take further account of the requirements of officers. It is considered to be generally acceptable.
52. The housing mix is the remaining point of contention. The applicant is providing additional information to justify why the proposed mix does not better meet with the policy requirements. This document was not available at the time of writing. Officers are of the opinion that the proposed mix is not reflective of the requirements in policy HG/2 and could be refused on this basis. On receipt of the awaited information, it will be necessary to assess whether there is sufficient justification to override the policy requirement in this instance.
53. For the above reasons I make the following recommendation:

### **Recommendation**

54. Delegated powers to approve or refuse subject to the outcome of a financial assessment of the viability of the proposed housing mix.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Development Control Policies, adopted July 2007.
- Circular 11/95 and 05/2005
- Planning Files References: S/1543/02/O and S/0223/10/RM

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