

S/1152/13/FL

Former Bishops Hardware Store, Old Station Yard, Cambridge
Road, Impington, CB24 9NU

Erection of 29 residential apartments following demolition of
existing buildings, repositioning of vehicular access, and
associated works

Formal response
on behalf of

Histon & Impington Parish Council

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23rd July 2013

Summary response

The Council objects strongly to the development as proposed in this application on the following grounds:

- the proposed building by nature of its massing, materials, and design (in the style of an office block) is totally out of character. Furthermore, it does not, in any way, integrate with surrounding uses/buildings, and fails the design principles as set out in the draft local plan policy (HQ/1)
- there is inadequate car parking on site and no adequate/acceptable alternative locations for overflow parking
- there is inadequate noise protection for bedrooms facing the guideway, noting that all bedrooms have natural (rather than mechanical) ventilation
- it does not meet the standard for 40% affordable provision
- it does not make adequate provision for the children who will be on site in terms of safe play space
- it is overdevelopment of the site, and is inconsistent with the SHLAA
- it totally fails to follow Policy E/8 in the Draft Local Plan
- it has a negative impact on sustainability

The Council notes the public response to the open meeting as reported by the applicant in the Planning Statement, pages 5, 6 with a large majority against the development. It is confusing that the tabular response suggests that 2 Villa Place supports the scheme, whereas the text suggests that residents at this property are concerned about the scheme layout.

Parish Councillors attended the session, and one Councillor spoke to all attendees and will attest that every one but one at the time strongly condemned the plans as ugly, ill conceived and unwanted. The sole attendee who did not was a local owner who was seeking to develop houses on other side of guideway so held his counsel.

The developer has not chosen to discuss its plans with the Parish Council

Background

The site is in the Draft Local Plan brought forward by Issues and Options 2 Part 2.

In the SHLAA update June 2013 it is identified as having a housing capacity of **10**. Policy E/8 in the Draft Local Plan applies.

The commentary with E/8 presents the rationale for the proposals for the area. Histon Parish Council and Impington Parish Council grouped to deliver a single Parish Council in 2012, and the new Council is focussed on delivering a clear vision for the future of the settlement, exploiting the opportunities presented by the guideway, and making the settlement a sustainable destination of choice.

The village is the site of a number of successful specialist comparison stores (wide and diverse range - cycles, gifts, toys, kitchens, picture framing, fireplaces etc). Since the introduction of the guided bus, comparison stores that have been able to build on the siting and advertising opportunities arising from the guideway have seen business growth, delivered by the wider catchment arising from the guided

bus passengers.

With further guideway patronage growth, and the development of the growing Northstowe development Histon & Impington are uniquely placed to benefit from the location of the guideway stop. Together with the co-location of Histon Football Club and Cambridge City Football Club at the Glassworld Stadium (Bridge Road, Impington) there are clear opportunities to redevelop the station area into a vibrant centre, and this is the aim of policy E/8.

These proposals were highlighted as part of the publicity associated with the Draft Local Plan. Quoting from the Cambridge News of June 3rd, 2013 (relevant portions in **bold**)

Village 'gateway' set for transformation in plan for 900 homes

Written by CHRIS HAVERGAL

A vision for the transformation of the area around the guided busway in Histon has been revealed as part of proposals for 900 homes in villages surrounding Cambridge.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's local plan, which was published last night, backs Histon and Impington residents' calls for the land around the former railway station to be redeveloped to provide more shops, restaurants and cafes.

The ideas, drawn up by the parish council, aim to turn the village into a destination on the guided busway while preserving Victorian buildings such as the station building and the Railway Vue pub.

The local plan, which will shape the development of the district for the next two decades, proposes that housing growth in existing communities should be centred on Sawston, which is line to get 540 new houses - triggering concern among villagers about increased traffic.

Willingham, Comberton, Melbourn and Gamlingay are also in line for major developments.

Last night's announcements follow the publication last month of plans for a new town at Waterbeach barracks, a new village at Bourn airfield, as well as a major extension to Cambourne and significant development on the edge of Cambridge.

The Histon proposal covers the Bishop's site, the Clark Brothers' yard west of Station Road, and the businesses to its west on both sides of the guided busway.

It extends northwards along Station Road to include the former East of England Development Agency building, and eastwards to Bridge Road, including the businesses behind Station Stores.

The parish council wants to attract businesses that would be open from 8am to 8pm including restaurants and wine bars, around 20 homes, and also hopes there will be a local government hub - perhaps including the county council's long-planned archives centre.

Cllr Edd Stonham, a parish councillor who also represents the village on the district council, said it was good that villagers were shaping their own futures.

He said: "I think it will be good for the village because the proposals have been drawn up over a long period of time and are better than some of the proposals that might be put forward by developers.

"It will give us a sustainable area rather than just a housing area which would become a dormitory for people who have nowhere to work rather than in town.

"Residents said they didn't want more housing if there's no work and I think the parish council has worked hard to get that."

The Sawston proposals include green belt sites south of Babraham Road and between Dales Manor Business Park and Babraham Road, as well as redevelopment of part of the business park.

