

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

4 July 2012

**AUTHOR/S:** Planning and New Communities Director

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### **S/0809/12/FL – IMPINGTON**

**Erection of 72 Dwellings (Including 29 Affordable Dwellings), Vehicular Access, Public Open Space, Car Parking, Associated Landscaping and Infrastructure for Bellway Homes Ltd.**

**Recommendation: Approval**

**Date for Determination: 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

#### **Notes:**

**This application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination as it is a major application and the recommendation of Histon and Impington Parish Council conflicts with the officer recommendation.**

**To be presented to the Committee by Kate Wood**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. The site is located within the Impington village framework. It measures 2.44 hectares in area and is a brownfield site that formerly comprised the SAICA cardboard packaging factory but is now vacant land. The buildings that have recently been demolished consisted of a 10,400 square metres production facility building and a 1,400 square metres storage warehouse. The buildings were surrounded by hard landscaping and there were also a number of tanks. There are currently three vehicular access points off a private right of way to the south. A hedge, trees, and an awarded watercourse run along the western boundary of the site. A leylandii hedge, ditch, and a private access road run along the southern boundary of the site.
2. Open Green Belt land lies to the south and west. A residential development lies to the south east. An electricity substation is located to the east with residential development beyond. A bridleway and the Cambridge Guided Busway run along the northern boundary with an office development beyond.
3. This full planning application, received 13<sup>th</sup> April 2012, proposes the erection of 72 dwellings together with an area of public open space. The residential development would be situated on the eastern section of the site (1.7 hectares) and the public open space would be situated on the western side of the site (0.5 hectares). The density would equate to 42 dwellings per hectare.
4. 29 of the 72 dwellings would be affordable and located on the north western and south eastern sections of the residential development. The mix would be 10 x 1 bedroom dwellings, 13 x 2 bedroom dwellings, 5 x 3 bedroom dwellings, and 1 x 4 bedroom dwelling. The remaining 43 of the 72 dwellings would be available on the open market and located on the western and southern areas of the residential development. The mix would be 17 x 2 bedroom dwellings (40%), 11 x 3 bedroom

dwelling (26%), 12 x 4 bedroom dwellings (28%), and 3 x 5 bedroom dwellings (6%).

5. The dwellings would range from two storeys in height (8 metres) to two and a half storeys in height (10.3 metres). The two and a half storey dwellings would be located to the west facing the public open space and the two storey dwellings would be located mainly to the south, north and east facing the roadways. There would be 13 different house types. The design of the dwellings would reflect traditional Victorian dwellings in the surrounding area with features such as bay windows, door canopies, and decorative brick arches above windows. The materials for construction would be buff bricks (two types) with red brick detailing or render for the walls and artificial slates for the roofs. The developments would have small groups of dwellings with the same materials.
6. A total of 126 parking spaces would be provided for the whole development that includes 111 allocated spaces and 15 visitor parking spaces. Some parking spaces are on plot and some parking spaces are in parking courts. A shed would be provided within the rear garden of each single dwelling for cycle parking and each dwelling within the blocks of flats would have a cycle space within a cycle store that would be provided within the communal garden area.
7. Each single dwelling would have three bins with a storage area within the private rear garden. Each dwelling within the blocks of flats would have at least two bins with a storage area provided within the communal garden.
8. Villa Road would be widened to 5 metres within the site area and there would be a central access point to the residential development off that would measure 5.5 metres wide with 1.8 metre wide footpaths each side. There would also be a shared private driveway to the western end adjacent the public open space. A new 1.8 metre wide footpath would be provided along the northern side of Villa Road that links to a new footpath to the southern side and a footpath link to the Guided Busway and bridleway through the development. A two metre high acoustic fence is proposed along the northern boundary adjacent the Guided Busway.
9. The public open space would provide a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) together with informal children's playspace and informal open space. A belt of trees and a hedge would be planted along the eastern boundary adjacent the residential development and the hedge and tree along the western boundary would be retained.
10. The existing ditch along the site frontage would be culverted and a new swale would be provided in its place with a hedge behind. A swale would also be provided within the public open space and link with the awarded watercourse along the western boundary.

### **Planning History**

11. **S/2530/11** - Demolition of Existing Factory Buildings and Hard Landscaping - Approved
12. **S/2456/11** - Erection of 68 Dwellings (Including 27 Affordable Dwellings), Vehicular Access, Public Open Space, Car Parking, Associated Landscaping and Infrastructure following Demolition of Existing Factory Buildings and Hard Landscaping - Withdrawn
13. A number of applications have been submitted over the past 20 years for extensions and outbuildings in connection with the former factory at the site.

