

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005  
**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/1785/04/F - Willingham**  
**Erection of 76 Dwellings including Conversion of Barn into Dwelling;**  
**Land to the West of High Street at Manor Farm**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval**  
**Date for determination: 23 November 2004**

### Site and Proposal

1. The site occupies 1.94 ha land to the rear of farm buildings and dwellings fronting High Street. The land is in agricultural use as grassland, with established trees and hedgerows on three boundaries. A brook adjoins the western boundary, but is outside the application site. To the south, residential development by Bovis Homes Ltd is in progress (also known as Willowbrook/Covent Garden). The application site represents a continuation of that development. A timber barn on the site is grade 2 listed.
2. This application for the erection of 76 dwellings and the conversion of the barn to a dwelling was received on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2004, and amended on 20<sup>th</sup> October and 29<sup>th</sup> November. The application includes 22 units of affordable housing, representing a 29% provision. Vehicular access is proposed from the High Street, with pedestrian/cycleway linkages to the development to the south. Narrowing of the High Street carriageway on either side of the new access is proposed in order to achieve adequate visibility splays. The existing bus stop on the site frontage will be relocated by the developer to a site to be agreed.
3. The dwellings represent a mix of 1&2 bed flats, and 2,3,4, and 5 bed houses. They range in height from 1-storey garages and outbuildings to 2 and 2½-storey houses with occasional 3-storey buildings in strategic positions. There are a variety of styles of contemporary and traditional architecture.
4. The density is 39.2 dwellings per hectare. Provision of 2,200 sq m open space is made, including one LAP unequipped play area.
5. The application is supported by a design statement from the agent, together with a transport assessment, a flood risk assessment and a tree survey. Removal of fruit trees and dying trees is included in the proposal.

### Planning History

6. Listed building consent for the conversion of the listed barn to a dwelling has been granted - **S/1701/04/LB**.
7. Planning permission for the adjoining development on this allocation site was granted on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003 to Bovis Homes Ltd et al for 80 dwellings - **S/1572/01/F**. The application was issued in conjunction of a Section 106 Agreement for an education

contribution, public open space provision and maintenance, affordable and discounted cost housing, and a play area contribution.

### **Planning Policy**

8. In the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 the following policies are relevant:
  - P1/3** - Sustainable Design in the Built Environment
  - P5/3** - Density
  - P5/4** - Meeting locally identified housing needs
  - P6/1** - Development-related provision
  - P6/4** - Drainage
  - P8/2** - Implementing sustainable transport for new development
  - P8/5** - Provision of parking
  - P8/8** - Encouraging walking and cycling
  - P9/8** - Infrastructure provision
  
9. In the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 the following policies are relevant:
  - SE2** - Rural Growth Settlements
  - SE9** - Village edges
  - HG3** - Allocations in Rural Growth Settlements
  - HG7** - Affordable housing on sites within village frameworks
  - HG10** - Housing mix and design
  - TP1** - Planning for more sustainable travel
  - CS1** - Planning obligations
  - CS10** - Education (financial contributions)
  - CS13** - Community Safety
  - RT2** - Provision of open space in new development
  - EN5** - Landscaping of new development
  
10. In Inset Plan No 100 Willingham the site falls under Allocation 1B. **Policies Willingham 1 and 2** require developers of this land to provide affordable housing in accordance with **Policy HG7**, and to make a financial contribution towards the costs of improved educational facilities, the provision of a village hall and an extension to the recreation ground. These policies have been carried forward to the draft Local Development Framework 2004.

### **Consultations**

11. **Willingham Parish Council** - held a public meeting on 15th October. WPC has strong objections to the proposal on grounds that:
  - A third large development feeding into the High Street would result in an unacceptable increase in traffic on a road that is already heavily congested at peak times;
  - Existing sewerage problems close to the proposed site would become considerably worse;
  - Drainage problems (already reported in connection with the adjacent Covent Garden development) would add to the danger of flooding in an area very close to the flood plain;
  - These unacceptable pressures will only be addressed by significant investment in roads and cycle paths, utilities (drainage, sewerage and electricity supply) and facilities (better public transport and adequate policing). The PC believes that

the public opposition to this proposal is partly linked to the lack of investment in infrastructure in the village;

