

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2 September 2015

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Number: S/2363/14/FL

Parish: Elsworth

Proposal: Use of the land as a residential caravan park with up to a maximum of 28 caravans

Site address: Constellation Mobile Home Park, The Drift, Elsworth, CB23 4JP

Applicant(s): Mr James Crickmore

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Key material considerations: Principle of development
Access, traffic and highway safety
Impact on listed buildings
Residential amenity
Services and facilities

Committee Site Visit: 1 September 2015

Departure Application: No

Presenting Officer: Andrew Winter

Application brought to Committee because: The recommendation of the Parish Council is contrary to that of Planning Officers

Date by which decision due: 22 April 2015

1. Planning History

C/0648/58 – Erection of workshop for use in manufacture, repair, and sale of caravans, sheds, toilets etc.

C/0193/62 – Three additional caravans (making a total of 27 caravans allowed on the whole site) (approved)

C/0832/62 – Extension of caravan site (refused)

C/1603/72/F – Extension of existing caravan site by 16 residential units, with garage/store (refused)

S/1135/77/O – Extension of residential mobile home park (24 mobile homes)
(refused)

S/0135/81/O – Extension and re-design of mobile home park (refused)

S/1193/05/F – Enlargement of mobile home park with new layout to include an additional 2 units (refused and dismissed at appeal – ref APP/W0530/A/05/1196512)

S/0697/10/F – Erection of 2 Dwellings and Garage (With Studio Above) following Demolition of Existing Bungalow and Garage at 7 The Drift Elsworth (approved)

Planning Policies

2. **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012
Planning Practice Guidance**
3. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy
2007**
ST/6 Group Villages
4. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Development Control Policies DPD 2007**
DP/1 Sustainable Development
DP/2 Design of New Development
DP/3 Development Criteria
DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments
DP/7 Village Frameworks
HG/1 Housing Density
HG/2 Housing Mix
NE/9 Water and Drainage Infrastructure
NE/10 Foul Water Drainage Infrastructure
NE/15 Noise Pollution
SF/10 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space and New Developments
SF/11 Open Space Standards
5. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)**
District Design Guide SPD – adopted March 2010
Open Space in New Developments SPD – adopted January 2009
6. **Proposed Submission Local Plan (July 2013)**
CC/4 Sustainable Design and Construction
H/7 Housing Density
H/8 Housing Mix
H/11 Residential Space Standards
HQ/1 Design Principles
S/3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
S/7 Development Frameworks
S/10 Group Villages
SC/7 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments
SC/8 Open Space Standards
TI/2 Planning for Sustainable Travel

Consultations

7. **Parish Council** – Recommends refusal:

a) "It is by no means clear what land is the subject of the application and whether or not it lies in or out of the village development framework. No indication has been given as to exactly where the proposed additional dwellings would be sited. This needs to be clarified. Please note that some of the land apparently belongs to a neighbour, Mr David Boyd. Please see copy of Land Registry Documents enclosed.

b) The site is primarily for the over 55s. The sustainability of the site for this age group in the village is of concern. The village has very few amenities, very limited shopping facilities and no doctor's surgery, dentists or other forms of medical care. In addition, there is very poor public transport, in particular to these facilities that would be required.

c) Layout and density of building. The increase in the size of the site would create disproportionality in the type and density of housing in this rural village (also there is considerable problem with the sewerage on the site. It already floods. Additional dwellings would exacerbate this.)

d) Effect on listed buildings. The village has many listed buildings and additional mobile homes would alter the balance of the types of dwellings in the village.

e) Effect on conservation area. The site is in an area of the village surrounded by meadow and additional housing would deteriorate from this setting. Siting additional buildings on or near to meadowland would not be desirable.

f) Traffic issues. The junction at the bottom of the Drift is dangerous in terms of visibility in both directions when pulling onto the main road (Boxworth Road) as well as when turning into the Drift. Any increase in traffic from the site would be unwise as well as being a noise nuisance to residents of the Drift. The road to and from the site is treacherously potholed, has a steep gradient and no footpath. This provides a very unsuitable access for the older pedestrians."