## **Planning Policy**

14. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Core Strategy DPD, 2007:**  
ST/4 Rural Centres
  
15. **South Cambridgeshire LDF 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  
HG/2 Housing Mix  
HG/3 Affordable Housing  
ET/6 Loss of Rural Employment to Non-Employment Uses  
NE/1 Energy Efficiency  
NE/3 Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development  
NE/6 Biodiversity  
NE/11 Flood Risk  
NE/12 Water Conservation  
NE/14 Lighting Proposals  
NE/15 Noise Pollution  
NE/11 Flood Risk  
SF/6 Public Art  
SF/10 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments  
SF/11 Open Space Standards  
TR/1 Planning for More Sustainable Travel  
TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards  
TR/3 Mitigating Travel Impact
  
16. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):**  
Open Space in New Developments SPD - Adopted January 2009  
Trees & Development Sites SPD - Adopted January 2009  
Landscape in New Developments SPD - Adopted March 2010  
Biodiversity SPD - Adopted July 2009  
District Design Guide SPD - Adopted March 2010  
Affordable Housing SPD- Adopted March 2010  
Public Art SPD - Adopted January 2009

## **Consultation by South Cambridgeshire District Council as Local Planning Authority**

17. **Histon and Impington Parish Council** – Has the following comments: -  
  
“The joint response from Histon & Impington Parish Councils dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012 to the initial application and the discussions held with the developers since, have only resulted in one minor alteration that we view as an improvement. The overall application still has many flaws, weaknesses and shortfalls. Therefore, Histon & Impington Parish Council cannot support awarding planning permission at this stage.  
  
HIPC recommends refusal of this planning application, notwithstanding that there are some welcome details in the application for these much needed residences.

HIPC finds that the detail of the flooding prevention and drainage proposals are incomplete and give cause for concern, the pollution has not been measured under the former concrete slabs and further pollution has been created by the means of demolition, the guided bus access is not shown as being agreed by CCC and the design unsafe, aspects of the design are contrary to the recommendations of the police, the proposed footpath on the Villa road access requires a double crossing of the road, the proposed open area being subject to water-logging and not being an all year round facility, the LEAP is undefined, the lack of competition in high speed internet provision, the reduction of car parking provision to the extent that the amenity of the site will be severely affected (like Orchard Park), the important landscaping for this site is undefined, the noise barrier proposed has many issues, there is no indication of a prior on site archaeological inspection, and the facing of the tallest buildings on slightly elevated land onto the green belt (contrary to SCDC policy). Together these points convinces HIPC to recommend refusal.

### Employment

HIPC would wish the site to be retained for commercial use but understand from discussions with SCDC Planning Officers that under current LDF policies such a position is not defensible. We require that the new LDF defends the need for an appropriate commercial/residential mix or else ditches the concept of Rural Centres and abandons further housing development in our community.

### Flooding and drainage

HIPC notes there is no intention to develop on the lands designated within the Flood Zones by the Environment Agency. There are however consequential issues arising from their plans.

The ditch alongside the site on the north side of Villa Road (designated by the applicant as "Saica Ditch") is outside the red line on the planning application map in the Design and Access Statement. HIPC is concerned about the lack of arrangements for the maintenance of this ditch, especially as:-

- The ditch is to be faced with a newly proposed hedge (admirable in itself) which will inevitably lead to leaf fall and debris accumulating in the ditch
- The V section will initially enable increase in capacity during peak flow, but the ditch is to be culverted under the road access to the site (and for shorter lengths under the footpath access)

The Environment Agency report (copied in the appendix to the Flood Risk Assessment) stresses that the run off from the site will inevitably exceed that of the current situation.

The culvert into the Award Drain 172 is in poor condition and needs attention.

The water table recorded during a drought period showed the table within 1.3m of the surface. At such depths the open areas will puddle and be wet after every significant rainfall. [See also comments below on the open space].

### Pollution

The geo-environmental survey has not been updated since the previous application. The applicants were also informed about HIPC's local knowledge that in its early commercial use there were fewer regulations and even less care taken on this site. HIPC would expect that if SCDC were minded to grant planning permission, given

the flagrant disregard for the imposed conditions under which demolition was agreed to be carried out, that it should be a condition that a further survey of the site as is now undertaken to determine the extent of the additional pollution created from this source, which included the breaking up of asbestos based cement, and continuous burning of materials on site.

HIPC notes that a new document "Remediation Action Plan" was included with the amended application. The intention is admirable but, given the experience of the applicant not following the Demolition Method that they filed (detailed in the report to be prepared by HIPC with the assistance of many residents), HIPC would anticipate closer supervision being undertaken by SCDC to ensure compliance.

HIPC notes that the plan refers to removal of existing (that is pre-demolition) asbestos contamination in the soil.

HIPC would expect SCDC to condition the commencement of residential development on successful soil tests indicating the ability to remove the previous proposed restrictions on householders growing vegetables for consumption, and the advice to wash children's hands immediately after contact with the soil.

To achieve this, SCDC will probably need to engage external consultants. HIPC would expect the developer to fund these resources.

