

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 6th April 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0113/05/F - Great and Little Chishill Erection of 11 Affordable Dwellings, Land at Heydon Road for Raglan Housing Association

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval
Date for Determination: 3rd May 2005**

Members will visit this site on 4th April 2005

Site and Proposal

1. This full application, registered on 20th January 2005, proposes the erection of 11 affordable dwellings for rent on a 0.32ha area of orchard land to the east of Heydon Road, Gt Chishill.
2. To the south of the site is a pair of semi-detached houses. To the north is a vehicular access serving a large agricultural building. To the east and west is agricultural land. The site is on the inside of a bend at the edge of the village. The road falls away towards the village. The site itself is set above the level of the road behind a grassed bank. The frontage of the site comprises a poplar hedge and tree planting. There is no footpath along the front of the site.
3. The layout plan proposes a single point of access in the northern part of the site with a roadway running to the rear of the proposed dwellings. A footpath is shown within the site, in front of the proposed dwellings, joining Heydon Road at the southern end of the site. There is no exiting footpath serving development in this part of Heydon Road for the new footpath to link into.
4. The application proposes two pairs of 3-bedroom semi-detached houses, two pairs of 2-bedroom semi-detached houses, and a terrace of three 2-bedroom houses. The houses have ridge heights of 8.7m and are set away from Heydon Road. Two parking spaces are provided to the rear of each dwelling, outside the residential curtilages, with the exception of Plot 11, which has parking at the front.
5. Materials proposed are brick, with tile hanging at first floor, and red/brown plain tiled roofs.
6. The site is outside the village framework which is adjacent the southern boundary.

Planning History

7. In January of this year an application for the erection of 14 Affordable Dwellings was withdrawn. (Ref: S/2567/03/F).

Planning Policy

8. **Policy SE5** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (The Local Plan) identifies Great Chishill as an infill only village.
9. **Policy SE8** of the Local Plan 2004 states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
10. **Policy HG8** of the Local Plan 2004 states that as an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Local Plan, planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on sites within or adjoining villages. The following criteria will have to be met.
 - 1) The development proposal includes secure arrangements for ensuring that all dwellings within the scheme provide affordable housing in perpetuity for those in 'housing need' as defined in **Policy HG7**.
 - 2) The number, size, design mix and tenure of the dwellings are all confined to, and appropriate to, the strict extent of identified local need.
 - 3) The site of the proposal is well related to the built-up area of the settlement and the scale of the scheme is appropriate to the size and character of the village.
 - 4) The development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.

Development under this policy must also comply with criteria 1), 4) and 5 of **Policy HG7** and the relevant interpretation provisions of that policy.

11. **Policy HG7** of the Local Plan sets out the District Councils policy in respect of affordable housing on sites within village frameworks. Criteria 1), 4) and 5), referred to above, confirm that such affordable housing should be limited to units of types and sizes required to provide accommodation for those revealed to be in 'housing need' by an up-to-date survey; be occupied only by qualifying persons, subject to cascade provisions, and; be secured in perpetuity by planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or an alternative form of equally effective provision.
12. **Policy EN5** of the Local Plan encourages retention of trees and hedges whenever possible in proposals for new development.
13. **Policy EN1** of the Local Plan states that the District Council will seek to ensure that the local character and distinctiveness of Landscape Character Areas is respected, retained and wherever possible enhanced. Planning consent will not be granted when it would have an adverse effect on the character and distinctiveness of these areas.
14. **Policy EN12** of the Local Plan refers to retention features and historic types of conservation value.
15. **Policy EN13** of the Local Plan sets out the Council's Policy in respect of Protected Species.

Consultations

16. **Great and Little Chishill Parish Council** recommends approval. "The Parish Council approves this application but would like consideration to be given to some contrasting tiling to be used to break-up the red/brown multi facing brick to give a more attractive appearance."
17. **The Local Highway Authority** requests that dimensions are shown on the visibility splays. It states that the road is not designed to a standard that will be adoptable, so it will remain private. It comments that the parking space 22 appears impractical and the location of two secure cycle parking spaces are shown for each property.
18. **The Environment Agency** confirms that its standing advice applies in this case.
19. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests conditions restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the period of construction. Informatives should be attached concerning the use of driven pile foundations and the burning of waste.
20. The **Trees and Landscapes Officer** states that the major area towards the rear of the site where development is concentrated appears to be dense scrub. Efforts appear to have been made to retain an element of the existing tree cover situated along the site frontage, although the quality of the pollarded poplars is generally very poor. The point of access does cut through an area of established young plantings and the location of plots 10 and 11 "squeezes" and will necessitate the removal of existing trees. This erodes the element of natural screening to this part of the site frontage, and also limits the potential to replant. This point should be addressed. Any consent should contain a condition for protective fencing of retained trees.
21. The **Ecology Officer** has concerns at the impact of the development on the local biodiversity, although the layout does try to retain more natural features than the withdrawn scheme. There are points that require further clarification.
 1. Is this site really the most suitable in the village? He states that he has been made aware of a vacant field that is more central to the village and would appear to have less wildlife interest.
 2. There would appear to be a discrepancy between the numbers of retained poplar trees as shown on the various drawings. These trees should be accurately shown to assess the impact.
 3. What is the purpose/use/habitat potential of the land between the footpath and the road?
 4. The amount of car parking and access roads appear quite significant. By removing some areas of hard surface it might be possible to retain additional fruit trees.
 5. There is concern that the present assessment states that no form of mitigation or compensation could be provided.