8. **Local Highway Authority (LHA)** – Raised an objection to the above planning application in its original format as the application was not supported by sufficient transport information to demonstrate that the proposed development would not be prejudicial to the satisfactory functioning of the highway.
9. **Updated verbal comments of the LHA (dated 13 August 2015)** – Further to the receipt of the visibility splay drawing and the amended description of the application to two additional units only, the Local Highway Authority can now remove its objection to the application.
10. **Tree Officer** – No objections

Representations

11. **Owners/Occupiers of 1 & 5 Cowdell End, 42 & 44 Boxworth Road and Woodland House (The Drift):**
 - Clarification needed in relation to application boundaries and nature/description of proposal
 - Poor condition of roadway exacerbated by development (The Drift)
 - Highway safety issues: increase in traffic from site and lack of footpath

- Increase in density of existing site
- Impact on residential amenity
- Inadequate sewage system (which has been known to overflow)
- Increase in surface water flooding
- General concern of increase in number of homes on site in the future
- Extent of land use and mobile homes being located in the countryside

Planning Comments

12. The main issues in this application are:
- Matters of Clarification
 - Principle of Development
 - Heritage Impact
 - Highway Safety
 - Surface and Foul Water Drainage
 - Residential Amenity

Matters of Clarification

13. Planning approval for a total of 27 mobile homes on the site was allowed in 1962 (ref C/0193/62). At present there are 26 mobile homes within the application site and an unauthorised caravan towards the north-eastern corner of the site, which appears from the Council's aerial photographs to have been there for several years. The applicant is preparing a separate application to regularise the use of this land.
14. The application description has been varied since its registration on 16 February 2015 to restrict the increase in the number of units from 27 to 28 rather than allow general flexibility of the total number of mobile homes on site. Thus the application is effectively for an increase of up to two caravans given the one unauthorised caravan that currently occupies part of the site.
15. The application site plan has been revised to show the correct land ownership and boundaries of the site.

Principle of Development

16. The NPPF advises that every effort should be made to identify and then meet the housing needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Additionally the Development Plan (Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted January 2007 and Development Control Policies Development Plan adopted January 2007) identifies Elsworth as a Group Village where the construction of new residential dwellings within the framework is supported. The density of the proposal is also accepted given the need to retain some informal open space on the site and the limited additional traffic generation from the two units.
17. The parish council has raised concern that Elsworth has very few amenities to support the development given the likely age group of the residents (over 55s). It also has concern in this regard because of the "very poor public transport" to surrounding

amenities and services. To examine this point, a review of Elsworth confirms the following services:

- Three bus service routes from Elsworth to Cambridge and St Ives with limited frequency
- A village shop with regular opening hours ('Elsworth Village Shop')
- A post office (located at Elsworth Sports Club) with opening times on Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Two pubs/restaurants
- No GP, dentist or library but such services can be accessed in nearby settlements of Papworth Everard and Cambourne.

18. The location of the site therefore does benefit from some services and facilities both in the locality and shared with surrounding settlements. This is not uncommon in rural areas. Public transport is limited in frequency, but key links are provided to service centres such as Cambridge and St Ives. Further to this, there is an opportunity for residents within the community to car share. The (additional) development would therefore not be completely isolated from services and facilities.

19. Aside from the number of services and facilities in the locality, the development would make a small contribution to the recognised undersupply of housing in the district over the next 5 years. It would be socially sustainable in terms of its location, and the new residents would benefit the local rural economy increasing the likelihood that more services and facilities could be financially viable in the village in future. Consequently, it is key that sustainability is not viewed narrowly in this instance as this can have profound adverse impacts on smaller settlements with regard to the 'sustainability trap' identified by the Taylor Review back in 2008.

Heritage Impact

20. The application site is located outside of Elsworth Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs to the north of 1 Cowdell End. The siting of the two mobile units would be sufficiently divorced from the setting of the conservation area, particularly given the intervening residential development at Cowdell End and the tall treed boundary to the east of the site. The additional units would also be sited towards the rear of the site away from The Drift and views of the Grade I Holy Trinity Church.

21. Consequently, the development is not found to have a significant impact upon the aforementioned heritage assets in accordance with Policy CH/4 and CH/5.