It is noted that in the Environment Agency letter copied as Appendix C to the Flood Risk Assessment states that SUDS and soakaways cannot be installed on the polluted site. This could have serious ramifications. Unless the pollution is cleared to at least the depth of the soakaways, the rain water from the site would need to be removed via the foul water sewer. The foul water sewer and the pumping arrangements at Home Close are already close to maximum capacity. The same foul water sewer at Kay Hitch Way, as SCDC well knows, backs up on moderate rainfall. HIPC is convinced that Anglia Water Authority would not permit extra rain water discharge to this sewer. This reinforces the extent of the requirement to clean the site and for this to being dependently certified as being successfully completed.

Furthermore, HIPC requires SCDC to include notification of the previous pollution on all house purchase searches submitted for this site.

#### Guided Bus Way Access

HIPC have not seen any documentation showing that the County Council has agreed to this access. Indeed, HIPC note that during the construction of the guide way that extra access points were vigorously resisted, including a match day access from Histon FC ground to facilitate spectators using the Guided Bus to access the ground.

Assuming the access is permitted, HIPC note:-

- The guide way is used extensively by pedestrians and cyclists, many of the latter at significant speed
- The mixed traffic along the 3m wide maintenance track requires careful and considerate use to avoid accidents: "there are no rules of the road" and cyclists find they need to adjust their line of travel to avoid pedestrians.
- The proposed access is at an acute angle of approach effectively through a narrow 2m wide gap in the proposed noise barrier: there are no sight lines

The design makes HIPC question whether this would be a safe route for children going to school. HIPC supports SCDC's efforts to encourage sustainable transport use but feel that any predictions of walking and cycling use involving junior members of the community must assume that they will use the Villa Road access to the site.

Furthermore, in our last comments we noted that the car park provisions (numbered 23 and 24 on the amended plans and the two adjacent visitor spaces) on the site (placed over the 6m wide easement for the foul water sewer) are vulnerable to planned and opportunistic crime. Previously, HIPC had assumed some protection from the CCTV cameras on the nearby Histon and Impington Guided Bus stop, but are now aware that the registration of these facilities permits their use solely for surveillance and evidence provision on the guide way facilities and any crime committed thereon.

HIPC would expect SCDC to have consulted the Police Architectural Liaison Officer on this specific point as well as on the proposed development in general.

#### Villa Road access

Villa Road currently has no pedestrian (or cycle-path for that matter) separation from vehicular traffic. HIPC notes that the developer is proposing a new footpath on the South side of this part of Villa Road. Given the previously noted unsuitability for use by younger residents of the guide way access (even if granted), HIPC considers the proposal to be unsafe, requiring as it does two crossings of Villa Road. Only a footpath on the Northern side of Villa Road would be acceptable.

HIPC, as mentioned elsewhere strongly supports SCDC efforts for sustainable transport but notes that the developer reckons that the nearest bus stop is 550m from the site (and much further for those houses within the site). It is of interest that SCDC policy on affordable homes on exception sites (ref: HG5) requires a maximum distance to a bus stop of 400m.

The road access into the site will only be used from the easterly direction. HIPC considers that it is inevitable that cars will cut this corner and therefore a small traffic island be inserted to reduce the clear accident risk: there is sufficient space to splay the entrance a little to facilitate this. A consequence of such an island would be to slow the incoming vehicles, a safety improvement that HIPC would welcome.

The junction with South Road needs consideration before planning is approved. This is outside the site, but the development will change considerably the vehicular flows at this junction. It also urges SCDC to produce its own transport analysis given the County Council's unwillingness/inability to review the effects of new development on anything less than substantial new developments. Trip generation of 1200 weekly vehicle movements at peak times onto the B1049, the majority of which would trigger the lights at the Cambridge Road junction with the B1049 and cause further bottlenecks to the traffic passing through the settlement from the North in the morning peak period.

#### Open Space

The applicant considers this to be suitable as public open space. HIPC completely rejects this assertion. The land may not be flooded often (it is according to the quoted letter from the Environment Agency in the Flood Risk Assessment a flood attenuation site) but with the high water table the land will inevitably be often too wet for use. HIPC is expecting that the developer will make a contribution under the

terms of the SCDC Supplementary Planning Documents for Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities to the Parish Council for proper provision.

HIPC notes a precedent that for a similar situation in Impington at the former Unwins site the developer accepted that a grassed area would not be available for periods of the year and did make a full SPD contribution.

#### LEAP

The developer has not indicated the use and scale of the facility to be provided, and or arranged for on-going maintenance. The indicative placement does mean access is across the often water logged area. HIPC would expect this to be changed to an elevated section (perhaps using re-use of material from the site during development) that is contiguous with the developed section.

HIPC notes that the original proposal for steps into the open area have been replaced with a wheelchair and child transport friendly ramp: this appears to have been the only amendment made in respect of the joint Parish Councils' submission and discussions with the developer to the previous application.

