

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

2nd February 2005

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/2305/04/F - Melbourn

Erection 35 Flat Very Sheltered Residential Home, 18 Flats and 4 Houses, Including Demolition of Existing Residential Home, Moorlands Residential Home, The Moor, for Cambridge Housing Society

Recommendation: Refused

Date for Determination: 14th February 2005

Members will visit this site on Monday 31st January 2005

Site and Proposal

1. Moorlands Residential Home is located on a 0.67 ha site to the east of The Moor, Melbourn, opposite the Village College. The site currently comprises two main buildings, the main residential block and a day care unit, set within well landscaped grounds.
2. To the north the site abuts an unmade roadway leading to a pumping station beyond which is a recreation ground. To the south is an industrial building fronting The Moor behind which there is a block of flats currently under construction.
3. To the east the site abuts the rear gardens of bungalows in Dickasons. These properties are set on land which is slightly higher than the main part of The Moorlands site.
4. This full application, registered on 15th November 2004, proposes the demolition of the existing buildings on the site (this element is to be phased) and the erection of a 35 flat very sheltered residential home, 18 flats and four houses.
5. The 35-bedroom residential home comprises a mainly three-storey building, with a ridge height of 9.6m, although it reduces to a two-storey building at the rear of the site where it adjoins properties in Dickasons. The building extends directly behind three of the existing bungalows in Dickasons for a length of 35m and the distance between it and the boundary varies between 11m and 11.5m. At this point the new building will have an eaves height of 6m with a shallow sloping roof which rises to a height of 6.6m a further 7m away from the boundary where the building rises to three storeys. There are four flats at first floor level facing Dickasons, each containing a lounge and bedroom window. There is some screening on the east boundary of the site although views into the site from the rear gardens of properties in Dickasons are still obtained.
6. The building is designed in a 'U' shape, and whilst requiring the existing day centre building to be demolished, it warps around the existing residential building, allowing it to be retained whilst the new building is constructed. An existing mature walnut tree is to be removed. A substantial lime is shown as being retained.

7. Fronting The Moor, to the north of the proposed entrance road which serves all properties, are proposed two linked 3-storey blocks each containing 6 two-bedroom flats, with a ridge height of 9.1m. To the rear of these would be a single block of 6 two-bedroom flats facing the internal access road. Between this block and the rear of existing properties in Dickasons is proposed a pair of 2^{1/2} storey semi-detached three-bedroom houses and a pair of 2-storey two-bedroom houses.
8. The application contains a tree survey and report.
9. The scheme is developed at a density of 85 dph.

Planning History

10. None that is relevant to this application.

Planning Policy

11. **Policy SE2** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") designates Melbourn as a Rural Growth Settlement where residential development and redevelopment will be permitted on sites within village frameworks provided that:
 - (a) The retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village;
 - (b) The development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours;
 - (c) The village has the necessary infrastructure capacity; and
 - (d) Residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly policy EM8.
12. Development should provide an appropriate mix of dwellings in terms of size, type and affordability and should achieve a minimum density of 30 dph unless there are strong design grounds for not doing so.
13. **Policy HG7** of the Local Plan sets out the District Council's policy in respect of affordable housing on sites within village frameworks. In villages such as Melbourn, where the population is in excess of 3000, such provision should represent up to 30% of the total number of dwellings for which planning permission may be given, dependant upon the level of clearly identified local need, although higher or lower percentages may be agreed in the light of such factors as proximity to local services; access to public transport; the particular costs associated with the development; and whether or not the provision of affordable housing would prejudice other planning objectives warranting greater priority in the particular case.
14. **Policy HG9** of the Local Plan states that the development of residential care homes within village frameworks will be permitted where:
 - (a) The quality of design is in keeping with surrounding properties and landscape in terms of scale, form, layout and materials;
 - (b) Boundary treatment provides privacy and a high standard of visual amenity;
 - (c) The privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties is protected;
 - (d) There is safe and convenient access for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians;
 - (e) Parking facilities are in accordance with District Council standards; and
 - (f) There is access to an adequate level of services to meet the need of the development.

15. **Policy CS9** of the Local Plan states that the District Council will refuse planning permissions for proposals which would result in the loss of a village service, where such loss would cause a significant reduction in the level of community or service provision in the locality.

Consultations

16. **Melbourn Parish Council** recommends refusal. "We are refusing this application on the grounds that the proposal does not provide the facilities the community requires. We don't feel that the design/layout will allow the level of care necessary nor does there appear to be adequate day care facilities vital to the community. We feel further discussion is required and would welcome another meeting at the first opportunity".
17. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests a condition restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the period of construction. He also comments in respect of the use of driven pile foundations and the burning of waste and points out that a Demolition Notice will be required in respect of the existing properties
18. The **Environment Agency** offers standing advice in respect of surface water drainage.
19. The **Council's Drainage Manager** states that the Council is responsible for the award drain immediately downstream of the site. As the proposal represents an increase in the impermeable area of the site, the applicant should produce a flood risk assessment that will outline the impact on the award. Proposals for the disposal of surface water from the site should then be agreed with the Council's Drainage Manager.
20. The **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** requests that adequate provision is made for fire hydrants.
21. The **Trees and Landscape Officer** objects to the loss of the Walnut tree. It is noted that a Lime tree is shown for retention however with development on two sides of the tree this will also be compromised by the proposal and an objection is raised.
22. The comments of the **Local Highway Authority** and **Commercial Director** will be reported verbally.

