

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

5 December 2012

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

S/1855/12/OL – GREAT WILBRAHAM

Residential development to provide six dwellings comprising three two-bedroom dwellings, two three-bedroom dwellings and one four-bedroom dwelling and vehicular access (outline planning permission including details of access, layout and scale).

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 5 November 2012

Members will visit the site on 4 December 2012

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the recommendation of the planning officer does not accord with the Parish Council recommendation.

Conservation Area

The application will be presented by Ray McMurray, Principal Planning Officer.

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to a vacant parcel of land 0.33 ha located to the rear of four terraced houses Nos12-18 The Lanes at the northern fringe of the village. The site is adjoined by agricultural land to the north east. To the south east the site is bounded by the rear garden of No.76 Angle End, and to the south west by the landscaped setting of Wilbraham Baptist Church. Access to the site is gained from a minor cul-de-sac track from Angle End. The village primary school is located 50 metres to the west, accessed from The Lanes.
2. The north eastern and south western boundaries are marked with mature trees.
3. The site lies within Great Wilbraham conservation area. The Church of St Nicholas, which is located some 100 metres to the south west of the site, is listed grade 2 star. The agricultural land to the north east is designated as part of the historic park of Wilbraham Temple. In the LDF, the adjacent agricultural land is within the Cambridge Green Belt and the development framework limit runs along this boundary.
4. The outline application, dated 3 September 2012, proposes the erection of six dwellings on the site and the formation of a vehicular access directly onto The Lanes. The application shows a layout of dwellings in a courtyard, with three smaller dwellings (2-bed) in a terrace, a pair of larger semi-detached dwellings (3-bed) and a single detached dwelling (4-bed). The scale of the houses is given as 1.5 storeys for the smaller terraced dwellings and 2.5-storey for the larger houses. Parking for 9 cars is to be provided. The density is 27 dwellings per hectare.

5. Amended drawings were received 19 November 2012 to show the removal of the garage adjacent the front elevation of the detached house to enable landscaping of the boundary with the Baptist Church. Revised landscaping details have been provided that show:

- the removal of the existing conifers on the boundary with the Baptist Church;
- the raising of the crowns on the parkland boundary to 5000mm;
- strategic replanting with beech and silver birch trees; and
- the establishment of a native species hedge along the boundary with the 'Park',

The landscaping changes are intended to (a) obviate the concerns raised regarding 'shading' of the terrace comprising dwellings 1, 2 and 3, (b) improve the overall 'rural appearance' of the site and (c) provide for improved sunlight into the site as a whole.

6. The proposal has been the subject of extensive pre-application discussion with officers.

Planning History

7. S/1174/75/O One dwelling and garage Refused 1975

Planning Policy

LDF Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2007)

ST/6 (Group Villages)

Residential development and redevelopment up to an indicative maximum scheme size of 8 dwellings will be permitted within the village frameworks of Group Villages, as defined on the Proposals Map. Development may exceptionally consist of up to about 15 dwellings where this would make the best use of a single brownfield site.

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007:

DP/1 Sustainable Development

DP/2 Design of New Development

DP/3 Development Criteria

DP/4 Infrastructure Provision

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

NE/1 Energy Efficiency

NE/6 Biodiversity

CH/4 Development within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building

CH/5 Conservation Areas

TR/1 Planning for More Sustainable Travel

TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards

Consultation

8. The Parish Council recommends refusal on the following grounds, stating:
 - a) **'Access** - The proposed new access onto The Lanes is likely to add to already existing problems in that area. Inconsiderate parking during school drop off and pick up times will be compounded along with concerns about increasing levels of traffic (including HGV's). It is felt that Highways will need to look at this carefully with a view to expanding the yellow lines and moving the 30MPH restriction further down to the village entrance. Traffic does not slow down in enough time before reaching this point.
 - b) **'Low Cost Housing Provision** – It is felt that we cannot really comment properly on this application without knowing the agreed arrangements for this provision. The applicants have indicated that they are not able to provide LCH on this site but there is no written mention of how this would be dealt with. We are keen to provide LCH in our village but do not currently have any sites allocated.
 - c) **'Parking on site** – There are only 9 car parking spaces shown for 6 properties which is not felt to be enough. Realistically there should be a minimum of 2 per house, probably more for the larger properties and there should also be some allowance for visitor parking. Whilst the provision of 15 bike spaces is an admirable environmentally friendly gesture, given the rural nature of the village it is felt that bikes cannot be used as an alternative to a car.
 - d) **'Biodiversity** – The report is not a true representation of the site and evidence has been submitted from a long time ago. Anecdotal evidence shows that there is a vast amount of wildlife on and using the site which will be lost.
 - e) **'Height of the buildings** – The proposed houses will be much higher than surrounding properties which will cause overlooking of houses and gardens, which is exacerbated by the 'back land development'.
 - f) **'Sewerage and Flooding** – Many parts of the village, and particularly Angle End already experiences problems with sewerage smells because of overload of the antiquated system. We would like a guarantee from Anglian Water that this development will not increase this existing problem. The layby is a flash flooding point and we would like to know how the additional buildings would impact on this and how it would be dealt with.
 - g) **'Consultation** – A number of near neighbours have not been consulted prior to this application. There is a great deal of unrest and concern about this particular development from most neighbours.
9. **Head of Housing Strategy and Development-** The applicant is willing to commit to affordable housing but it is not agreed whether this should take the form of on-site or a commuted sum. The scheme has been valued for the purposes of a commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision. The figures have not been agreed and it has not been confirmed that on-site provision could not be achieved at a later date when detailed consent is sought.
10. **Environmental Health** – No objection subject to conditions.