#### BT Only

HIPC notes that with the reduction in employment within the village, the trend for working within the dwellings should be encouraged. This would help reduce travel to work volumes. Whether working at home, or the more facility intensive working from home, the incorporation of future proof arrangements are to be welcomed. As the area is already being fitted for high speed broadband, HIPC considers that not only should the dwellings be connected to the fibre optic networks but, because wi-fi operates at significantly lower speeds than the new connections, that the houses should include some high speed wiring. The cost is minimal but the marketing advantage would distinguish these dwellings from others.

#### Housing mix

HIPC notes the change from last time. No comment is made on changing from 6 three bedded to five bedded and one six bedded dwelling. The provision of many two bedded dwellings is applauded but, on the advice received from those allocating affordable social rented houses in the area question the desirability of having so many single bedded properties. HIPC recommends reconsideration to allow more two bedded and fewer single bedded dwellings.

#### Car Parking Provision

HIPC noted that the previous application did include the maximum car parking space under current SCDC policy. The experience of Orchard Park demonstrates that not providing sufficient spaces considerably reduces all residents' amenity. The new application has reduced the parking provision. HIPC finds this unacceptable. SCDC are reminded that the policy is to reduce car usage (a policy strongly supported by HIPC which notes the aspects of this application towards this objective) not to reduce car ownership. HIPC can not support this application on this aspect alone.

#### Layout

HIPC notes the additional, admittedly small, green space within the development which is appreciated.

The affordable homes are still over the most polluted parts of the site: this provides even more reason for the strict oversight of the clean-up programme.

### Landscaping

The Councils have not received a landscaping proposal for the site. The site plans do have indicators of trees (e.g. on the western boundary of the built development) but the effectiveness of these will be very dependent on variety selected. As the site is adjacent to the green belt, the guide way and is relatively dense, HIPC would expect to be consulted. Any planning permission granted should be conditional on an agreed landscaping plan. Planting next to the guide way will need the approval of the Guided Bus Operators (the County Council).

The location (and contents) of the wild flower area needs further consideration. HIPC notes that the wild flower area agreed as part of the guided bus development near Gatehouse Lane has already fallen into disuse and dilapidation: maintenance responsibilities and funding need to be agreed.

Landscaping of a site such as this is a critical planning issue, not an afterthought.

### Noise Barrier

The developers have proposed a noise barrier along the Guided Busway. It is noted that the noise readings submitted do show peak values after 22.00 hours of more than 70db. This was the World Health Organisation level prescribed by the Planning Inspector in his deliberations on the guided bus project. It is not clear to HIPC whether his prognostications related to housing by the guide way needs also to be applied to new development.

It is noted that these 2m high barriers at their westerly end will be protecting houses which are on land which is 1m below the level of the guide way, making a 3m barrier in total. Given the small size of the gardens backing onto the guide way this will effectively box in the small area, making plant growth challenging and leading to further coverage of the land (increasing speed of rainwater run off) and a poorer environment for the residents. HIPC invites SCDC to consider how this can be improved. A suggestion is that instead of a timber based noise barrier a green barrier is used incorporating climbing or trailing plants. HIPC can provide more detail if required.

Regardless of design, these noise barriers will be on the land within the site (probably on the immediate boundary). Maintenance arrangements (including access on the maintenance track of the guide way) need to be clarified.

### Archaeological Survey

HIPC continues to press for a full archaeological survey. The applicant's desk top survey indicates sufficient cause, supported by local information from the history section of the Village Society, for this to be required.

### Renewable energy

The applicant proposes solar panels on all houses. It is clearly in the interests of the market house residents for these houses to be to the same energy standards as the affordable homes.

## View from the Green Belt

The original application was in contravention of SCDC policy (GB/2 and GB/3) on both the southern and westerly edges with the maximum height building facing the green belt. The current application has addressed the southerly edge into the green belt, but the two and half story (aka three storey houses) still face westwards over a land which is lower than the development site.

If only for this reason the plans should not be approved.

## Location

The site is located within the Parish of Impington. The applicants were informed at the public consultation and in our meeting with them. However, many of the documents are still labelled "Histon".

## Construction

If planning permission is granted, HIPC would expect the following conditions on the construction

- ⤴ Construction and disturbance limited to working hours Monday to Friday
- ⤴ Deliveries from the B1049 to be only through Chequers Road ( in line with the existing restrictions in the area on all goods vehicles)
- ⤴ Deliveries to avoid travel to and from school times."