Representations

23. The occupier of 14 Dickasons expresses concern at the limited amount of time given to comment on a proposal, which will result in the site becoming a building site for near future. There is concern about the effect on health of the unavoidable noise, dust and general pollution over an undetermined period.
24. The occupiers of 12 Dickasons express similar concerns and ask for assurances that strict controls would be imposed on the noise and pollution levels during demolition and construction.
25. The occupier of 15 Dickasons strongly opposes the application in its present form although it is accepted that Moorlands needs updating. The garden of No15 is some 10m long and the proposed building will be located behind this although clarification

is sought on the exact distance. It is noted that the main building contains a plant room that is located at the closest corner to No15 whilst it is assumed that this will not convene any noise pollution levels there is likely to be a constant hum from the building generators, which could be better placed at the roadside of The Moor. It is hoped that the pathway to the rear of the building will not be accessed by the public but guarantees are sought from a security aspect. There is concern that the application is a 'forgone conclusion' Assurance is sought that the applicant could not sell the building at a later date to be private flats, which would have greater impact and requirements.

26. The occupiers of 16 Dickasons are concerned that no information about the proposal was available sooner and that a three-storey structure looming behind will devalue property. There is concern at the possible level of noise from the plant room. Whilst they would not wish to stand in the way of providing a better quality of life for the elderly residents of the home there would be great reassurance if additional screening could be undertaken at the bottom of the garden.
27. A further letter, sent on behalf of the residents of 10-16 Dickasons, reiterates that concern at the loss of outlook and privacy currently enjoyed and asks that if the development should go ahead the hedgerow on the rear boundary should be greatly thickened and ideally fenced for those that wish it. The Moorlands garden area should be made as secure as possible for the safety of its residents and to make the rear of properties in Dickasons less accessible to the general public. Assurances are again sought in respect of noise from the plant room. The letter still however expresses concern at the amount of additional cars that will result from the development and that The Moor is already congested and that this must increase the risk of accidents opposite the school. The prolonged building works and loss of trees will have a detrimental effect on wildlife. The new design of the self-contained flats seems an extremely expensive exercise to house only 6 more residents. Is this to ensure an easier future sale of the building to private housing? If so there will then be enormous traffic and other problems.

Applicant's Representations

28. A copy of a letter submitted in support of the application and addressing the matters raised by Melbourn Parish Council is attached as Appendix 1.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

29. The site is within the village framework and therefore the principle of redevelopment is acceptable. The key issues to be considered with this application are whether the development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, the amenities of neighbours, whether safe and adequate access can be provided, and whether the proposal confirms to Local Plan Policy HG7 in respect of affordable housing.
30. The existing building is located adjoining attractive planted groups, particularly at the southern end. In designing a new building for the site the applicant is constrained by the need to retain the existing residential home building while the new one is being constructed. This has to a large extent dictated the footprint of the new building, which as a result will require the removal of a number of existing trees within the site. Including a walnut tree to the south of the main building which is identified in the tree report as being a tree of between high and moderate priority for retention. The Trees and Landscapes Officer objects to the loss of this tree and is concerned at the close proximity of the new building on two sides of a lime tree which is identified in the tree

report as being an exceptional tree warranting a high protection priority. The applicant is discussing the measures for the retention of the Lime tree further with the Trees and Landscapes Officer but the loss of the Walnut is unavoidable with the scheme as proposed. Members will be able to see these trees on site and will have to balance the desirability of retention against the benefits of the housing scheme as a whole.

31. In terms of the impact of the development on the amenity of neighbours I am concerned at the proximity and length of the building to the rear boundary of bungalows in Dickasons. The gardens of these bungalow are relatively shallow, ranging from 8-13m. The proposed building has lounge and bedroom windows at first floor level facing the bungalows in Dickasons within 11 metres of the boundary. Although there is some existing planting on the boundary and the land on the application site is lower than that of the bungalows I consider that there will be an unreasonable loss of privacy to the occupiers of properties in Dickasons.
32. I have no objection to the erection of a three-storey building along the frontage of the site with The Moor although I have asked the applicant to look at the design of the building in order to make more of a feature of the roof, which is currently very shallow and squat. The proposed buildings at the northern end of the site fronting the access road are acceptable and will not harm neighbour amenity.
33. The comments of the Local Highway Authority will be reported verbally. The applicant is discussing the requirement for a flood risk assessment with regard to the impact of the development on the nearby award drain direct with the Council's Drainage Manager. The outcome of these discussions will be reported verbally.
34. The Development Manager has confirmed that this scheme has been the subject of lengthy discussions with Cambridge Housing Society and that the mix of housing is appropriate. He also confirms that the erection of the additional blocks of flats is required to fund the main building and that the District Council will have nomination rights. These can be secure through a Section 106 Agreement if necessary and therefore the requirements of Policy HG7 are met.
35. The objection of Melbourn Parish Council relates to the design and layout of the building which will not allow the level of care necessary and that there does not appear to be adequate day-care facilities vital to the community. Policy CS9 seeks to prevent a significant reduction in the level of community or service provision in the locality. The letter from the applicants at Appendix 1 sets out the Housing Association's position regarding the day-care provision and this matter is to be discussed further with the Local Members, the Housing Portfolio Holder and officers prior to the meeting. A verbal report will be made.
36. Landscaping and boundary treatment would be conditions of any consent. The Chief Environmental Health Officer requires a condition restricting hours of operation of power driven machinery during the demolition and construction process. As some of the building works will take place around the existing residential home I am sure that the applicant will be seeking to minimise disturbance in any event. I have asked the Chief Environmental Health Officer to comment further on the concerns of local residents in respect of the plant room. The applicant is aware of these concerns and is proposing to suggest noise mitigation measures if necessary.

Recommendation

That the application be refused on the grounds that the proposed residential care home building will result in an unreasonable loss of amenity to the occupiers of adjacent properties on Dickasons by reason of overlooking and being overbearing, contrary to Policies SE2 and HG9 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning files Ref. S/2305/04/F

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