In order to mitigate development impact a condition should be imposed to require a scheme of ecological appraisal to be submitted, which should consider the bird species identified in the current assessment and the proposed means by which habitat features for them might be created. The fruit trees proposed for retention must be protected prior to work commencing. Shrub planting and deadwood habitats could be enhanced for invertebrates at site boundaries.

22. The **Development Manager** confirms that this scheme has been discussed at great length with the applicant and the Parish Council and the layout, house types, mix and tenure has been agreed.
23. The **Environment Operations Manager** comments that the refuse collection access road runs to the rear of the properties and the turning head is annotated 'refuse vehicle turning area'. Confirmation should be sought that this road will be to adoptable highway standard to withstand 26 tonne gross weight 6x4 vehicles. The refuse storage for each dwelling is shown to be within the porch areas at the front of the properties. Collection will not take place from the front of the properties via the footpath as this does not comply with the planning guidance. If the storage is to remain as currently shown it should be confirmed that it is large enough to house two 240 litre wheeled bins and a 55 litre kerbside box and that conveyance will require residents to place their bins on the shared access road for collection or provide further details of revised storage location.
24. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** request that adequate provision is made for fire hydrants.
25. The **Architectural Liaison Officer, Cambridgeshire Constabulary** comments that generally in curtilage parking is preferred but where this is not possible parking should be in small courts serving a maximum of six dwellings close to and within the natural surveillance of the dwellings served. In this instance, with the exception of spaces 21 and 22, there is no surveillance of parking from the highway with the remainder in a parking court serving 10 dwellings. The existence of the concrete track beyond the parking court increases the vulnerability both of vehicles parked and the backs of dwellings. A reconsideration of refuse collection might allow all the dwellings to be provided with in curtilage parking. Consideration should be given to providing lighting for the parking area, particularly if it is intended to apply for a Secured by Design award. Care needs to be taken that planting to the front does not impede natural surveillance of dwelling frontages which should provide two-way supervision.
26. **The Wildlife Trust** comments that issues raised in respect of the withdrawn application remain relevant to the new application. Small areas of natural habitat and green space within villages can be disproportionately valuable for local wildlife and for the quality of local people. Any development proposals should seek to ensure that they cause no net loss in biodiversity. It would appear that further consultation with local residents would be appropriate to try to find a suitable location for affordable homes that also ensures the protection and/or enhancement of local biodiversity.
27. The comments of the **Affordable Housing Panel** will be reported verbally.

Representations

28. Fourteen letters have been received objecting to the application on the following grounds:
 - Access is off a narrow road and will be dangerous. Cars observing the speed limit are in the minority.
 - There is no street lighting or footpath at this end of the village.

- Nearest play area is at the far end of the village and with no footpath or street lighting would be hazardous to get to.
- Site was an orchard, which was chemically experimented on for several years. Has the safety of the soil been investigated? If families are to be housed on this land surely their welfare should be of paramount concern.
- Lack of amenities within the village makes this an unsuitable location for affordable housing. There is no village shop/post office, no school, no doctors and public transport is very limited.
- Affordable housing would suggest a more affordable way of life. However lack of the above makes ownership of a car a necessity which may not be ideal for the financially challenged. Such a location will require a more costly way of living.
- The site is currently a wildlife haven with sightings of many species of wild animals and birds reported, including the Marsh Tit and badgers.
- There are many Poplar trees bordering the site and to pacify previous concerns it is stated that some of these trees would remain, however once footings are dug roots will be damaged and the trees will die.
- The electricity supply is currently under stress and water pressure is low.
- There is no guarantee that the people selected to occupy the houses will come from the local area.
- What guarantee is there that there will not be further building at a later date?
- Development will detract from the rural character of the area. A modern estate of affordable houses would not be in keeping and is more suited to an urban environment.
- One letter supports the concept of affordable housing in Gt Chishill, subject to the houses being only for rent, but not the use of this site.
- The scheme will effectively join the two villages of Heydon and Gt Chishill which will lose their separate historic identities permanently.
- The site falls within a Nature Conservation Zone and construction would be contrary to Policy SP12/1 and HG27 as well as PPG7.
- There is no parking for visitors.
- The scheme is not needed as there are very few people from Gt Chishill on the housing register to rent houses in the village.
- Heydon Road is a quiet road with little traffic and families use the road for walking and cycling. This luxury would be lost.
- The site is outside the village framework and Gt Chishill is an infill only village. A full copy of the letter can be viewed as part of the background papers and will be on display at the meeting.