18. **Local Highways Authority (Development Control)** – Comments that the dimensions shown on drawing number BW109-010 Revision C are acceptable except that a maintenance strip should be shown to the shared surface between Plots 57/59. Further comments in relation to drawing number BW109-002 Revision N that block paving is not acceptable for the footways adjacent to the raised table between plots 69/69 and 59/72.
19. **Local Highways Authority (New Communities)** – Commented on the previous application that a transport statement is appropriate for this size of development and considers that the site is well located with respect to local amenities, is accessible by non-car modes of transport and particularly public transport, that the traffic generated would be commensurate with the level of traffic associated with the existing use, that the impact on the local highway network is acceptable, that the development would remove significant levels of goods vehicles from the highway network, and that the parking would be consistent with the District Council's standards. The Guided Bus Team has requested a contribution but this is not considered CIL compliant. Requests a condition in relation to the implementation of the Travel Plan.
20. **Housing Enabling Manager** – Comments that 40% of the dwellings would be affordable which is in accordance with Policy HG/3. There is a good mix of different sized affordable houses and the tenure mix of 50% social rented and 50% intermediate is acceptable in terms of the viability of the scheme. All homes need to meet the Homes and Communities Agency design and quality standards that include lifetime homes and a minimum sustainable code level 3. Notes that some of the dwellings are located on private roads that would require extra charges for households on low incomes.
21. **Environmental Health Officer** – Comments that the acoustic report submitted with the application identifies the dominant noise sources affecting the site as the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, the Premier Foods industrial unit, and the road

traffic along Villa Road and the A14. Future noise levels have been predicted at the facades of the dwellings and the amenity areas and noise mitigation and insulation measures in the form of an acoustic fence and glazing and mechanical ventilation strategy are recommended. These measures are considered to provide an adequate level of protection against noise and a reasonable level of amenity and quality environment for future residents. Requires condition in relation to the details and implementation of the noise attenuation measures, times of use of power operated machinery, and external lighting. Also request informative with regards to the burning of waste on site and pile driven foundations.

22. **Contaminated Land Officer** – Requests a condition in relation to a detailed scheme for the investigation and recording of contamination and remediation measures.
23. **Environment Agency** – Comments that the development is only acceptable providing conditions are attached to any consent in relation to flood risk mitigation measures in accordance with the principles set out in the Flood Risk Assessment, and surface water drainage. Considers that the Groundwater Risk Assessment in relation to contamination is acceptable providing conditions are attached to any consent to ensure that the contamination remediation works are completed in accordance with the Action Plan and work shall stop if any contamination is found that has not previously been identified on the site. Also requests various informatives.
24. **Land Drainage Manager** – Has no objections subject to conditions in relation to the full detailed design of the drainage, investigation and improvement of the adjacent piped watercourse alongside Villa Road at the junction with South Road, and a commuted sum towards the future maintenance of the award drain. Also requests informatives in relation to Land Drainage Byelaw Consent for connection to the award drain and Cambridgeshire County Council consent for piping of the watercourse.
25. **Anglian Water** – Comments that foul drainage from the development is to the Cambridge STW that has adequate capacity for these flows. Considers the surface water strategy/ flood Risk assessment submitted with the application acceptable.
26. **Building Control** – The access is acceptable for emergency vehicles.
27. **Trees and Landscapes Officer** – Has no objections. Comments that there are no significant trees on site but the tree protection details submitted should be installed prior to development. Requests a robust landscaping scheme to include larger scale trees with planting pits to be agreed to allow adequate rooting volume. Whilst the trees off-site at the entrance to South Road could provide a landscape feature, they are not considered worthy of preservation due to the nature of the trees and replacements being acceptable if lost.
28. **Landscape Design Officer** – Has concerns in relation to the levels of the public open space in relation to flooding and states that there should be a dry route to the LEAP. and the access ramp should have higher sides for safety purposes. The LEAP should not be enclosed with the equipment in a compound and should be spread out. The current planting along the drain on the western side and the cypress hedge along the frontage is high maintenance and incongruous. New planting suitable for this edge of countryside location should be incorporated. There is scope for large trees to be planted within the public open space. There are too many dwellings on the site that gives a lack of space for significant planting along the Villa Road frontage that may cause maintenance issues with the swale and impact upon the dwellings. Requires conditions in relation to landscaping. Also has

concerns in relation to the tapering of driveways and security of cycle stores within the rear amenity spaces to the communal gardens.

29. **Ecology Officer** – Has concerns in relation to the layout and considers that too many dwellings are being placed on the site and opportunities for quality environmental enhancements are being missed. However, no objections are raised subject to conditions to agree a habitat link from the new ditch on the public open space to the public drain and landscape measures for the banking facing the public drain. Comments that the proposed shallow swale above a box culvert and link from the ditch in the public open space would not form a satisfactory habitat link between the drains. Further details are required in relation to the ditch within the public open space to demonstrate that it compensates for the loss of the SAICA ditch. The public drain could be enhanced so that it is an attractive feature. Also comments that although water voles are not on the site, the development ignores the opportunity to improve the ecology potential of the public drain. Accepts that reptiles are not on the site but if left undeveloped there could be potential given the site being close to an existing pond and drains that accommodate frogs and toads.
30. **Archaeological Team** – Comments that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential and requests a condition in relation to an archaeological investigation of the site.
31. **Urban Design Team** – Supports the application and comments that the layout creates a successful sense of place in relation to its surroundings, distinct public and private spaces, massing that reflects the local context, focal buildings that improve legibility, well defined streets with appropriate structured built form active frontages, integrated parking, and appropriate local architecture and materials.
32. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** – Comments that the site has a low crime risk and that the layout is generally acceptable.
33. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** – Requests a condition in relation to the adequate provision of fire hydrants.
34. **Rights of Way and Access Team** – Welcomes the provision of a pedestrian/cycle link to the bridleway that runs alongside Guided Busway to enable easy access to this area and the network beyond but also suggests an additional link from the public open space.
35. **Section 106 Officer** – Comments that the proposal has satisfied the need for the provision of onsite public open space with an Local Equipped Area of Play but requests contributions towards the off-site provision of outdoor sports space, the provision and maintenance of community facilities, the provision of waste receptacles, and the provision of public art together with a monitoring fee.
36. **Arts Development Officer** – Comments that a public art plan for the development (as per SCDC SPD on Public Art) should have been explored at pre-application stage and Section 106 agreement submitted with the application.
37. **County Education and Waste** – Requests contributions towards secondary education places and waste.

