

**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

3 July 2013

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

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**S/0255/13/FL– CALDECOTE**

**Residential development with 4 chalet bungalows and double garages, Next to Casa de Foleta, St Neots Road, Caldecote**

**Recommendation: Refusal**

**Date for Determination: 22 April 2013**

**Notes:**

**This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination following a request from the Local Member**

**To be presented to the Committee by Paul Sexton**

**Departure Application**

**Site and Proposal**

1. This full application, as amended by details received 6 June 2013, proposes the erection of 4 chalet bungalows and garages on a 1.52ha area of currently vacant land to the south of St Neots Road, Caldecote.
2. The proposal is for the erection of 4 detached chalet style properties served by a single point of access, which is located midway along the frontage of the site with St Neots Road. Plots 1 and 4 are 3-bedroom units, with detached double garages set in front of the properties. The two central dwellings, Plots 2 and 3, are 5-bedroom units, with linked double garages at the side of each dwelling. The maximum ridge height of the units is 7.5m, and they are set back a minimum of 20m from the front of the site.
3. A newt mitigation area is shown at the southern end of the site and the application documentation refers to the creation of a new pond. The application states that the proposed dwellings will be built to the equivalent to Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
4. The north boundary of the site, with St Neots Road, is formed by a varied and unmanaged mixture of coppiced ash trees and field hedge. To the west the boundary comprises a thick but broken line of conifer trees, beyond which is a single storey dwelling, Casa de Foleta. To the east the site is bounded by an unmanaged native, predominately hawthorn hedge, beyond which a track separates this area from the rest of the dwellings along St Neots Road. To the south is an intermittent hedgerow beyond which a mixed woodland area screens views to Caldecote. Beyond the south east corner of the site is a small pond, not in the ownership of the applicant. Access on to the site is currently at the most north eastern corner of the plot.

5. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Development Statement, Construction Management Plan, Sustainability Appraisal, Conservation Report (Great Crested Newt Assessment), and Draft Heads of Terms.
6. The density is 2.6 dwellings per hectare
7. The application has been advertised as a departure from the development plan

### **History**

8. S/1516/12/LD – LDC as storage site for 4 transportable stores for Fosters Circus - Refused
9. S/1383/11 – Change of use to touring caravan park – Approved with conditions
10. S/1708/09/F – Erection of 4 bungalows with double garages – Refused
11. The application was refused on the grounds that the site was outside the village framework, that it did not accord with the housing mix required by Policy HG/2 or provide affordable housing under Policy HG/3, and that it did not provide adequate ecological data to assess the presence of Great Crested Newts and the potential impact of development on that species. Caldecote Parish Council objected to the application.

### **Planning Policy**

12. National Planning Policy Framework 2012

### **South Cambridgeshire LDF Core Strategy DPD 2007**

13. ST/6 Group Villages

### **Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007:**

14. DP/1 Sustainable Development  
DP/2 Design of New Development  
DP/3 Development Criteria  
DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments  
DP/7 Development Frameworks  
HG/2 Housing Mix  
HG/3 Affordable Housing  
NE/1 Energy Efficiency  
NE/6 Biodiversity  
NE/11 Flood Risk  
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
15. South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents  
Biodiversity SPD – adopted July 2009  
Open Space in New Developments SPD – adopted July 2009  
District Design Guide SPD – adopted March 2010

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

16. **Caldecote Parish Council** recommends approval as a departure from planning policy. The Parish Council does not consider this dispensation sets a precedent given the history of the site, and its position in an established row of houses. Approval is subject to the normal considerations regarding drainage, working hours and particularly wheel washing to prevent mud on the road.

In respect of the revised drawings the Parish Council confirms its recommendation of approval commenting that it 'notes the fact that the application is outside the village envelope, but points out that there are already houses either side. The amended application addresses previous concerns re the housing mix, and a sustainability statement is included. The offer of monies in lieu of affordable housing is noted.'

