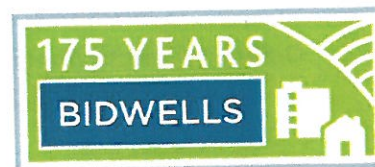


Your ref:  
Our ref: TFH/sjc/28283  
dd: 01223 559593  
df: 01223 845150  
e: tim.havers@bidwells.co.uk  
Date 6 March 2015



Mr Paul Sexton  
Development Management Team  
South Cambridgeshire District Council  
South Cambridgeshire Hall  
Camboume Business Park  
Camboume  
Cambridge  
CB23 6EA

Trumpington Road  
Cambridge CB2 9LD  
t: 01223 841841  
f: 01223 845150  
bidwells.co.uk

Dear Paul

**Outline Planning Application (S/2791/14/OL) for the landscape design-led residential development of Land East of New Road, Melbourn**

I write further to Melbourn Parish Council's objection to the above application and refer to their letter of 29 January 2015. There is a significant and acute need for market and affordable housing within South Cambridgeshire District. The Proposed Submission Local Plan identifies an objectively assessed need for 19,000 new homes in South Cambridgeshire. The Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply to meet this pressing need and the presumption in favour of sustainable development must therefore be applied.

The current application for the landscape-led residential development of Land East of New Road, Melbourn will make an important, sustainable and beneficial contribution to the demonstrable housing shortage within the District. The Parish Council have objected on a number of grounds which I address in turn below.

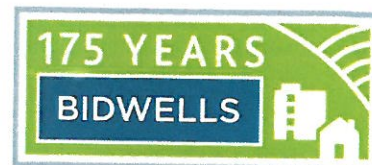
**The Principle of Development**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) are unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and a comprehensive 5 Year Housing Land Supply Assessment has been submitted in support of the application. Recent Inspector's appeal decisions at Cody Road and Bannold Road, Waterbeach also support this conclusion. The fact that SCDC are unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply is a key material consideration in the determination of this application.

Paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) specifically directs that 'relevant policies for the supply of housing land should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites'. In this context 'housing applications should be considered in the context of sustainable development' with the presumption in favour of sustainable development being applied. Therefore, planning permission should be granted for housing applications which constitute sustainable development and the principle of development for such applications is accepted.







### **Economic Role**

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF identifies the 3 pillars of sustainable development as being economic, social and environmental. The Parish Council's objection submits that the proposed development will make no meaningful contribution towards building a strong, responsive and competitive economy and in turn does not provide a clear economic role to meet the NPPF's sustainability objectives.

The proposed development would in fact result in a tangible and substantial beneficial impact upon the local and wider economy in both the short and longer term. In the short term, a significant number of construction jobs would be created. This would contribute directly to the building of a strong, responsive and competitive economy and would provide an important source of employment in the locality.

In the longer term, residents of the new development would have a meaningful and positive impact upon Melbourn's economy, supporting existing local shops and services within the village. SCDC's assessment of the site at the issues and options stage of the Local Plan also concluded that it has good access to a range of employment opportunities. Melbourn has its own 17 acre employment site and the proposed development will support not only the continued economic growth of this but also of the wider area, including Cambridge City. The provision of high quality, sustainable housing is essential to the continued wellbeing of the Cambridge economy, particularly with major international companies, and associated employees, such as AstraZeneca choosing to re-locate to Cambridge.

Furthermore, the development of the proposed 75 bed care home would result in the creation of at least 40 full time equivalent jobs in the care industry. This is a substantial number and again will make a meaningful contribution toward the building of a strong, responsive and competitive economy.

In terms of delivery, there is already significant market interest in the proposed care home and the applicant is confident that it will be delivered. Discussions have been held with a number of care home operators and there is a clear market demand for this facility in this location.

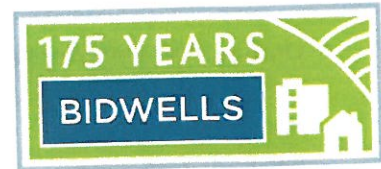
The contribution which the proposed development will make toward building a strong, responsive and competitive economy is therefore both clear and tangible and the development will play an important economic role to meet the NPPF's sustainability objectives.

### **Social Role**

The second pillar of sustainable development is the social role. The NPPF states at para.7 that development should perform a social role 'by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being'. The Parish Council submit that the development does not provide on-site provision for local health, community, or education needs, that the scale of the proposal is questionable, that the site is poorly located in relation to existing services and facilities and that the proposal will not create a high quality built environment.

