

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee  
**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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6<sup>th</sup> July 2005

**S/0013/05/F - Fen Drayton  
Erection of 10 Affordable Houses  
Land between 12 and 13 Cootes Lane**

**Recommendation: Refusal  
Date for Determination: 5<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

**Members are reminded that the established protocol for considering “rural exception” sites includes all such applications being the subject of a Member Site Visit. This will take place on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2005.**

### **Site and Proposal**

1. This is a full application, received on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2005, for the erection of ten affordable houses, including 8 No. two bedroom units and 2 No. three bedroom units, to be located on a site on the northern side of Cootes Lane, to the west of the village of Fen Drayton. The site is roughly rectangular in shape, with a highway frontage of approximately 34.5 metres and a maximum depth of approximately 80 metres. The site widens to approximately 40 metres at the rear, and extends to approximately 0.3 hectares. The density equates to 33 dph.
2. The site lies within the area of the former Land Settlement Association Estate, west of Fen Drayton. Immediately to the west of the site are three greenhouses. There are semi-detached pairs of dwellings located approximately 30 metres to the east and 75 metres to the west of the application site respectively, with a series of detached dwellings located along the southern side of Cootes Lane.
3. The site is roughly level. Part of the site is occupied by a semi-derelict greenhouse. Along the highway frontage of the site is a mature hedgerow.
4. The submitted plans indicate a layout for ten dwellings with a short terrace of three dwellings to the highway frontage and a 4.8 metre wide carriageway with a single footway and turning head to be built along the eastern boundary of the site. This would lead to a 4.8 metre wide private access to serve the rear portion of the site. The submitted plans indicate that this would also provide access to the fields beyond. A pair of dwellings, on a “L” shaped footprint, would be located alongside the turning head with a further pair and a terrace of three dwellings set back to the rear of the site.
5. The submitted house types incorporate ridged roofs, with ridges typically fronting the highway. The roofs of one of the end units of each of the short terraces would be stepped down. Other architectural details included sentinel and simple monopitch storm porches, gable windows to some units, arched brick heads and false chimneys.

6. Car parking would be provided alongside two of the units and elsewhere in bays alongside the spine road / private drive or in courtyards. The existing hedgerow would be retained along part of the highway frontage. The flank and rear boundaries would be provided with post and rail or close boarded fencing.
7. The submitted details include a visibility splay to the east which appears to be outside the application site. This anomaly has been raised with the agent and a response is awaited.

### **Planning History**

8. No relevant history has been identified relating to the site.

### **Planning Policy**

9. **Policy SE4** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") identifies Fen Drayton as a Group Village, within which residential development and redevelopment up to a maximum scheme size of 8 dwellings will be permitted within the village frameworks of Group Villages, subject to various detailed criteria. (The application site lies outside the Village framework boundary.)
10. **Policy SE8** of the Local Plan normally precludes development outside village frameworks.
11. **Policy HG8** of the Local Plan relates to exceptions for affordable housing. This policy states that : As an exception to the normal operation of the policies of this 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 all have to be met:-

- (1) The development proposal includes secure arrangements for ensuring that all the 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 the 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.
  - (5) Development under this policy must also comply with criteria (1), (4) and (5) of Policy HG7 and the relevant interpretation provisions of that policy.
12. **Policy HG7** of the Local Plan relates to affordable housing within frameworks but also provides detailed criteria and definitions with regard to affordable housing.
  13. **Policy Fen Drayton 1** of the Local Plan states that within the area of the former Land Settlement Association Estate, planning permission will not be granted for housing or commercial development unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

14. **Policy P8/1** of The County Structure Plan relates to the links between land use and transport.

### **Consultations**

15. **Fen Drayton Parish Council** initially recommended approval, subject to the development being to serve a need for a specified amount of social housing and it being strictly regarded as an “exception” case. Concern was expressed, however, regarding the adequacy of the proposed parking facilities and the maintenance of boundary fences.

Subsequently, the Parish Council has requested that the application be brought before the meeting of the Development and Conservation Control Committee of 6 July, in order that a Housing Corporation grant can be used and in order to enable amendments to be considered at that meeting which, the Parish Council states, are due to be considered at its own meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> June.

16. **The Housing Officer** supports the principle of the proposed development, subject to planning considerations, and has supplied a report indicating proven housing need.
17. **County Highway Authority:** Concerns expressed regarding highway details including the lack of a footway in the direction of the village centre and primary school and fact that one of the visibility splays lies outside the application site.
18. **Chief Environmental Health Officer:** Conditions recommended relating to noise and other nuisances during the construction period.
19. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service:** Additional water supplies for firefighting are not required.
20. **Cambridgeshire Constabulary - Community Safety Dept.:** Detailed concerns have been expressed regarding the form of the layout having regard to security issues from the sides and rear of the site and to problems of surveillance.
21. **Environment Agency:** Drainage details to be considered by way of planning conditions.