17. The **Local Highway Authority** has no objection subject to conditions which include the provision and maintenance of vehicular and pedestrian visibility splays, the use of dropped kerbs, drainage and surface construction within 6 metres of the highway boundary, provision of cycle parking facilities, and the submission of a traffic management plan which would include the control of dust, mud and debris. Permitted development rights should be excluded for gates across the approved access.
18. The **Environmental Health Officer** recommends, given the previous use of the site, that it is subject to an investigation, recording and remediation of any contamination, which can be secured by condition. A condition should also be included restricting the hours of operation of power operated machinery during the construction process. The use of bonfires and burning of waste should be the subject of an informative.
19. The Council's **Housing Development Officer** comments that the proposal requires the provision of 2 affordable dwellings under Policy HG/3. These should be 2-bedroom houses, one of which should be for rent and one for shared ownership. The preference is to secure on-site provision and therefore the applicant needs to contact local registered providers to ascertain whether or not they would be interested in taking the units on. In the event that no provider is interested, the Council will need written confirmation of this, and can then, at its discretion, seek to secure a commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision, with the cost of any valuation being met by the applicant.
20. The comments of the **Councils' Ecology Officer** and **Hardwick Parish Council** will be included in an update report or reported at the meeting

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

21. 13 letters have been received commenting on the application. Letters are supportive of the proposal for houses on the site, although some express reservations, particularly if a precedent is created. The points made are summarised below:
- a. Although the site is outside the village framework it is a natural site for housing, being more of an infill plot along a busy main road between existing housing and commercial properties. It seems a sensible solution to the need for more housing and the new residents will be easily absorbed into the community.
  - b. The proposed dwellings are in keeping with adjacent properties.

- c. Whilst density could be increased the drainage may not be able to cope with further dwellings and there may be an adverse impact on wildlife.
- d. Affordable housing should be provided on the site and one of the properties should be replaced with 2 or 3 smaller houses (3 or 4 bedrooms) which would better meet local needs. There is a shortage of 3 bedroom dwellings in the area.
- e. There should be an innovative approach in dealing with drainage. It will put less strain on the village sewage station than the 20 caravan plots already approved on the site.
- f. There should be high expectations in terms of environmental performance.
- g. Boundary treatments should reflect existing natural boundaries rather than fencing.
- h. The site is currently unsightly and the development would improve its appearance, and the entrance to the village.
- i. The additional traffic generated by 4 dwellings should not be an issue.
- j. Housing is a better option than the touring caravan site previously approved.
- k. The application contradicts itself both with the statements "enhancement by the addition of" and the "relocation of" a 4x4m pond into the new mitigation area. The owner of the pond in the south east corner of the proposed development, comments that there is no permission to move it, and is not sure whether any enhancement would have a detrimental impact on the existing pond, which has traditionally been fed with seep from the proposed development area. The site layout does not indicate the position of any new pond.
- l. Concern that the newt mitigation area will become an unapproved storage area.
- m. The whole stretch of road should be included within the village framework.
- n. One letter, whilst not objecting to the development on the basis of the special circumstances that exist for this site, would object if it leaves the village open to further successful planning applications elsewhere.

### **Representations on behalf of the applicant**

- 22. The applicants' agent has commented that whilst accepting that the site is outside the village framework it is within an area established frontage development of residential and other uses along the south side of St Neots Road, between the Caldecote Petrol Station and the site of the Enterprise Café in the village of Hardwick. There is good evidence that the site can be classified as 'brownfield' and was used when the applicant purchased as a commercial property.
- 23. The design of the proposed dwellings follows the type, scale and form of existing development along St Neots Road, whilst individually varying roof and eaves heights, adding interest to and respecting the level and character of the area. A landscape

scheme is included with the application, which has been agreed with the Conservation department.

24. The applicant has confirmed his willingness to make the necessary contributions required by a Section 106 agreement. There is a regular bus service along this part of St Neots Road connecting the local population to the village and Cambridge City. There is a footpath and cycle path along to frontage of the site, connecting to the local and wider environment.