The proposed development represents a major opportunity to provide a sizeable amount of affordable housing, with a number of units being allocated to Melbourn residents. Given the high level of need for affordable housing within South Cambridgeshire the impact of this provision in social terms will be considerable and accords directly with the NPPF's definition of the social role as 'providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations'. In addition, the scheme includes a significant number of market houses and a care home of up to 75 beds. There is strong demand across the district for market housing and the Council are unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply to meet this need. The provision of a care home, for which there is also clear market demand, is again of key benefit in terms of social sustainability, helping to create a mixed community and to provide suitable





accommodation for the elderly within Melbourn. The social role of the proposal is both clear and demonstrable.

The scale of the development has been landscape-design led from the outset with the focus being upon the creation of a sustainable scheme which accommodates a high quality layout, significant landscape buffer and a care home.

The Parish Council object to the proposal on the grounds that it does not provide on-site provision for local health, community, or education needs and that the site is poorly located in relation to existing services and facilities. The proposed development contains a substantial, multi-functional landscape buffer measuring some 1.8ha which will be accessible to the general public, facilitating informal play, recreational activities and a pedestrian route along the southern edge of the site. This land is not currently accessible to the public and the landscape buffer is a key component of the submitted parameter plan, ensuring that the development will deliver this important piece of green infrastructure. The illustrative masterplan demonstrates that the development will accommodate both open space and children's play space, again these will be accessible to existing Melbourn residents. These on site facilities have an important social role to play, and will contribute to the social sustainability of the development.

With regard to the site's location in relation to existing services and facilities SCDC's assessment of the site at the Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan concluded that it was easily accessible by public transport, bicycle and to pedestrians. Melbourn is a large village which is well equipped with a substantial range of shops, services and amenities and social clubs. It is capable of accommodating the level of development proposed and these facilities will be accessible to future residents of the development. It is noteworthy that planning permission (S/2048/14/FL) was recently granted for the residential development of the adjacent site at Victoria Way and that this was considered a sustainable location with good access to local facilities and services.

The Parish Council also contend that the proposal will not create a high quality built environment. The application is for outline planning permission only, however, the applicant has gone to significant lengths to ensure a high quality landscape-design led process from the outset and has attended both a Design Workshop and the Design Enabling Panel offered by SCDC. The scheme was well received with the Panel stating that the scheme was a 'well-presented development proposal which demonstrates the evolution of the general design to date' and that 'the application has the potential to deliver a good scheme'. The illustrative masterplan demonstrates clearly one way in which the site can achieve a high quality scheme.

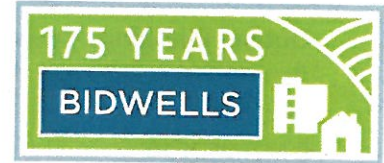
### **Environmental Role**

The third pillar of sustainable development is Environmental. The Parish Council object on the grounds that the proposed development will not protect or enhance the natural environment but instead will cause an adverse impact.

The application site currently consists of agricultural land. The loss of this land for agricultural purposes must be balanced against the clear and immediate need for a substantial amount of new housing in the South Cambridgeshire District. The proposed development will make a significant and sustainable contribution to both market and affordable housing provision in the district, in addition to providing for market demand for a care home.

With regards to biodiversity, the proposed development will substantially enhance the existing site's relatively low ecological value, with the proposed green infrastructure providing new and varied habitat of a significant scale.





In terms of visual impact, the Parish Council submit that it is doubtful whether the landscape buffer will be capable of screening the development in its entirety. The landscape buffer is a key feature of the proposal and the design has been landscape-led from the outset with the intention to create a soft, green edge to the southern boundary of the site, a significant improvement over the existing comparatively hard urban edge to the southern boundary of Melbourn in this location. The buffer is specifically designed not to act as a complete screen. Its form was discussed at South Cambridgeshire District Council's Design Workshop and presented to the Council's Design Enabling Panel. The Panel's report, submitted in support of the application states that 'the south east linear green space was supported and the potential to provide buffer planting but still maintain views both in and out of the development was encouraged'.

The Parish Council also contend that 'development in this location will not help to minimise pollution or to mitigate and adapt to climate change, particularly if new residents are dependent on the private car'. The development will provide 20% of its required energy from renewable sources, twice the amount required by South Cambridgeshire District Council's adopted and emerging planning policies. The NPPF states that the environmental role in sustainable development is to 'mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy'. The proposal to exceed the policy requirement by this degree accords with this aim and will contribute to the scheme's ability to operate as a sustainable development.

Furthermore, the site is easily accessible to both pedestrians and cyclists with good public transport access to both Cambridge and the surrounding settlements, including Royston. Melbourn itself has a substantial array of facilities and services and Melbourn High Street is located approximately 600m from the site, well within the 800 metre 10 minute walk isochrones. There is therefore a wide range of accessible services and facilities which can be accessed by future residents of the site by non-car modes of transport.