- There are already problems of surface water disposal at the Covent Garden development, and this development will exacerbate the situation. They recommend further investigation taking into account local advice;
  - The transport assessment does not take into account the cumulative effect of three major developments. There is an urgent need to provide a bypass for the village, to which major new housing schemes should contribute.
12. **Local Highway Authority** - the HA has accepted amended road layout and parking provision, and the findings of the submitted transport assessment. Conditions are recommended to be attached to any planning permission granted.
  13. **Environment Agency** - Discussions between the EA and the developers is continuing. Originally the EA objected on the grounds of flood risk and risk of water pollution, but subsequently has requested further information in response to the findings of the flood risk assessment. The EA seeks provision of same-level compensation on the land or nearby for flood water storage, in addition to a 4-6 metre wide buffer strip clear of development adjacent to the watercourse. Soakaways are acceptable on this site. Further information concerning highways drainage is also requested.
  14. **Old West Internal Drainage Board** - has noted that the proposal involves discharge to the Lord's Ground Ditch/Willingham Lode high level system. As these fall under the jurisdiction of the Environment Agency, the Board is content for the Agency to represent its interests in this matter.
  15. **Over and Willingham Internal Drainage Board** - comments awaited.
  16. **Anglian Water** - comments awaited.
  17. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue** - has requested provision of fire hydrants by means of a condition on any planning permission granted.
  18. **Chief Financial Planning Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council** - Applying a formula based on a net developable hectare basis, the CFPO has required a financial contribution of £155,488. The formula includes elements for various community facilities and amenities to be provided under the auspices of the Parish Council. The educational element is intended for the village school and the secondary school at Cottenham.
  19. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** - has put forward suggestions for amendments to the layout that have been incorporated by the applicant. In response to the amended plans received 29<sup>th</sup> November, the PALO is concerned about poor natural surveillance of two parking spaces next to Plot 1, and has requested 1.8m high weld mesh fencing in place of chain link to the back of hedge on the northern boundary to provide protection for the car park.
  20. **Conservation Manager**- has requested amendments to the design and cladding of dwellings that form part of the setting of the listed barn, as well as boundary treatments in this area, so as to safeguard the setting of the listed building. In the event that Members are minded to grant planning consent, he recommends that this be subject to resolution of design matters to his satisfaction.

21. **Trees and Landscape Officer** - has indicated that the proposed footpath/cycleway adjacent to the western boundary should be constructed using a 'no dig method'. He considers two trees within the scheme to be worthy of TPO designation.
22. **Landscape Design Officer** - has negotiated amendments to the proposed layout in order to safeguard boundary hedges and to enable additional planting to take place.
23. **Cultural Services Manager** - states that there is no formal play or sports provision within the development, and that this is in accordance with the wishes of the Parish Council. The CSM is happy to accept this as the recreation ground is close by and improvements to the existing play and sports facilities on the main village recreation ground is a better and more financially viable option. The areas of usable play space within the development are small and amount to only about 700sqm. This leaves a shortfall of provision by the developers which needs to be provided in the form of a commuted capital sum towards the provision of formal play and sports facilities off site (on the recreation ground). This may be used towards new facilities or capital improvements to existing facilities. This should also include a contribution towards the cost of the land.

In addition, appropriate commuted maintenance sums should be provided for all open space plus a contribution towards maintenance of the "off site " play and sports provision. The Parish Council should be strongly encouraged to ring fence the commuted funds specifically for the purposes outlined above.

The Council is currently working towards a new recreation policy as part of the LDF process which will provide an approved formula for the commuted capital and maintenance sums required from developers but in the mean time it is appropriate for the Parish Council to negotiate a figure directly with the developers.

The CSM recommends that the larger areas of informal public open space within the development are designed for informal play space (unequipped) with signs prohibiting dogs and possibly a bench and bin for residents' use.

24. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** - recommends conditions to control hours of operation of powered machinery during the construction period, methods of construction of driven pile foundations, and investigation of the site for contamination.
25. **Development Manager**- has indicated that the proposed siting and mix of affordable dwellings has been discussed with Granta Housing Society and is acceptable in his opinion.
26. **Recycling and Waste Minimisation Officer** - has requested various minor amendments to the scheme to ensure satisfactory access by refuse vehicles. Suitably amended plans are awaited.
27. **Ecology Officer** - requests conditions to be added to require a survey for the presence of bats in existing buildings, schemes for the ecological management and enhancement of the biodiversity value of the ditch adjacent to the site (Dockerall Ditch), and the provision of bat and bird boxes.

### **Representations**

28. The following representations have been received from 13 residents of the village:

*Site specific comments*

- Limits on hours of operation of powered machinery have not been adhered to on other developments.
- Development will overlook neighbouring properties.
- Overlooking from Plots 13-15
- Many trees and shrubs will be removed.
- Wildlife habitats should be maintained/increased.
- The site should have significantly larger open space provision.
- The setting of the listed barn will be destroyed by modern development around it.
- Harm to the setting of listed buildings on High Street.

