

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee
AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

7 August 2013

S/0941/13/FL – GIRTON
Erection of New Dwelling at Trinity Farmhouse, Trinity Farm, Huntingdon Road,
CB3 0LG
(for Mr Mark Dean)

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 28 June 2013

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination on the request of District Councillor Thomas Bygott.

Members will visit the site on 6 August 2013.

To be presented to the Committee by Andrew Winter

Site and Proposal

1. The application site comprises existing garden area to the dwelling known as Trinity Farm, which hosts a tennis court, swimming pool, garden outbuildings and treed boundaries. The site is encircled by neighbouring, detached residential properties and is located outside of the village framework and in the Cambridge Green Belt. South of the site and beyond the neighbour at Arcady is the approved 91 hectare North West Cambridge development site - a major mixed use expansion of the City provided in connection with the needs of Cambridge University.
2. The application, validated on 3 May 2013, seeks permission for subdivision of the site and the erection of a two storey dwelling to the north-west of Trinity Farm with a partly shared vehicular access on to the public highway.

Site History

3. C/0340/70/O - Planning permission was refused for 3 detached dwellings and a garage on paddock land adjoining Trinity Farm due to its conflict with Green Belt policy and highway safety.
4. S/2001/84/O – A new dwelling adjacent to Trinity Farm was refused and dismissed at planning appeal due to inadequate justification for the development in the Green Belt. The fact that the development need not be conspicuous was not considered sufficient reason for setting aside strong Green Belt policies.
5. S/0984/97/F – A new dwelling was previously refused adjacent to Trinity Farm by virtue of its harm to Green Belt objectives and lack of justification for being located in the countryside. Reference was also made to the increased threat

posed by the development to the coalescence between the built up areas of Cambridge and Girton.

6. S/1886/11/O - Outline permission has been granted for a major development site to the south of Huntingdon Road (on behalf of the University of Cambridge) comprising up to 3,000 dwellings; 2,000 student bedspaces; 100,000 sq.m. employment floorspace, of which: up to 40,000 sq.m. commercial floorspace (Class B1(b) and sui generis research uses) and at least 60,000 sq.m. academic floorspace (Class D1); up to 5,300 sq.m. gross retail floorspace (Use Classes A1 to A5) (of which the supermarket is 2,000 sq.m. net floorspace); Senior Living, up to 6,500sq.m. (Class C2); Community Centre; Indoor Sports Provision; Police; Primary Health Care; Primary School; Nurseries (Class D1); Hotel (130 rooms); Energy Centre; and associated infrastructure including roads (including adaptations to Madingley Rd and Huntingdon Rd), pedestrian, cycle and vehicle routes, parking, drainage, open spaces and earthworks.

Planning Policy

7. The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development having regard to the soundness of the development plan and the policies therein.

8. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Area Actions Plans:**

North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (adopted 2009)

9. **Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007:**

ST/1 Green Belt

ST/6 Group Villages

South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007:

DP/1 Sustainable Development

DP/2 Design of New Development

DP/3 Development Criteria

DP/7 Development Frameworks

GB/1 Development in the Green Belt

GB/2 Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt

NE/6 Biodiversity

SF/10 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space and New Developments

SF/11 Open Space Standards

TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards

10. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):**

District Design Guide SPD – adopted March 2010

Open Space in New Developments SPD - adopted January 2009

Landscapes in New Developments SPD - adopted March 2010

11. **Circular 11/95 (The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions)** advises that planning conditions should be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects..

Consultation by South Cambridgeshire District Council as Local Planning Authority

12. **Girton Parish Council** – “The Council seeks officers’ judgement on whether this is the sort of circumstance in which greenbelt can be developed, but unless officers have objections the Council will approve the application.”
13. **Cllr Tomas Bygott** – “Trinity Farm is designated as Green Belt, as it is adjacent to land separating Girton village from Cambridge City. The majority of that land has now been taken out of the Green Belt in order to build the Cambridge North West Development, but the strip of land along the south western side of Huntingdon Road in Girton has remained Green Belt.
14. Although the proposal for a new dwelling in the Green Belt would in most cases be contrary to policy, there are very special circumstances which apply in this case. The North West Cambridge development to the west of the site has severely affected this part of the Green Belt so that it no longer performs all the functions of the Green Belt as defined in paragraphs 79 and 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Nonetheless, the designation of that strip of land as Green Belt should remain, as it protects the character of the local area and prevents inappropriate development.
15. The above application can be considered as an exceptional circumstance requiring a departure from Policy GB/1 in the Development Control Policies DPD of the 2007 LDF, in accordance with the NPPF (and formerly PPG2):
 - The application fulfils the requirements of Policy GB/2 ‘Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt’, particularly with respect to landscaping and being sited adjacent to other buildings.
 - It would not erode the open and rural character of the area in Policy GB/2.
 - It fulfils the criterion of ‘limited infilling in an existing village’ in paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