#### **Representations by Members of the Public**

38. Six letters of representation have been received from nearby residents that raise the following issues: -

- i) Overdevelopment
- ii) Increase in traffic especially in rush hours
- iii) Flooding of the site
- iv) Poor drainage
- v) Bring a disused and unattractive site back into use
- vi) Much needed housing
- vii) Pressure on facilities
- viii) Access and highway safety
- ix) Parking
- x) Education contributions
- xi) Footpath links
- xii) Cycle storage
- xiii) Scale of dwellings
- xiv) Loss of commercial site
- xv) Light pollution

### **Representations by the Applicant's Agent**

39. A letter has been submitted that addresses issues raised during the consultation process. This agrees to conditions with regards to archaeology, acoustic measures, contamination, finished floor levels, ground levels, and materials. A tenure mix for the affordable housing of 50% social rented and 50% intermediate is agreed along with the dwellings being lifetime homes standards and a sustainable code level 3. The public art contribution is not agreed. In response to the Parish Council comments, it is noted that the Environment Agency and Drainage Officer have not objected, one footpath link is considered acceptable by the Rights of Way Officer, the Local Highway Authority has accepted a new footway to the south of Villa Road, the open space on the western side of the site is compatible with the floodplain, the Leap will be subject to conditions, IT facilities will be facilitated where possible so residents can work from home, the housing mix and car parking provision is appropriate with regards to local policies, and the site is not within the Green Belt itself so there can be no objection in principle to the loss of the Green Belt or the general impact upon the Green Belt.
40. The applicant's agent has submitted a water vole survey that concluded there was no historic evidence or recent activity of water voles in the public drain adjacent the site. However, water voles were found 120 metres from the site and it is recommended that the drain is surveyed immediately prior to commencement of works and if water voles are found, mitigation measures submitted.
41. A site plan has been submitted that shows the layout of the public and private open spaces and the approach in relation to ecology issues and landscaping. The applicant's do not consider that further information is necessary at this stage and the details can be agreed by condition.

### **Material Planning Considerations**

42. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are the principle of residential development on the site particularly with reference to a loss of employment, density, housing mix and affordable housing, developer contributions, and the impacts of the development upon the character and appearance of the area, neighbour amenity, highway safety, flood risk, contamination, ecology, and trees and landscaping.

## **Principle of Development**

43. The site is located within the village framework of a 'Rural Centre' as identified under Policy ST/4 of LDF. These villages are sustainable in nature as they have a good level of services and facilities and residential developments with no limit on size are considered acceptable in principle. The scale of the proposal is therefore considered appropriate.

## **Loss of Employment**

44. The use of the site for non-employment purposes is only supported if it complies with one of the following criteria set out under Policy ET/6 of the LDF (i) it is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand. Applications will need to be accompanied by documentary evidence that the site is not suitable or capable of being made suitable for continued employment use. Evidence would be required that the property has been adequately marketed for a period of not less than twelve months on terms that reflect the lawful use and condition of the premises; or (ii) the overall benefit to the community of the proposal outweighs any adverse effect on employment opportunities and the range of available employment land and premises; or (iii) the existing use is generating environmental problems such as noise, pollution, or unacceptable levels of traffic and any alternative employment use would continue to generate similar environmental problems.
45. The employment site has been marketed by Bidwells for sale and for let for commercial uses since September 2010. It has been advertised by a board on site, a brochure, mailings to local and national commercial agents, a press release, local newspapers, the estate agents website, and the EGI website. During the period between September 2010 and August 2011, there was interest in the site from 9 different parties. Only one of the 9 interested parties was looking to use the site for commercial purposes and this did not lead an offer. Seven of the other eight parties made offers on unconditional basis (four) or a conditional basis (three) on securing the use of the site for residential development. The site was sold to Bellway Homes Ltd. In August 2011 but remains on the market to date.
46. From the marketing of the site, it shows that there was a severe lack of interest in the site for commercial purposes. The agent considers that the main reasons for this poor level of attraction were the limited demand for large scale industrial units particularly over 10,000 square feet in area, the requirement for more modern units without poor specifications and dimensions and ongoing costs of maintenance and repair, the requirement for good accessibility to the site from further afield close to major roads without access via narrow roads, the proximity of the site to a residential area, the image of the buildings, and the density of the buildings and lack of manoeuvrability for large vehicles.
47. Given the above marketing campaign and apparent lack of commercial interest in the premises, the use of the site for residential purposes is considered acceptable. It should be noted that there are a number of other employment sites within the village namely at the Vision Park and Chivers factory. These issues were considered as part of application reference S/2530/11 which was approved and the buildings have now been demolished.

