

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

13th May 2005

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/0524/05/F - Landbeach
Redevelopment of Mobile Home Park to Provide 15 Retirement Mobile Units,
Bluebell Woods Caravan Site, Ely Road, for David Charles Ltd**

**Recommendation: Refusal
Date for Determination: 17th June 2005 - Major Application**

Site and Proposal

1. An irregular shaped site with a total area of 1.85 hectares on the western side of Ely Road, approximately 400m north of the Landbeach Road/A10 ("Slap Up" P.H.) junction. Between the site and the A10 is a loose ribbon of pre-war housing whilst to the rear is a collection of lakes used for fishing.
2. The site is in two sections. A 7.0m wide driveway adjacent the northernmost house, "Hayburnwyke", gives access to a "loop-road" around which are 5 mobile homes; there is a large gravelled parking area. The second part of the site lies to the south-west of the mobile homes and is mainly willow/willow scrub and other trees, the land having been excavated for gravel in the past.
3. The full application, received on 18th March 2005 proposes the redevelopment of the current 5 mobile homes site to provide a total of 15 mobile homes on a site area of 0.85ha.
4. The remaining treed area would remain.

Planning History

5. The applicants purchased the site in the early 1990's with the benefit of two earlier consents, one for two caravans, another for three. The site was laid out and brought up to a modern-day standard. Consent was granted in 1996 for a small site office. In 1997 consent for a bungalow was refused, and again in 1998. The subsequent appeal was dismissed.
6. At the January 2005 Committee (Item 16) an application to redevelop the site for 16 mobile units, together with an amenity lake in the treed area to the south, was refused, the reasons being:

"Although there is a ribbon of development to the south, and some development opposite, Bluebell Woods lies in the countryside well outside the villages of both Landbeach and Waterbeach – the centres of both being approximately 1.6km distant. The site also lies in the Green Belt.

1. As such the proposed intensification of use would be contrary to Policies P1/2 and P1/3 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) and SE8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2004) which seek to restrict

new housing developments to within village frameworks and existing settlements.

2. The proposal is, by definition, inappropriate development in the Green Belt and therefore contrary to Policies P9/2a) of the Structure Plan, GB1 and GB2 of the Local Plan, and the aims of PPG2 "Green Belts", all of which seek to protect the character and openness of the Green Belt, together with the setting and special character of Cambridge.
3. Positioned midway between the villages of Landbeach and Waterbeach, all journeys to and from the site will be by car. Such a dependence on the motor car is not sustainable and therefore contrary to Policy P1/3 - of the Structure Plan and Policy TP1 of the Local Plan.
4. The excavation and creation of the amenity lake will destroy the present area of regenerated wet woodland. Without a greater degree of detail and a site assessment such loss would be contrary to policies P1/2 and P7/2 of the Structure Plan and EN8 and EN12 of the Local Plan."

This decision is currently subject to an Appeal - Inspector's Report and Decision awaited.

Planning Policy

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:

- i) **Policy P1/2** - Environmental Restrictions on Development. This policy restricts new development in the countryside and also seeks to protect the loss of areas of biodiversity value.
- ii) **Policy P1/3** - Sustainable Design in Built Development. This policy seeks to minimise the need to travel and reduce car dependency.
- iii) **P9/2a)** - Green Belt. Aims to preserve the setting of the city of Cambridge and retain the openness of the Green Belt. New development will be severely limited.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2004:

- i) **SE8** - Village Frameworks, restricts housing development to within village frameworks.
- ii) **HG19** - Sub-division of mobile homes. Any approval for a mobile will be conditioned "no sub-division".
- iii) **GB1** - The setting and special character of Cambridge will be protected by a Green Belt.
- iv) **GB2** - Inappropriate development will not be permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.
- v) **TP1** - Aims, amongst other matters, to reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

Consultations

7. **Landbeach Parish Council** again supports the application as ‘the development will be for persons of 55 years and above and subject to a Section 106 Agreement’.
8. **Waterbeach Parish Council** recommends refusal, stating:

”The Council consider that this site is completely unsuitable for retirement houses as it is unsustainable. The pedestrian access to the facilities of Waterbeach is poor, the crossing of the A10 unsafe. Vehicular access and safety accessing the A10 is inadequate and unsafe.”
9. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** has no objections.
10. **The Old West Internal Drainage Board**

Has no objections if surface water is discharged via soakaways. Any other method must be referred back to the Board for further comment.