11. **Ecology Officer**- No objection to the development. Whilst acknowledging the potential of the site and grassland and hedgerow habitat for reptiles it is usually possible for these to be accommodated within the development site. Recommended condition to be attached for detailed surveys for bats and reptiles to be carried out prior to development, and for protection of nesting birds.
12. **Landscape Design Officer**- Additional planting to supplement the existing planting adjacent to the Baptist Church is necessary to soften the new development. Additional planting at the entrance is recommended, as conditions.
13. **Trees and Landscape Officer** – the revised strategy for tree management and planting submitted by the agent is acceptable, subject to detailed conditions.
14. **Urban Design Officer** – Comment that the farmyard building group is an appropriate design approach to the setting and location. The garage to the front of the farmhouse looks incongruous. The massing of the farmhouse and barn should be adjusted to show the barn as the higher building.
15. **Conservation Officer** - The Conservation Officer recommends refusal of the scheme as originally submitted. The CO comments that this part of the village is one building deep following the road, giving a strong linear character to the settlement pattern and with green wooded backdrop and rural character providing the transition from settlement to countryside, and as described in para 3.18 (page 27) of the Design Guide.
16. The position of the site is important and prominent, being opposite the grade II* listed Church and as a backdrop to the nineteenth century Chapel (a heritage asset). It is partly screened from the green by a hedge & some trees, but some are deciduous giving more views in winter and the proposal would also involve the removal of some of this screening.
17. The Conservation Officer considers that consistent advice has been given that this site would not be appropriate for development due to its undesirable back land form which would be out of keeping with the character of the Conservation Area and this part of the village, the reasons for the refusal of S/1174/75.
18. In addition, the Conservation Officer has concerns about the lack of certainty and the scale, form & design of the indicative scheme. The lack of certainty is due to the form of the submission as an outline application, which provides insufficient clarity where a context is particularly sensitive.
19. Although designed in a farm/outbuilding style, the scale, proportions and height of the proposal are competitive rather than subservient to the buildings in which they become a backdrop. The top heavy proportions, numerous domestic openings & contrasting details such as the dormer balcony add to complexity and therefore to the competition.
20. The prominence of the proposed garage, together with the loss of important screening at this position, would add to the harm.
21. The proposal would therefore result in a moderate level of harm to the conservation area (CH/5) and (CH/4) settings of the grade II* listed church and the chapel (a heritage asset & positive building in the conservation area), due to its position, prominence, height, scale & form.

22. When providing previous advice, the Conservation team considered a possible affordable housing scheme for the site, in which case it was advised to consider a scheme of a farmstead layout, as the public benefit would potentially outweigh the harm. In this application, there is no significant special benefit of this type and therefore the harm would outweigh the benefit.
23. The comments of the Conservation Officer on the amended scheme will be reported to Members when received.
24. **English Heritage** – The site has the potential for some impact on the character and appearance of the Great Wilbraham conservation area. The Lanes and the northern part of Angle End are characterised by a single row of dwellings, albeit set at varying distances back from the roads. A farmyard grouping is an appropriate model for development on this site. The number of houses may give an over-developed appearance. If the pair of houses in the weather-boarded ‘barn’ were to be removed the site might have a ‘looser’ appearance.
25. It is difficult to define the extent of the harm as the application is in outline, but it would not be substantial and could be mitigated by careful attention to scale, form and massing. Any approval should be linked to the scale massing and form of buildings shown in the submitted drawings. Reducing the number of units to, say, 4 would also reduce the risk of harm.
26. Any residual harm would need to be weighed against wider public benefits, which might include helping to sustain the viability of the village and its institutions, and possibly delivering affordable housing. It would be up to the Local Planning Authority to determine whether the wider public benefits would outweigh the harm.
27. **Local Highway Authority**- No objection subject to conditions to ensure surface water drainage away from the highway and suitable surfacing of the access road to prevent debris falling on the adopted highway.
28. **County Archaeology** – The site has a high potential for archaeological interest. Recommended standard condition to secure a programme of archaeological investigation.
29. **County Council Growth & Economy** – The site lies within the catchment area for Milton Household Recycling Centre where a financial contribution for strategic waste infrastructure will be required.
30. **Anglian Water**- The sewerage system has capacity for the expected flows and there is capacity at the Teversham sewage treatment works to cater for it.
31. **Environment Agency** – the scheme is within Flood Zone 1 (low risk).