## **Density**

48. The net site area excluding the open space measures 1.7 hectares in area. The erection of 72 dwellings on the site would equate to a density of 42 dwellings per hectare. This would comply with the density requirement of at least 40 dwellings per

hectare that should be achieved in sustainable villages as set out under Policy HG/1 of the LDF, and make the most efficient use of previously developed land.

### **Affordable Housing**

49. 29 of the 72 dwellings would be affordable in nature. This would represent 40% of the total number of dwellings of the proposed development and be in accordance with Policy HG/3 of the LDF. There would be a range of sizes and a mix of tenures that would meet local needs. A condition would be attached to any consent to secure the dwellings as affordable in perpetuity.

### **Housing Mix**

50. The housing mix of the 43 market dwellings would provide accommodation in a range of types, sizes and affordability to meet local needs. 40% of the total number of dwellings of the proposed development would be two bedroom units and comply with Policy HG/2 of the LDF.

### **Character and Appearance of the Area**

51. The layout, scale, form, design, details, and materials of the development are considered to preserve the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy DP/2 of the LDF. The layout creates a successful sense of place in relation to its surroundings, distinct public and private spaces, massing and heights that reflect the local context, focal buildings that improve legibility, well defined streets with appropriate structured built form, active frontages, integrated parking, and appropriate local architecture and materials.
52. The two and half storey dwellings that front the public open space are not considered to harm the visual amenity or openness of the Green Belt as they would be located a distance of at least 25 metres from its nearest boundary and screened by dwellings of a lower height and/or significant landscaping.

### **Neighbour Amenity**

53. The location of the development site adjacent to the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, the Premier Foods industrial unit, and the A14 and Villa Road is not considered to result in an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance that would harm the amenities of residents of the new dwellings subject to the erection of an acoustic fence and glazing and mechanical ventilation strategy to be agreed by a condition of any consent.
54. The siting and design of the dwellings are considered to lead to an acceptable relationship to neighbours and between the properties in terms of massing, light and privacy with regards to the recommendations set out in the District Design Guide SPD.

### **Highway Safety**

55. The traffic generation from the proposal is not considered to result in a significant increase in the level of traffic from the existing lawful use. The level of traffic from the existing lawful use is estimated at 522 two-way trips daily including 417 vehicle trips compared to 616 two-way trips daily including 432 vehicle trips in relation to the proposal. The development would also reduce the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles using the roads in the long term. In addition, a residential Travel Plan has been submitted to outline methods of communication to the new residents in order to encourage single occupancy car trips and promote car sharing and the use of

alternative modes of transport as well as home working. The access widths and visibility splays comply with the Local Highways Authority standards. Materials would be a condition of any consent. The development is not therefore considered to be detrimental to highway safety and would improve pedestrian safety through the provision of a new footpath leading from the site to Villa Road.

56. 126 vehicle parking spaces have been provided on the site. This is calculated at 1.75 spaces per dwelling and would be in accordance with the Council's maximum parking standards that seek to reduce over reliance on the car and promote more sustainable forms of transport as set out under Policy TR/2 of the LDF.
57. At least one secure cycle space would be provided within a shed or cycle store for each dwelling that would comply with the Council's cycle parking standards.

### **Trees and Landscaping**

58. The proposal would not result in the loss of any important trees that are important to the visual amenity of the area. Tree protection details have been submitted in relation to the tree on the western boundary to be retained. A landscaping condition would be attached to any consent to agree a planting scheme that would be in keeping with the landscape character of the area and enhance the development.

### **Ecology**

59. The proposal would not result in the loss of any protected species. However, it is not considered to maintain or enhance biodiversity in accordance with Policy NE/6 of the LDF. There are opportunities to improve the ecological potential of the public drain and enhance the quality of the environment. Further consideration is required. A condition would be attached to any consent to maintain existing biodiversity and secure ecological enhancements.