It would also enhance the character of the local area in Policy DP/2”.
16. **Local Highway Authority** – Recommends approval subject to conditions governing: access width, access surface drainage and bound material. A planning informative is recommended to convey general advice of any works to the public highway.
17. **Scientific Officer** – A condition relating to contaminated land investigation is not required in this instance.
18. **Landscape Officer** – No objection to the application but recommends conditions to secure full details of both hard and soft landscape works and boundary treatments.
19. **Tree Officer** – The trees on site are not afforded any statutory protection and the trees to be removed are within the domestic curtilage of the property and would be considered domestic specimens with limited value outside of the site.

Representations by Members of the Public

20. Representations from 3 neighbours have been received raising the following points:

Objections to:

Scale
Visual Intrusion
Cramped appearance
Impact upon trees and hedges

Support to:

Good use of land
Good design to meet local housing demand
The proposal is 'infill development' in accordance with paragraph 89 of the NPPF.
No impact/harm to openness of Green Belt
The NIAB and North West Cambridge Site are significant factors to support the proposal

Material Planning Considerations

21. The main issues in this case are:

- the impact of the proposal upon the Green Belt and countryside;
- the residential amenity of immediate neighbours
- highway impact
- community open space and infrastructure

Green Belt and Countryside Impact

Inappropriate Development

22. New dwellings in the Green Belt are considered inappropriate development by definition under paragraph 89 of the NPPF, except for "limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan." No such plans exist for this site under current adopted policy and consequently the proposal is defined as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which will require 'very special circumstances' to clearly outweigh its harm in principle, and any other harm, to the Green Belt.

Other Harm

23. The site is situated amongst several spacious, low density plots to the southern side of Huntingdon Road all of which contribute to its open and verdant character. The proposed subdivision of the site and erection of a dwelling would add further built development to this predominantly rural context that would inevitably reduce the open, undeveloped quality of the Green Belt. Screening from mature vegetation would afford some mitigation to the visual impact of the proposal but, as with refused application S/2001/84/O, the fact that the development would be relatively inconspicuous

is not sufficient reason for setting aside strong Green Belt policies. Therefore, the development would erode and undermine the openness and permanence of the Green Belt – both of which are key factors that define its character under paragraph 79 of the NPPF.

The development would be sufficiently divorced from neighbouring properties to avoid any adverse overbearing or overshadowing impact. Overlooking would be controlled by high level windows at first floor level in the side elevations and consequently the proposal is not found to adversely harm residential amenity.

Very Special Circumstances

24. The applicant has put forward several factors that are claimed to represent very special circumstances in this instance that clearly outweigh the in principle harm of the development to the Green Belt. These are summarised below:
 - (i) The proposal would not have a material adverse impact on the visual openness of this part of the Green Belt;
 - (ii) The dwelling to the east of Trinity Farm is proposed to be demolished in the outline plans for the North West Cambridge site and the proposal can therefore be considered as replacing existing floorspace in this part of the Green Belt;
 - (iii) The North West Cambridge site substantially undermines the value of this site as Green Belt to such an extent that it no longer achieves the purposes of the Green Belt as defined in the NPPF;
 - (iv) Trinity Farm makes no contribution to maintaining a 'critical gap' separating Girton from Cambridge;
 - (v) The site has a village edge character and would not extend the outer limit of the built environment to encroach upon the countryside;
 - (vi) In terms of preserving and enhancing key views of the historic setting of Cambridge, the openness of Trinity Farm is considered to be of little significance when bearing in mind the extent of the approved North West Cambridge site.
25. The above considerations purport to outweigh the aforementioned harm to the Green Belt and to determine this the contribution of the site to the Green Belt must be assessed in context with its surroundings. Extensive reference has been made to the North West Cambridge site and its release from the Green Belt involving a significant change and impact to the outer fringe of the City. But the salient point here is summarised in paragraph 3.8 of the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan:

“Whilst the [major] development will abut the existing development in Girton Parish that fronts onto Huntingdon Road, the development is unlikely to have any direct links with that part of Girton, and will function as an urban extension to the built up area of Cambridge, to which it will link across a strategic gap, As such, it should be regarded as a new neighbourhood of Cambridge.”