#### *Traffic and parking*

- Inadequate road junction onto High Street due to inadequate visibility.
- The proposed junction is too close to Osborne Close junction.
- The road and pedestrian links to the northern boundary implies a future extension of development for which there has been no agreement.
- Insufficient parking provision has been made.
- Existing on-road parking space will be reduced.
- Existing on street parking already causes traffic chaos, especially at times of auctions. New frontage dwellings will encourage more on-street parking.
- The existing road narrowing at Willowbrook has created gridlock on the High Street. The proposed road narrowing will do the same and will impede emergency vehicles, and create dangers for cyclists.
- Where will the bus stop be re-sited to?
- The bus service to Cambridge has been cut by half.
- The development does not reflect local needs and will attract commuters.
- A cycle route to Longstanton is required.
- Traffic on the High Street has reached unmanageable levels, as it is a back route to the M11.
- With little employment in the village the development will generate more car-borne transport, contrary to government policy.
- This site should have lower density development without any provision for affordable housing until a bypass is built.
- How much more traffic can the village take? The village should be supported by A14 improvements, the guided bus and a bypass before significant new development is allowed.

#### *Infrastructure and services*

- Flooding occurs behind properties in the High Street in the winter and times of heavy rainfall. There are foul drainage problems in Fen End.
- Part of the site is shown on Environment Agency maps to be in an area at medium risk of flooding.
- Can the existing sewerage system cope?
- Will the sewage pipe along the High Street need to be replaced, causing more traffic problems?
- Local electricity supply is likely to be inadequate. Will the substation be upgraded?
- Recreational facilities and surgery inadequate to serve the village's current population.
- Local school intake levels are already high.
- The proposal will affect local school class sizes. Will there be a school extension, and where?
- New influx of youth has led to difficulties in policing the village.

### *The village generally*

- There has been enough recent development - Balland Field, Saxon Way, Pyrethrum Way, Willow Brook.
- Too much construction noise, traffic, general inconvenience.
- With Northstowe coming, this extra development is not needed.
- Those jobs within the locality are mainly low paid and would not finance the purchase of the proposed dwellings.

### *Policy and approach*

- Villagers voted to reject these proposals at the Public Meeting in October.
- This housing allocation is contained in the draft LDF. To grant approval at this stage would be premature.
- In the LDF draft (Rural Centres Preferred Option Report) Willingham fails to qualify as a Rural Centre as it does not meet any of the four key criteria. Cambourne has been identified as capable of absorbing the District's housing need, so this development is not needed.
- Planners/ developers show total disregard for building anything but more and more houses.
- "Directions from government do not have to be correct or in the interests of the people you represent - be resolute and stand up and be true".

### **Planning Comments - Key Issues**

29. As the site has been allocated in the adopted Local Plan, the main issues relate to the details of the proposal rather than to the principle of residential development. The developments planned at Northstowe and Cambourne, as referred to by some objectors, are not relevant to the consideration of this application.

#### ***Traffic and access***

30. The submitted transport assessment concludes that the development will have a maximum 5% impact on High Street in the PM peak, which is not considered to be a major impact. The overall frequency of accidents on the B1050 is low (2.4 accidents a year) and very few accidents have occurred close to the site area. The report concludes that the overall impact of the development is low and the additional traffic flows will not make the existing situation any worse. The Highway Authority has accepted this assessment, as well as the proposed works to narrow the High Street at the site entrance. This is a main concern for the Parish Council and many of those who have written in, but on the advice of the Highway Authority I consider this aspect to be acceptable.

31.

#### ***Layout, design and mix***

32. The design statement and concept drawing accompanying the application show that the layout has been designed to reflect the informal nature of Willingham's side roads. The access road is flanked tightly by two new houses, between which views to an area of public open space and adjoining countryside are available. In the centrepiece of the site there is a triangular area of open space around which are a few 3-storey houses to provide a central focus. Dwellings around the listed barn are clustered to reproduce the form of a farmyard, which are the subject of continuing discussions with the agent. Subject to this, I consider the layout to be acceptable.

33. The mix of dwellings varies from 1-bed to 5-bed, and from 2- to 3-storey heights. There are a variety of styles and scales of buildings, using a restricted range of materials that can be found in Willingham, including light buff brickwork, render and

stained timber cladding to walls, and a mixture of slate and pantile roof finishes. Access roads vary from shared surface to standard double pavement.