Overall, it is therefore clear that the proposed development will play a significant and demonstrable role in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

### **Prematurity**

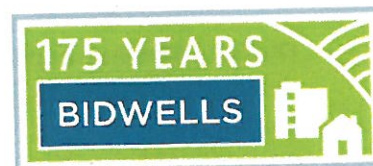
The Parish Council object to the proposal on the grounds of prematurity. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is clear in its direction that arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission, particularly in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposed development is not so substantial or its cumulative effect so significant that granting planning permission would undermine the plan-making process and there are no grounds to refuse the application on the basis of prematurity.

### **Transport Impacts**

These comments are with specific reference to the appraisal of the submitted Transport Assessment and supporting documents undertaken by Transport Planning Consultants (TPC) on behalf of the Melbourn Parish Council. It should be noted that there has been recent correspondence and meetings with Cambridgeshire County Council officers on the Transport Assessment and agreement has been reached on some elements of the report that will also account for points raised in the appraisal prepared by TPC. There will be, subsequent to this letter a revised Transport Assessment issued to Cambridgeshire County Council taking into account agreed revisions to the assessment raised by the officers thus a formal response to all points raised by TPC cannot be provided at this stage until the revised Transport Assessment has been completed.

With regards to the proposed development access, officers of Cambridgeshire County Council have accepted its location and there is on-going discussion with officers over its exact form. The current design of the access has undergone an independent Road Safety Audit as well as being scrutinized by Road Safety Officers of Cambridgeshire County Council, the results of which require relatively minor alterations to





the layout or considerations that can be addressed at the detail design stage that will again need to be approved by the Highway Authority and undergo another round of Road Safety Auditing.

The parking provision of the proposed residential units and care home will be compliant with the current Cambridgeshire County Council maximum parking standards and the masterplan will be developed, should outline planning approval be given, to take this into account.

It is noted that TPS consider the proposed trip generations of the development to be robust and reasonable. Officers of Cambridgeshire County Council consider that for the residential element of the development they are not robust enough thus we have provided new trip generations of vehicular traffic, which are higher than previously assessed, and have now been accepted providing an even more robust assessment.

The distribution of this vehicular traffic is also being reappraised and thus will require a reassessment of the junctions modelled within the agreed Study Area. This will be presented in the revised Transport Assessment accordingly. It should be noted, that the traffic distribution will be taking into consideration the surveyed movements of traffic on junctions within the Study Area as suggested by TPC.

With regards to the promotion of sustainable travel it is currently considered that the provision of the following is deemed to be appropriate to enhance and promote different modes of travel other than the private car:

- Footway improvements along New Road near to the site entrance to link the site to Melbourn village and to connect to the development site opposite with associated pedestrian links to the cemetery and Industrial Park;
- New cycle stands at the village centre and train station;
- S106 contribution to improvements to the local public footpath No.9 to the train station; and
- Residential Travel Plan and associated measures.

Further to this it has been discussed with officers of Cambridgeshire County Council and further measures are suggested and include:

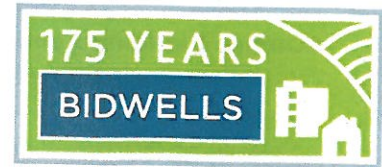
- Providing further speed management measure near to the entrance to Melbourn village from the south of the site;
- Altering speed humps along New Road to become speed cushions to reduce impacts on cyclists;
- Upgrading of bus stops near to Vicarage Close;
- S106 contribution to the Royston – Melbourn – Cambridge A10 cycle route;
- Provide 3 car club spaces and fund each car for a set period of time on the development site (one of the cars to be wheelchair accessible);
- Update the Residential Travel Plan to include linkages with School Travel Plans to promote walking / cycling / car sharing to / from the schools;
- In addition to the Residential Travel Plan a Workplace one will also be provided for the Care Home.

It is considered that the proposed measures noted above will provide the best, practical support to the development site and will also benefit the local community.

#### **Village Character, Services and Facilities**

The Parish Council submit that the scale of the proposed development is too large for the existing village and that it will be detrimental to the character of the village, that the village facilities will not have the capacity to accommodate the proposal and that additional vehicle movements and noise will be generated.





The proposed development, as set out above under the 'Environmental Role' heading has been landscape-led from the outset. It has been specifically designed not only to be in keeping with the character of the existing village, but also to improve it by introducing a soft, green edge to the village, replacing the comparatively hard urban edge which currently exists.