Representations - Neighbours

11. None received

Representations - Applicant

- Unit 14 of the previous application has been withdrawn and the site office retained.
- Number of units reduced to 15, two less than on site at present.
- Driveway will be hard-surfaced with gates fitted.
- Soil drainage system adequate to take any increase in capacity and pipe is pumped to main sewer.
- Units will be occupied by persons of 55 years and can be the subject of a 106 Agreement.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

12. The main issues for consideration are Green Belt, access onto A10, and whether or not site is suitable for housing being outside both Landbeach and Waterbeach.

i) Green Belt

Policies of the Structure Plan and Local Plan, reinforced by Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 “Green Belts”, all seek to protect a Green Belt from inappropriate development and to maintain its openness. By definition, a housing development, whether mobile homes or permanent housing of “bricks and mortar”, is inappropriate. The two earlier consents for caravans on this site were granted prior to the allocation of this land as Green Belt. Consent for such would not be forthcoming today.

If a development is deemed to be inappropriate, the question has to be asked as to whether there are very special circumstances whereby consent be granted. Here the

applicant is stating that the site is occupied at present as one mobile, plus four mobiles each divided into four small units. (NB. As a result of recent legal rulings it has been established that, unless appropriately conditioned, planning permission is not required to sub-divide a mobile home.) This has resulted in the site being occupied with one family mobile home and sixteen one-bed units ie 17 units. To redevelop the site with 15 will reduce the density.

The other argument put forward is that, with a Section 106 Agreement stating that residents will be 55 +, all residents will be retired, and therefore will not drive into, or out of the site, at peak hours.

These arguments do not justify consent being granted. Three of the mobiles proposed will measure 6.0m x 16.0m (96m²/1033 sq ft), with the other twelve measuring 6.0m x 18.0m (108m²/1162 sq ft). It seems to me unlikely that units of these sizes will only be occupied by single people. Likewise, even if people are retiring earlier, there can be no guarantee that all of the occupiers, even if aged over 55, will not be working.

When an appeal was dismissed in 1998 (see HISTORY above) to replace one mobile with a small bungalow, the Inspector was very firm in his view that this was inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the replacement did not amount to a very special circumstance.

ii) Access

Although the access to the site has been widened, albeit without planning consent, it is onto a fast and very busy section of the A10, subject to the 60 mph limit. Whilst visibility to the south is reasonable, the section of road is heavily treed both sides and is rather gloomy. To the north there is an adverse bend.

iii) Suitability for Housing

The site lies in the Green Belt, well outside the village frameworks for both Landbeach and Waterbeach. Policies do not permit such developments as proposed in a countryside location.

In addition the location of the site is not sustainable, especially as intended, for persons of retirement age. For such an age group, close proximity to shops, a Post Office, and other facilities is essential. As pointed out by one neighbour, there is a footpath, immediately opposite the entrance to the site, which leads through to the village green. The footpath's length is 745m. However it would be extremely dangerous for an elderly person to try and cross the A10 at this point.

Recommendation

13. Refusal

Although there is a ribbon of development to the south, and some development opposite, Bluebell Woods lies in the countryside well outside the villages of both Landbeach and Waterbeach – the centres of both being approximately 1.6km distant. The site also lies in the Green Belt.

1. As such the proposed intensification of use would be contrary to Policies P1/2 and P1/3 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) and SE8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2004) which seek to restrict

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3. Positioned midway between the villages of Landbeach and Waterbeach, all journeys to and from the site will be by car. Such a dependence on the motor car is not sustainable and therefore contrary to Policy P1/3 - of the Structure Plan and Policy TP1 of the Local Plan.

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/2128/04/F and S/0524/05/F

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