### **Material Planning Considerations**

25. The key issues for Members to consider are the principle of development, including the sustainability of the site, housing mix, affordable housing, ecology and other matters

#### *Principle of development.*

26. The site is outside the village framework of Caldecote, which does not extend northwards beyond the main part of Highfields, 370m to the south west of the site as the crow flies. Policy DP/7 states that in such locations only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside will be permitted. The extant consent for use of the land as a touring caravan site accords with this policy.
27. The text to the policy states that it exists to ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment on the edges of villages, and to help guard against incremental growth in unsustainable locations.
28. Although the land to the south of St Neots Road, heading east from Hardwick, is characterised by a line of detached dwellings, mainly set well back from the road, with well planted frontages, the character changes between the east boundary of the application site, formed by an access track, and the petrol station close to the roundabout at the junction of Highfields and St Neots Road, to the west. Along this 350m stretch of the road there is a single dwelling, which is a sprawling low property in a plot which has a 90m frontage, and the petrol station. The remaining areas, including the application site and a 75m wide area to the east of the petrol station, are undeveloped land.
29. Officers are of the view that development of the application site for residential purposes will have the effect of eroding the countryside along this stretch of St Neots Road, to the detriment of the character of the area, and the erode the gap which currently exists between the settlements of Caldecote and Hardwick. Officers are also of the view that should consent be granted for residential development on this site it would be difficult to resist future applications for residential development on the land to the east of the petrol station, which would further erode the countryside at this point.
30. Although the applicant has pointed out that the site is within 400m of the bus stops connecting Caldecote to Cambridge and the west, with a connecting footpath/cycleway, it is located 1.5km from the village school and shop, and 1.8km from the recreation ground. Whilst it would be reasonable to expect that people will walk to the bus stops there is likely to be reliance on the car for other services, including those within Caldecote village. Officers are therefore of the view that overall this site is not in a sustainable location for additional residential development.

### *Housing Mix*

31. Policy HG/2 requires that developments of less than 10 dwellings should provide a mix of units, including at least 40% one and two bedroom units, at least 40% three bedroom units and around 25% with four bedrooms or more, unless it can be demonstrated that the local circumstances of the particular settlement or location suggest a different mix would better meet local needs.
32. The previously refused scheme proposed all four-bedroom units.
33. Although the scheme, as revised, proposes 2 three-bedroom and 2 five-bedroom dwellings the mix remains contrary to the mix required by Policy HG/2 and no evidence has been presented with the application setting out why the mix put forward would better meet local needs.

### *Affordable Housing*

34. The applicants' agent has advised that letters have been sent to at least three registered providers and to-date there has been no success in finding a provider who will take on affordable dwellings in this location.
35. To date written responses from registered providers have not been provided, however the applicant has confirmed his willingness to provide a commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision.
36. The further views of the Housing Development Officer will be reported.

### *Highway safety*

37. The Local Highway Authority has not raised an objection and the required visibility splays can be provided. The applicant has indicated that a wheel wash facility will be provided, which could be secured as part of a traffic management plan.

### *Residential amenity*

38. Officers are of the view that the development of the site as shown will not have an adverse impact on residential amenity. The concerns of the occupier of the property served by the access road along the east boundary of the application site about it becoming blocked could be dealt with in an informative on any consent.

### *Ecology*

39. The comments of the Ecology Officer will be reported, however the ecology report submitted with the application follows discussions at the time of the application for the use of the site for touring caravans. The applicant has accepted the need for mitigation in respect of great crested newts.

### *Drainage*

40. Surface water drainage can be dealt with by condition should consent be granted

### *Other matters*

41. The application is accompanied by a Draft Heads of Terms in which the applicant recognises the need for contributions in respect of public open space and community facilities infrastructure in accordance with Policies DP/4 and SF/10.

### *Conclusion*

42. Although the application has addressed some of the detailed reasons for the earlier refusal of four dwellings on this site, the objection in principle to residential development of this site has not changed. Officers are of the view that the granting of consent for the use of the site for use by touring caravans does not alter this position.

### **Recommendation**

43. That the application is refused for the following reasons:

The residential development of this site would result in a consolidation of development outside the village framework of Caldecote, which would erode the rural character of the area and the countryside between the settlements of Caldecote and Hardwick, contrary to the aims of Policy DP/7 of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007, which restricts development in such locations to that required for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside. In addition the proposal would result in a form of unsustainable development due to heavy reliance of the private car for access to services and facilities, contrary to the aims of Policy DP/1 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007, which promotes sustainable development that minimises the need to travel and reduces car dependency.

Notwithstanding the above the proposal is unacceptable as it does not provide a mix of housing units as required by Policy HG/2 of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007. In particular the scheme does not provide for 1 or 2-bedroom units of accommodation.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (adopted July 2007)
- Planning File Ref: S/0255/13/FL, S/1383/11 and S/1708/09

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