The district council said all of the selected sites were considered to be the most well-connected to employment sites but Cllr David Bard, who represents the village, disagreed.

He said: "One of the major issues that needs to be overcome is the traffic these extra developments are likely to put on Babraham Road, which is a really busy road already.

"The other concern is that these developments are very poorly related to the rest of the village.

"I thought we had got beyond the 1960s approach of putting huge developments on the edge of villages with very little thought about how people access them."

Many other proposals, including plans for 1,500 homes in Cottenham, have been ruled out.

Cllr Pippa Corney, the cabinet member for planning policy, said South Cambridgeshire's character and quality of life would be protected.

She said: "We've listened to our residents throughout extensive consultation on the draft plan and are pleased that parish council development ideas are also part of these final proposals.

"Reflecting local feeling, the majority of new development will be based around Cambridge and in new towns or villages with only a small percentage in existing communities, creating employment opportunities and much-needed new homes."

The environs of the station is an important area to the community. At the time of the proposals for the guideway, a campaign (SoS - "Save our Station") was run to try to protect the station buildings for the future. As evidence of the massive support for that this photograph shows a number of the supporters of that scheme.



Detailed response

The proposed building by nature of its massing, materials, and design (in the style of an office block) is totally out of character. Furthermore, it does not, in any way, integrate with surrounding uses/buildings, and fails the design principles as set out in the Draft Local Plan policy (HQ/1)

The proposal does not accord with the design principles as set out in Draft Local Plan policy HQ/1. In particular it does not:

- Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape (a)
- Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness (c)
- Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area (d)

Similarly, it fails to meet the policies in the LDF, it does not:

- protect and enhance the character of the district and local distinctiveness through careful integration with the existing built form (DP/d);
- preserve or enhance the character of the local area (DP/2a);
- conserve or enhance important environmental assets of the site (DP/2b);
- be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area (DP/2f);
- Include high quality landscaping compatible with the scale and character of the development and its surroundings (DP/2j).

Specifically, it has the appearance of an office block with atrium entrance. It is not even appropriate as a residential development - let alone in the location and adjacent to two Victorian buildings and an Edwardian row of buildings that define the local character.

The exterior finish is unique in the settlement - it does not respect in any way the local vernacular.

The Parish Council is concerned that the interior of many of the flats will be naturally dark, and require permanent artificial lighting.

In addition, without dimension drawings (and given the odd shapes of some of the flats difficult to determine anyway) it is not possible to check that the minimum floor areas of 50 sq m for one bed and 67 sq m for two have been met. This should be clearly marked on the appropriate plans.

- there is inadequate car parking on site and no adequate/acceptable alternative locations for overflow parking

The application is confused, confusing, and using inappropriate data to make its case for reduced parking levels.

NB Specific mention is made of parking bays and also a small car park opposite

the site. The parking bays have a 30 minute limit, and are in constant use for deliveries to and purchases from the Mace convenience store. The car park is private, for the use of businesses (and customers of same) to Kendal Court. Neither provides any possibilities for use by residents of the development.

The transport statement refers to Station Road as a typical **village** road - yet calculations are presented on the basis of suburban reference figures. Similarly calculations are based on 2026 figures, and, at times, 2001 census data.

And, the applicants go on to say: "*The Output Areas that have been selected contain residential properties that most closely resemble the type of properties that are proposed for the development site.*" The two output areas used (E00092086 and E00092102) are 39.12% 65 or older. It is hardly likely that the proposed development will be attractive to retired purchasers, particularly when specifically designed properties exist in Histon for prices that are likely to be significantly less. Therefore this choice of output areas is inappropriate, and any justification based on the associated statistics invalid.

Extensive reference is made to HiCar, implying both that such car sharing schemes would support the reduced car ownership and use, and that such a scheme is viable and effective in the local community. Unfortunately for these arguments, HiCar closed well over a year ago because of lack of support. Whilst car share schemes may be effective and work well elsewhere, the clear message for Impington and Histon is that car ownership is essential and the preference of the community.

Whilst both Citi 8 and guideway services are close by, there are a number of factors that have not been considered:

- both are very much radial routes - heading in and out of the city centre
- numerous work opportunities are **not** on these routes - eg West Cambridge
- commuter guideway services are frequently full when arriving at the Histon & Impington stop. Guideway services have been designed primarily for the coming development at Northstowe and towns north thereof. No extra services have been (or are likely to be) provided for the small number of additional passengers wishing to get on at Histon & Impington

Moreover, whilst the applicants are arguing for reduced car parking because of the likely use of alternative modes, they are to provide only the bare minimum of cycle parking.

The Council believes that the development is likely to be targeted at couples where both are in employment, and this therefore would exacerbate the shortfall in parking.

Furthermore, given the location of the development at a section of Cambridge Road/Station Road that is covered by parking restrictions there is no good place for any overflow.