### **Flood Risk**

60. The site lies partly within flood zones 1, 2 and 3. The public open space would be situated within flood zones 2 and 3 (medium and high risk) and the dwellings would be situated within flood zone 1 (low risk). A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with the application that identifies a number of watercourses adjacent to the site that provide potential sources of flooding. These are the Awarded watercourse (public drain) along the western boundary, the culvert and SAICA ditch along the southern boundary, the culvert underneath the eastern end of Villa Road, and the private drain to the south of Villa Road. The existing site is completely non permeable whereas the proposed development would comprise dwellings and gardens within the low risk flood zone and public open space within the high risk zone, both of which would be compatible with its location and would result in a decrease in the rate and volume of surface water run-off and an increase the volume of the available floodplain. The LEAP is considered acceptable given that it would be accessible for the majority of the year. The dwellings would have a height of 11.80 AOD that would be 300mm above the 1 in 100 year plus climate change level of 11.48 AOD. This would give adequate protection to the dwellings from flood risk. In addition, mitigation measures such as the provision of a new ditch and a swale would compensate for the culverting of the SAICA ditch. Conditions would be attached to any consent to ensure compliance with the Flood Risk Assessment in terms of mitigation measures, ground raising, and floor levels.
61. Given the improved permeability of the site from that existing, surface water drainage has been calculated to be reduced from 308 l/s to 154 l/s for a 1 in 100 year storm event as a result of the implementation of a SUDS strategy. The details

of this would be agreed through a condition of any consent through the submission of a scheme for surface water drainage.

### **Contamination**

62. A Geo-Environmental Site Assessment, Remediation Action Plan and Quantitative Risk Assessment have been submitted. The detailed groundwater risk assessment demonstrates that groundwater remediation is not required but soil remediation may be required following removal of the soil from around the former heating oil and diesel tanks areas. A condition would be attached to any consent to ensure that remediation works is carried out in accordance with the Remediation Action Plan, the collection of soil samples following removal of the tanks, and works to stop if any further contamination is identified.

### **Developer Contributions**

63. Developer contributions towards the provision and maintenance of off-site outdoor sport space, community facilities, waste receptacles, education, waste, maintenance of the awarded watercourse and monitoring are required to comply with Policies DP/4, SF/10 and SF/11 of the LDF. A condition would be attached to any consent to secure these contributions if not already agreed through a legal agreement. A contribution towards public art is not required given that it is not a requirement under Policy SF/6 of the LDF.

### **Other Matters**

64. A Refuse Strategy has been submitted that shows at least three bins would be provided within the rear garden for each standalone dwelling and two bins with a refuse store for dwelling within a block. Bin collection points would be adjacent to the roadside to allow easy access for refuse vehicles on collection day.
65. An Energy Statement has been submitted that demonstrates that the solar panels or photovoltaic panels proposed to each dwelling would contribute towards the 10% predicted renewable energy requirements as set out under Policy NE/3 of the LDF.
66. A Water Conservation Strategy would be a condition of any consent to ensure the conservation and re-use of water as a scarce natural resource.
67. The request for a new policy from the Parish Council in relation to mixed commercial and residential developments is not a matter for consideration under this application. The new Local Plan Issues and Options report is currently available for consultation.
68. The 'greening' of the noise barrier could be achieved by a landscaping condition attached to any consent.
69. The Council encourages working from home and therefore the provision of appropriate technology within dwellings but cannot insist on these facilities.
70. The site is in a sustainable location with very good access to public transport links (Guided Bus) and within walking and cycling distance from the centre of the village.
71. Cambridgeshire County Council Rights of Way Team supports the pedestrian/cycle link to the bridleway that runs alongside the Guided Busway and also suggests an additional link from the public open space. There would be a gate at the entrance to the footpath link to allow safer access for pedestrians and cyclists.

72. The junction of South Road and Villa Road is not required to be improved by the Local Highways Authority. It is not reasonable to restrict deliveries to the site at specific times or to use a certain route to get to and from the site on highway safety grounds.

### **Conclusion**

73. Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is considered that planning permission should be granted in this instance.

### **Recommendation**

73. Approval subject to resolution of the Ecology issues.  
The following conditions and informatives are suggested: -

### **Conditions**

- i) Time Limit
- ii) Approved Plans
- iii) Boundary Treatment
- iv) Tree Protection
- v) Hard and Soft Landscaping Scheme
- vi) Landscaping Implementation
- vii) Levels
- viii) Refuse Storage
- ix) Cycle Storage
- x) Local Equipped Area of Play Details
- xi) Ecological Enhancement
- xii) Ecological Mitigation Measures
- xiii) Acoustic Scheme
- xiv) Hours of Operation of Power Operated Machinery During Construction
- xv) External Lighting
- xvi) Archaeological Investigation
- xvii) Contamination Investigation
- xviii) Flood Risk Mitigation Measure
- xix) Surface Water Drainage Scheme
- xx) Improvement of Piped Watercourse
- xxi) Water Conservation Strategy
- xxii) Fire Hydrants
- xxiii) Implementation of Travel Plan
- xxiv) Affordable Housing
- xxv) Developer Contributions- Open Space & LEAP, Community Facilities, Waste Receptacles, Education, Award Drain, Waste

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents: Open Space in New Developments, Trees & Development Sites, Landscape in New Developments, Biodiversity, Affordable Housing, Public Art, and District Design Guide.
- National Planning Policy Framework

- Planning File References: S/0809/12/FL, S/2456/11, and S/2530/11

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