- Potential overlooking of garden and swimming pool on opposite side of road to higher level of site.
- Inaccuracies in housing report:
 - talk of street lights will add to light pollution;
 - effect on local customers of light pollution;
 - properties poorly designed;
 - devalue existing properties;
 - damage to verges.

In addition a 16 page letter of objection has been received from the occupier of 77 Heydon Road. The letter expands on the above points and points to Local Plan Policies and criteria with which the site and development do not comply.

Planning Comments - Key Issues

29. The key issues to consider with this application are whether the application satisfies the criteria set out in the Policies HG7 and HG8 of the Local Plan (affordable housing).
30. Gt Chishill is identified by Policy SE5 of the Local Plan as an Infill-only village. Infill-only villages are generally among the smaller settlements in the District and tend to have a poor range of services and facilities. The text to Policy SE5 recognises that it is often necessary for local residents to travel outside the village for most of their daily needs and that these villages generally lack any food shops, have no primary school or permanent post office. It is stated that development on any scale is therefore likely to generate a disproportionate number of additional journeys, contrary to the aims of the Structure Plan.
31. Policy HG8 of the Local Plan however allows for exceptions to be made to the normal operation of policies of the Plan and states that planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on sites within or adjoining villages.
32. The Development Manager has confirmed that the scheme has been discussed at great length with the applicant and the Parish Council and the layout, house types, mix and tenure has been agreed. Any consent would not be issued until the applicant has entered into a Section 106 Agreement securing the arrangements to ensure that all the dwellings within the scheme provide affordable housing in perpetuity for those in 'housing need' as defined in Policy HG7. The Affordable Housing Panel will meet to look at these issues and its comments will be reported to the meeting.
33. The site, although outside the village framework, adjoins it to the south and is well related to the built up area of the settlement. In my view, the scale of the scheme is appropriate to the size and character of the village.

In respect of the impact of the scheme on the character of the village or the rural landscape, the site is located between the villages of Gt Chishill and Heydon. The distance between the northern edge of the village framework of Gt Chishill and the southern edge of the village framework of Heydon is only some 300m. Given that the frontage of the application site is 100m it will erode the gap between the two villages.

34. The proposed vehicular access to the site will disrupt the rural approach to the village. Although the existing frontage planting is not individually of great quality, cumulatively it does add significantly to the rural character of the area. It is essential that the applicant demonstrates the ability to provide an adequate and safe vehicular access to the site, that satisfies the requirements of the Local Highway Authority, in such a way that it allows a substantial amount of the existing frontage planting to be retained.
35. At the present time the layout plan submitted with the application shows visibility splays below the standard that are likely to be required by the Local Highway Authority and below those referred to by the applicant's own transportation planners, for a site that is located outside the 30mph speed restriction. I have requested a revised layout plan showing the full extent of the visibility splays required by the Local Highway Authority and sought confirmation that these can be provided without encroachment over third party land. Once the revised drawing has been received a fuller assessment can be made of the impact of the proposal on the character of Heydon Road. Additional detail is also required in respect of the proposed footpath.
36. I have passed on the comments of the Environment Operations Manager, the Architectural Liaison Officer, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Trees and Landscapes Officer and the Ecology Officer to the applicant and will report the response of any further information/drawings.
37. The site is owned by Bayer Crop Science, although a covering letter submitted with the 2003 application states that the land is not cultivated or used as part of its operations. A condition can be attached to any consent requiring tests to be carried out to identify any ground contamination, prior to the commencement of development, and put forward mitigation work if necessary.
38. Several of the letters of objection refer to the possible availability of what is felt to be a more appropriate site for affordable housing in the village, and that the landowner has not been approached by the Parish Council. Whilst this is a matter that might be discussed at the Affordable Housing Panel, if the application site is considered to be an appropriate site for affordable housing after taking into account all relevant considerations, consent should not necessarily be refused on the grounds that there might be a more appropriate site within or adjoining the village.
39. I shall report the receipt of any further details addressing the comments of the Local Highways Authority, Environment Operations Manager, the Architectural Liaison Officer, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Trees and Landscapes Officer and the Ecology Officer. I shall also report the view of the Affordable Housing Panel
40. If the proposal has the support of the Affordable Housing Panel, the above matters can be satisfactorily addressed, and the applicant can demonstrate that a satisfactory and safe vehicular access can be provided without having a significant adverse effect on the rural character of the area, I shall recommend that Members support the proposal.

Recommendation

41. Subject to the satisfactory resolution of matters set out in the above paragraph that the applicant be invited to enter into a Section 106 Agreement securing the provision of affordable housing in compliance with Policies HG7 and HG8 of the Local Plan 2004, and that, subject to the prior signing of that agreement, officers be given delegated powers to approve the application.

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: HG7 and HG8**
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Residential amenity
 - Highway safety
 - Visual impact on the locality
 - Housing Need
 - Nature Conservation

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning file Ref.S/0113/05/F and S/2567/03/F

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