***Density/open space***

34. The density of 39.2 dwellings per hectare exceeds the minimum required by Policy SE2, but this is acceptable in this central position adjacent to the High Street. The proposal does not include open space or play areas to the standards set out in policy RT2, however the Cultural Services Manager has indicated that a satisfactory approach in this instance would be for the developer to make a contribution towards improvements to the village's recreation ground, which is within walking distance of the site. This forms part of my recommendation.

***Affordable housing***

35. The provision made in the scheme has been assessed as acceptable and in compliance with Policy HG7 by the Development Manager.

***Impact on neighbours***

36. The main aspect to be considered is the effect on properties fronting High Street. Two occupiers have written with concerns. Those of No.20 have been addressed by the developer by the inclusion of a 1.8m high brick wall on the boundary, to provide visual screening and to reduce disturbance from traffic. The rear boundary of No.22 has been shown to have a fence 2.2m in height in order to reduce overlooking of the rear garden from proposed rear windows in Plots 13-15. The distance to the boundary from these windows is 11 metres. In my opinion this distance together with the proposed fence height is sufficient to overcome serious overlooking of the neighbours' garden from the proposed windows.

***Infrastructure and drainage***

37. Consultation responses are awaited from the Environment Agency and Anglian Water. A verbal update will be presented to members at the meeting. The Parish Council and objectors have raised a number of related concerns. In some cases the developer has indicated that he is willing to make appropriate contributions to the Parish Council and County Council in respect of recreation ground extension, recreation facilities, village hall, cycle links and educational facilities. In others, such as electricity supply, public transport, road network and policing, further information can be sought from the applicant if Members require this.

***Recommendation***

38. Subject to (1) no objections being received from the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and Over and Willingham IDB (2) suitably amended plans to take account of requirements for refuse vehicle access and Conservation Manager, and (3) the prior signing of a Section 106 Agreement to cover the following items - affordable housing provision, education contribution and contribution towards the provision of a village hall, contribution in lieu of provision of outside play areas towards the extension of the recreation ground and provision and maintenance of facilities upon it, public open space and its maintenance, and public arts provision then:

Delegated powers are sought to approve the application, as amended by plans date stamped 20<sup>th</sup> October and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2004, subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard Condition A - Time limited permission (Reason A);
2. Sc5a - Details of materials for external walls and roofs, doors, garage doors, and eaves(Rc5a1i);
3. Sc51 - Landscaping (Rc51);

4. Sc52 - Implementation of landscaping (Rc52);
5. SC56 - Tree protection during the course of development (Rc55);
6. Provision and retention of boundary treatment (Rc60);
7. Footpath construction adjacent to western boundary to use a 'no dig' method;
8. Sc5f - Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas (Reason - To minimise disturbance to adjoining residents);
9. Fire hydrants;
10. As recommended by the Ecology Officer;
11. As recommended by the Highway Authority;
12. Conversion of garages to living accommodation to require planning permission;
13. Restriction of hours of use of power operated machinery during the period of construction;
14. Investigation of site for contamination;

+ any conditions required by the Environment Agency or Anglian Water.

### **Informatives**

As recommended by Ecology Officer, Environmental Health Officer, Environment Agency and Anglian Water.

### **Reasons for Approval**

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
  - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
    - P1/3** - Sustainable Design in the Built Environment
    - P5/3** - Density
    - P5/4** - Meeting locally identified housing needs
    - P6/1** - Development-related provision
    - P6/4** - Drainage
    - P8/2** - Implementing sustainable transport for new development
    - P8/5** - Provision of parking
    - P8/8** - Encouraging walking and cycling
    - P9/8** - Infrastructure provision
  - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
    - SE2** - Rural Growth Settlements
    - SE9** - Village edges
    - HG3** - Allocations in Rural Growth Settlements
    - HG7** - Affordable housing on sites within village frameworks
    - HG10** - Housing mix and design
    - TP1** - Planning for more sustainable travel
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    - CS10** - Education (financial contributions)
    - CS13** - Community Safety
    - RT2** - Provision of open space in new development
    - EN5** - Landscaping of new development
    - Willingham 1 and Willingham 2** - Residential allocations and Legal Agreements

2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:

- Residential amenity including noise disturbance and overlooking issues
- Road layout, access and highway safety
- Design and appearance and visual impact on the locality
- Infrastructure and drainage
- Open space provision and landscaping
- Provision of affordable housing

**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/1785/04/F, S/1701/04/LB, S/1572/01/F

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