- there is inadequate noise protection for bedrooms facing the guideway, noting

that all bedrooms have natural (rather than mechanical) ventilation

During the public inquiry into the building of the guideway it was accepted that WHO standards for noise (ie low levels at night so that people could sleep with bedroom windows open) should be applied.

All bedrooms in the development have natural (ie not mechanical) ventilation - ie people will need to sleep with windows open. Whilst ground floor windows may be adequately protected by the existing noise barriers, there are first and second floor bedrooms that won't be, and as utilisation of the guideway rises, are likely to exceed the relevant noise levels.

In addition, the ground floor rooms will be closer to the guideway than any others in Histon or Impington, and confirmation should be sought that the existing barriers are sufficient. If not additional protection must be provided.

- it does not meet the standard for 40% affordable provision
- 40% of a development of 29 is 11.6, yet only 6 (3*1 bed, 3*2 bed) shared equity (75%/25%) properties are being provided.

Whatever, we note that because of this year's changes in housing benefit the 2 bed properties will have to be occupied by families, given that a couple would not get any support towards the costs associated with the second bedroom.

However:

- it is just 20%
- rented rather than intermediate (ie shared equity) housing would be preferable

We note that both the Merrington Place, and Primrose Lane developments are providing 40% affordable. The Unwins site (now Merrington Place) was bought at the peak of the market, so we question how viability can possibly be an issue for this development.

- it does not make adequate provision for the children who will be on site in terms of safe play space

The majority of the flats (18) are two bed, which will be occupied by families with children.

There is a token "landscaped" area at the end of the parking area on the southern boundary, but is not usable for play. The remainder of the site is parking and access to parking - it is not conducive or usable for play.

The Copse opposite the development is public open space, but is a wooded area with informal paths, often used by dog walkers etc. Whilst providing play opportunities for older children (with obvious caveats) it is not suitable for younger children, and furthermore it is across a busy road. Across yet another busy road (B1049) is a NEAP at the Recreation Ground but only accessible, given the road crossings and safety concerns, by youngsters with parents.

It is essential that some safe, play space is provided on site, as required by LDF policy DP/3e.

- it is overdevelopment of the site, and is inconsistent with the SHLAA

The June 2013 revision of the SHLAA identifies the site as having potential for the provision of **10** properties.

And whilst the Local Plan is seeking development densities of 40 dph in the most sustainable locations it accepts that achieving the right density of development for a location is important to the character of a place and local quality of life.

The proposed density of 132 dph far exceeds even the densest on the urban extension that is Orchard Park and is completely inappropriate in the village environment of Impington.

- it totally fails to follow Policy E/8 in the Draft Local Plan

This is seeking a mix of:

- a. Commercial uses – workshops, retail, café / restaurant (in Use Classes B1, A1 and A3);
- b. Community uses;
- c. Residential development including work / live units.

with the aim of creating an attractive and vibrant gateway to the settlements, and specifically must integrate with surrounding uses, respect the character and maintain the vitality and viability of Histon and Impington village centre,

- it has a negative impact on sustainability

The applicant describes this as a “sustainable” development.

This development removes an employment opportunity from the community and replaces it with housing - it therefore must have a negative impact on the sustainability of the community. The ratio of jobs to those in employment, a key measure of sustainability, will further drop.

Between Local Plans Histon and Impington have gone from a job/those in employment ratio of 1 to 0.7. Impington has been most severely hit by these changes, losing employment at sites that have become Merrington Place (ex Unwins seeds) and Primrose Lane (ex cardboard factory under various ownership). These, and the Bishop's site, have provided jobs, and most importantly, jobs outside of the high tech (and therefore, of necessity, high academic skill levels) industry.

- Environment

The Council is disappointed that only “good practice” thermal performance standards are being planned. The marginal cost of improvement is minimal, and for a development that the applicant describes as “sustainable” “best practice” should be achieved.

Whilst air source heat pumps are being proposed, there is also a significant (900Kw) gas fired heating plant. It is disappointing, therefore, that whilst solar gain on the south facing areas is going to be such as to require shading that no solar thermal or photovoltaic systems have been included.

- Utilities

The utilities report makes no mention of foul drainage capacity - expecting this to

be adequate.

There are well known problems with surface water surcharge of the foul drainage system in the area, eg at the sheltered housing in Kay Hitch Way, and the Parish Council is therefore deeply concerned that this development will exacerbate the problems with foul drainage, and ask that written confirmation from Anglian Water is obtained regarding capacity and possible impact.

Conditions

Should the District Council be minded to approve the scheme, the Parish Council would seek the following conditions:

- No deliveries nor operation of power equipment on site after 1pm on Saturdays (note that the applicant is seeking deliveries "Monday to Friday 08:00 – 18:00 and Saturday 08:00 – 18:00 as per normal planning requirements."
- No deliveries during the morning peak hour (7:30-9:00) in order to minimise traffic congestion
- All site access associated with construction to be via the B1049, Chequers Road and Station Road, in order to avoid the heavily traffic calmed residential area of Cambridge Road. NB consistent with agreements for Primrose Lane
- A traffic management plan, including parking arrangements for all site workers, be agreed prior to any works on site