Highway Safety

22. The updated comments of the Local Highway Authority are noted and no objection is raised from a highway safety perspective to the addition of two mobile units on the site.

23. Visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m at the junction of The Drift and Boxworth Road have been detailed on drawings by the applicant to show compliance with the Manual for Streets. A site assessment shows that there is greater visibility to the east when leaving The Drift and although visibility to the west is more limited by vegetation, this

does not prevent safe exit from this junction, particularly given the traffic calming in place (a matter accepted in application S/0697/10/F for two dwellings in The Drift).

24. The number of traffic movements generated by two additional residential units would be very limited and would not warrant the submission of a Transport Assessment in this instance given the accepted visibility and traffic calming measures at the Drift/Boxworth Road junction.
25. The Drift serves a number of residential properties but is not a main thoroughfare through the village for vehicles, as it leads to a farm access and public footpath. Traffic speeds are therefore likely to be low, reflecting the residential nature of the road. The surface of this road is of poor condition but at the same time is not impassable or obstructive to highway users. Safe use of this road is therefore possible and no objection is raised in this regard by the Local Highway Authority.
26. The inclusion of a designated footpath and new surface to The Drift would be desirable but would require the cooperation of two different landowners (the applicant and County Council) as well as sufficient funding. Such works cannot reasonably be imposed on such a small development nor are they entirely necessary for the development in this instance to be acceptable in planning terms.

Surface and Foul Water Drainage

27. Concerns have been raised in relation to the capacity of the existing foul water system to cope with further development in this location. The applicant has confirmed that the site is connected to the public mains drainage sewer and two additional residential units would not be expected to have a significant impact on existing capacity. This reflects advice from water authorities, which typically only require consultation from LPAs on developments of 10 or more dwellings. Furthermore, satisfactory foul water provision is a requirement of caravan site licences, in addition to water supply and adequate drainage systems for the complete and hygienic disposal of rain and surface water from the site, buildings, caravans, roads and footpaths.
28. Consequently, the drainage requirements for the development in terms of local planning policies NE/9 and NE/10 are met and secured separately in any case by the caravan site licence process. The site is also not located in an area of recognised flood risk under the Environment Agency's flood maps.

Residential Amenity

29. The development is not considered to generate significant noise or other impacts that would result in unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity in accordance with Policy DP/3.

Impact on Existing Services and Facilities

30. Policy SF/10 states that all residential development are required to contribute towards Outdoor Playing Space (including children's play space and formal outdoor sports facilities) and Informal Open Space to meet the additional need generated by the development. The site licence limits occupation of the mobile homes to 55 years olds or above and therefore there would be no direct demand on outdoor children's playspace in the village. However, the development would place potential demand on outdoor formal sports space, informal outdoor space and indoor community facilities.

31. Informal open space is already provided on the site in excess of 500m² area. This is in the form of a grassed area with some seating next to the tree belt to the north-eastern edge of the site. The available space here would meet the requirements for a development of this size, as calculated through the Open Space in New Developments SPD 2009.
32. The South Cambs Recreation and Open Space Study (July 2013) found that there was a surplus of formal sport space and allotment space within the village of Elsworth and that existing facilities were of good quality. It did identify the need for an informal basketball facility - the delivery of which is not essential to mitigate the impacts of the development in this application.
33. No specific projects for indoor community facilities have been identified by the Parish Council that are directly related to the development; fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development; or necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms (as per the requirements on paragraph 204 of the NPPF). As such, no request for contributions should be sought in the event the application was to be approved.

Conclusion

34. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF explains that the presumption in favour of sustainable development means granting permission unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be resisted.
35. In this instance, the development is not considered to be an overdevelopment of the site, is compatible with the local area, and acceptable in highway safety terms. On this basis, there are no adverse impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal. Accordingly, the development is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

36. Delegated approval subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

- a) **The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.**
(Reason - To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development, which have not been acted upon.)
- b) **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Plan (scale 1:1250).**
(Reason - To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)
- c) **The total number of mobile homes on the application shall not exceed 28.**
(Reason – In the interests of visual amenity, residential amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policies DP/1, DP/2 and DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents
- Proposed Local Plan
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Report Author: Andrew Winter – Senior Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713082