### **Representations**

22. One letter of support has been received from a housing developer variously commenting upon design issues, former LSA covenants, alleged precedents and the location of the proposed development. He further suggests that there has been a U-turn by the Planning Department.
23. One letter of objection has been received from a local resident commenting as follows:
- This would have significant implications for land occupied by the former Land Settlement Association
  - The housing need should have been met at the Wilderspin Garage
  - The Parish Council has ignored consultations.

- Many people felt there was need for a green lung
- This represents creeping urbanisation
- There is a lack of facilities and the village has little or no public transport

### **Planning Comments - Key Issues**

24. The application falls to be determined by reference to the policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The application site lies outside the village framework for Fen Drayton. It would therefore be outside the provisions of Local Plan Policies SE4 and SE8.

25. However, the proposal is advocated as “rural exception” site in accordance with Policy HG8 of the Local Plan. This policy provides that an exception to the normal operation of the policies of the Local Plan may be made in respect of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on sites within or adjoining villages.
26. In the above context, the housing need has been demonstrated. Furthermore, whilst the site lies approximately 190 metres outside the village framework at its nearest point it is noted that the policy refers to “villages”, rather than to “village frameworks” as such. Moreover, the site is well related to local facilities including both a primary school and the village hall which are both located in that area of the village nearest the application site. The site could therefore be said to satisfy the broad criteria of Policy HG8.
27. That policy, however, also refers to detailed criteria including its relationship to the built-up area of the settlement, the scale of the scheme being appropriate to the size and character of the village and ensuring that the development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.
28. In the latter context, regard is also had to the location of the site within the former Land Settlement Association Estate where Policy Fen Drayton 1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for housing or commercial development unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area. No agricultural justification is offered by the applicant, housing association or the agent.
29. It is noted that much of the former estate remains in horticultural uses, with a linear pattern of development along highway frontages, often with glasshouses to the rear. Against this established settlement pattern it is suggested that, whilst the detailed design of individual dwellings respects the various existing dwelling types, the overall form of the development would be incongruous. The depth of the plot, the siting of the majority of the proposed dwellings well back from the highway, the provision of a estate road to adoption standards, the fencing along the flank and rear frontages and the use of parking courtyards combine to suggest a form of development more typical of, and appropriate to, a suburban location than to the fringes of a rural village. The form of the development is therefore considered to be contrary to both Policy HG8 and Policy Fen Drayton 1 of the Local plan.
30. Many of the comments made by the local resident objecting to the proposal echo the above concerns. The reference to the housing need being met at the Wilderspin Garage is understood to relate to the proposal having been initiated by a housing

developer who wishes an existing Section 106 agreement relating to the former garage site within the village framework to be relaxed and for the affordable housing requirement to be met through the current development proposal. These considerations do not form part of the current proposal.

31. The letter of support also relates to the above suggestion. The reference in that letter to an alleged “U-turn by the Planning Department” is not considered to be justified. The initial response to a pre-application enquiry relating to the possibility of the developing a “rural exception” site has been consistent in relation to the broad considerations. The above analysis clearly indicates that the principal concerns relate to the form of development now proposed.
32. With regard to the comments from the Parish Council, the agents state that their client, the applicant housing association, has not given any instruction to prepare amended plans. At the time of preparing this report no such amendments had therefore been received by the Local Planning Authority although any update will be reported verbally at the meeting.
33. Having regard to the policies of the Development Plan, the above comments and all other material considerations it is recommended that the application be refused for the reasons indicated below.

### **Recommendation**

#### **Refusal.**

34. Reasons
  1. Although the proposal would bring forward 100% affordable housing on a site close to the village of Fen Drayton, the design of the proposed development, having particular regard to the siting of the majority of the proposed dwellings well back from the highway, the provision of an estate road to adoption standards, the fencing along the flank frontage and the use of parking courtyards, would damage the character of the fringes of the village and the rural landscape. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy HG8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 which provides for exceptions to other policies in relation to a proven need for affordable housing subject to various detailed criteria.
  2. The proposed development would be contrary to Policy Fen Drayton 1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 which states that within the area of the former Land Settlement Association Estate planning permission will not be granted for housing or commercial development unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area.
  3. The proposal fails to incorporate satisfactory highway details, including visibility splays and pedestrian footways in important areas. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the provisions of the Policy P8/1 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 which seeks to ensure the provision of appropriate access from the highway network that does not compromise highway safety.

**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/0013/05/F

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