A full and detailed Transport Assessment has been submitted in support of the application and this has been revised and updated following comprehensive discussion with the County Highways Authority. The level of traffic which the proposal will generate can be safely accommodated by the existing infrastructure and clear mitigation measures have been identified where required. With regard to noise, the proposal is for a landscape-led residential development consisting of up to 199 dwellings and a care home of up to 75 beds. It is not considered that it will give rise to abnormal or detrimental levels of noise which would be out of keeping with those normally expected in a residential area.

In terms of key village facilities, the Parish Council specifically identify early years provision, primary education and healthcare. Cambridgeshire County Council's consultee response states that 'with a contribution towards mitigating the impact of the development proposals, there is no basis for the County Council to object to the development proposals as set out in the planning application regarding education provision'. The County Council advise that they have previously identified that the primary school site has the capacity to enable the expansion of the school to become a 420 place, 2 form of entry school and 'that there is the opportunity to explore expansion of the pre-school provision linked to the primary school site, as part of work to increase capacity at the primary school'. It is also noteworthy that the Parish Council's own response to the planning application identifies that both the Primary School and Melbourn Village College support the proposed development.

With regard to healthcare, the applicant has stated that they are willing to enter into a Section 106 Agreement to facilitate the provision of financial contributions to mitigate the effect of the proposed development in terms of healthcare infrastructure.

### **Landscape and Visual Impact**

The Parish Council's objection contends that 'there is no need or expectation for this site to be developed in either the adopted Core Strategy or the emerging Proposed Submission Local Plan' and that the development will therefore create unnecessary landscape and visual harm. South Cambridgeshire District Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply to meet the acute and demonstrable housing need within the District. The development of sustainable, suitable sites is essential to meet this shortfall and well designed, high quality schemes can achieve this whilst minimising the landscape and visual impact. The proposed landscape-led development includes a substantial landscape buffer which is embedded within the parameter plan and has been specifically designed to minimise the visual impact of the development whilst maintaining a well-considered relationship between the new softer urban edge and the adjacent countryside.

### **Other Matters**

The Parish Council's objection identifies a number of other matters. The loss of a TPO tree is identified and objected too. The proposed development retains existing trees wherever possible. The tree in question was surveyed by the applicant's arboricultural consultant and found to feature bleeding canker throughout the stem. It is identified as Category U and recommended for removal regardless of any development. Concerns were also raised with regard to the sewage system, flood risk assessment and drainage strategy. The application is supported by a comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy and there is no technical reason why the infrastructure will not be able to accommodate the proposed development.



**Outline Planning Application (S/2791/14/OL) for the landscape design-led residential development of Land East of New Road, Melbourn**

6 March 2015

Page 7



Concerns were also raised in relation to the Highways impact and these have been addressed under the above 'Transport Impacts' heading.

**Local Consultation**

The applicant carried out a comprehensive public consultation exercise, full details of which were submitted in support of the application. Constructive feedback from the consultation exercise was fed into the design process. The Parish objection makes reference to their own consultation and consultation response. It is noted that 10% (102) people supported the development, which is not inconsequential in the context of any proposed development. Key issues identified included the acute demand for housing in the district, access to housing within Melbourn, (both market and affordable), economic benefits of the proposal and the benefits to the primary school of moving to an intake of two classes per year. The importance of ensuring that the village's infrastructure is equipped to deal with the proposal was also raised and the applicant is willing to enter into a Section 106 Agreement to ensure that this takes place.

**Conclusion**

There is an acute and demonstrable need for both market and affordable housing within South Cambridgeshire District. The Proposed Submission Local Plan identifies an objectively assessed need for 22,000 additional jobs and 19,000 new homes in South Cambridgeshire. The re-location of companies such as Astra Zeneca to the region will further intensify this demand. South Cambridgeshire District Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply to meet this pressing need and the presumption in favour of sustainable development must therefore be applied.

The proposed development will provide 40% affordable housing, equating to 80 dwellings and meeting almost the entire affordable housing need for Melbourn, which was identified at 82 applicants in the August 2014 housing register. In addition, it will provide a significant number of market houses and a care home of up to 75 beds, with up to 40 full time equivalent jobs.

The development will play a clear and sustainable economic, social and environmental role and will benefit both Melbourn and the wider area. There are no adverse impacts which would occur following the granting of planning permission which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the proposal, when assessed against the policies in the National planning Policy Framework when taken as a whole. There are also no specific policies within the Framework which indicate the development should be restricted. The site is positioned in a sustainable location, it is not environmentally constrained and the proposed development has been landscape-led from the outset. The presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied, allowing the significant benefits of the proposal to be realised.

Yours sincerely

**Tim Havers BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**  
Principal Planner

Cc Mr Peter Horley, Melbourn Parish Council Clerk