26. The approved North West Cambridge development represents a substantial increase in the built form of the City and its proximity to Girton village is argued to reinforce the purpose of the existing Green Belt to the south of Huntingdon Road (including the application site) in preventing urban sprawl and coalescing of neighbouring built up areas. The Green Belt area comprising Trinity Farm and its neighbours remains and is intended to remain firmly distinct from the built up area of the City and is not proposed to be removed from the Green Belt in the Local Plan Issues and Options 2 (2011-2031). These properties form a strip of Green Belt running perpendicular to the proposed strategic gap (Girton Gap) to the Cambridge North West site and, together, their open, spacious and verdurous character plays a significant part in preserving the separation and peripheral green setting of Girton village from the outer developed City limits.
27. The approved demolition of the neighbouring dwelling to the east of Trinity Farm (S/1886/11/O) will contribute to enhancing the open character of this strip of Green Belt to the south side of Huntingdon Road and the Girton Gap. However, it is not considered to be a like for like development given its physical separation from the application site.
28. Were the application accepted on the grounds put forward by the applicant, the LPA would likely struggle to resist, in principle, similar developments on the immediate neighbouring plots in the Green Belt. This would only serve to further undermine the Green Belt character and function in this area contrary to the aims of the NPPF. Lastly, the Planning Committee is reminded that it is not open to it to conclude the site should no longer be considered as Green Belt land. That designation remains with no proposal to remove it.
29. Consequently, very special circumstances are not considered to exist in this application to outweigh the harm of the development to the Green Belt; the development is thus strongly recommended for refusal in accordance with paragraph 87 of the NPPF.

Highway Impact

30. The development is considered to have an acceptable impact upon highway safety, subject to the conditions recommended by the Local Highway Authority.

Community Open Space and Infrastructure

31. The new development would put extra demand on community infrastructure and community open space in Girton and the applicant has confirmed that should planning permission be granted a contribution towards these elements, and refuse bins, in accordance with Policies DP/4 and SF/10, can be secured via a Section 106 agreement with the submitted heads of terms.

Recommendation

32. Refuse, for the following reasons:
 1. The development is located outside of the village framework of Girton and in the Cambridge Green Belt representing inappropriate development by definition contrary to paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and GB/1 of the South

Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007.

2. The site is situated amongst several spacious, low density plots to the southern side of Huntingdon Road all of which contribute to an open and verdant character. The proposed subdivision of the site and erection of a dwelling would add further built development to this rural context that would inevitably reduce the open, undeveloped quality of the Green Belt. Screening from mature vegetation would afford some mitigation to the visual impact of the proposal but the fact that the development would be relatively inconspicuous is not sufficient reason for setting aside strong Green Belt policies. Therefore, the development is found to erode and undermine the fundamental character of the Green Belt: that being its openness and permanence as defined in paragraph 79 of the NPPF.
3. The application site and several properties adjoining it to the south and north-west form a strip of Green Belt running perpendicular to the proposed strategic gap (Girton Gap) to the Cambridge North West site (S/1186/11/O). Their open, spacious and verdurous character, along with 'Girton Gap', play a significant part in preserving the separation and peripheral green setting of Girton village from the outer developed City limits. The approved North West Cambridge development (S/1886/11/O) represents a substantial increase in the built form of the City and its proximity to Girton village is argued to reinforce the purpose of the existing Green Belt to the south of Huntingdon Road (including the application site) in preventing urban sprawl and coalescing of neighbouring built up areas. Consequently, the development would undermine this purpose and does not present very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt mentioned in reasons 1 and 2 above, contrary to paragraph 88 of the NPPF.

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

- Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPDs and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- North West Cambridge Area Action Plan
- National Planning Policy Framework

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