Representations

32. Representations have been received from 64, 74 and 76 Angle End on the following grounds:
 - a. Danger from more vehicular movements at an already perilous junction of two narrow roads outside the village primary school, especially to children and parents crossing the road.
 - b. Households are likely to have two cars each- insufficient parking provision;
 - c. Parked cars from visitors to the school reduce the useable carriageway to one lane at peak drop-off and pick up times. Cars also park in the narrow cul-de-

sac leading to the site. There is traffic at the junction of The Lanes and Angle End adding to the dangerous confusion of vehicle movements.

- d. There is a steady stream of cars and lorries at rush hours on the Lanes and Church Street.
- e. Loss of yet another open 'green' space in the village. Previous applications have been refused as backland development.
- f. The site is a wildlife haven for bats and birds, foxes, deer, stoats, weasels, lizards, hedgehogs and grass snakes. The biodiversity report is out of date.
- g. Harm to the conservation area from backland development.
- h. Sewers in the area are regularly blocked. This has not been properly resolved by Anglian Water.

Response from the agent

- 33. The response of the agent to the concerns raised by Great Wilbraham Parish Council and the occupiers of 74 Angle End are attached as Appendix 1.

Planning Comments

Principle of development

- 34. The location of the site is in a sustainable position within the village framework and the scale of development is within the limits indicated in Policy ST/6 for a Group Village. The scheme has not been finally determined in terms of affordable housing provision but this is accepted by the Head of Housing Strategy and Development after discussions with the applicant. The density of development is below the minimum requirement of Policy HG/1 but is acceptable taking account of the fringe-of-village location and conservation interests. An acceptable scheme for infrastructure provision has been put forward by the applicant. The principle of development of the site is considered to be acceptable.

Affordable Housing

- 35. The possibility of provision of affordable housing onsite has not been excluded by the applicant and may be possible if reviewed at the time of submission for detailed reserved matters consent.

Layout

- 36. The design of the site in the form of a farmyard court is considered to be acceptable and has been accepted by English Heritage. The scale of buildings is varied and the external treatment of each would serve to echo the approach taken.

Conservation

- 37. The concerns of the Conservation Officer are noted but the degree of harm caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area is not considered to be substantial and therefore to be outweighed by the benefit to the village of a carefully conceived design and the contributions towards infrastructure including affordable housing that would be delivered. The suggestion of a reduction in numbers of units put forward by English Heritage is not considered to be warranted given the limited benefit to the character and appearance of the conservation area that would result from it. The detailed design of buildings would be required to be the subject of an application for reserved matters consent.

Traffic and parking

- 38. The concerns of the Parish Council and local residents about safety on the Lanes arising from the proposed new access are not confirmed by the Local Highway Authority. Parking provision is in accordance with Policy TR/2.

Biodiversity

39. The concerns of the Parish Council and local residents about the wildlife value of the existing site are noted. The application has been supported by a biodiversity statement. The Ecology Officer agrees that further biodiversity surveys should be carried out before any development commences in order to mitigate any specific harm to identified species.

Other matters

40. Anglian Water has confirmed that the sewerage system and STW capacity are adequate to deal with flows arising from the development.
41. Neighbours in Angle End and The Lanes were provided with notification letters of the application and a notice was posted on site. A notice was placed in the Cambridge News. It is considered that publicity for the application has met the statutory required standards.

Recommendation

42. Approval subject to the following conditions (summarised)

Conditions

1. Commencement
2. Submission of reserved matters
3. Landscaping and boundary treatments
4. External materials
5. Biodiversity surveys and enhancement
6. Access and parking
7. Withdrawal of permitted development rights for extensions.
8. As required by Health and Environmental Services.
9. Archaeological investigation.
10. Scheme of infrastructure provision including affordable housing.

Informatives

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

- South Cambridgeshire LDF 2007
- Planning file res S/1955/12/OL

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