

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 3rd August 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/1123/05/F - Girton
Erection of 15 Dwellings Following Demolition of Existing 8 Dwellings
at 16 – 30 St. Vincents Close
for Circle 33 Housing Group**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval
Date for Determination: 6th September 2005**

Major application

Site and Proposal

1. The site is an area of land occupied by eight residential properties and associated gardens and includes the current road, which will require works to be undertaken to it. The existing dwellings comprise four pairs of semi-detached 'Airey' houses which are set back from the road with front gardens between three and four metres deep. There are parking bays on either side of the road in front of the existing dwellings. St. Vincents Close, leading to Giffords Close, is relatively narrow, being approximately 3.5 metres wide where it adjoins the main stretch of St. Vincents Close. The site area is approximately 4.8 hectares, including the road. The net developable area, comprising the existing residential plots is approximately 0.4 hectares. Adjoining the site to the south and northwest are bungalows to the northeast is a pair of semi-detached houses.
2. This full planning application received on 7th June 2005 seeks permission to demolish the existing eight semi-detached dwellings and to construct 15 dwellings in their place. These will comprise of a mix of terraced and semi-detached houses, with off-road parking in the front or in a parking court. It will provide 1 no. 1 bedroom unit, 2 no. 2-bedroom houses, 11 no. 3-bedroom houses and 1 no. 4 -bedroomed house. 5 no. houses will be social rented, 7 no. shared ownership and 3 no. will be market housing. The net density of the development proposed is 37.5 dwellings per hectare. St. Vincents Close is to be altered to a shared surface with rumble strips to a ramped section.

Planning History

3. An earlier planning application ref. **S/2553/04/F** for the erection of 21 dwellings following demolition of 8 existing dwellings was withdrawn. This application was for a larger site area that included part of the rear gardens to 30-34 Pepys Way.

Planning Policy

4. **Policy P1/3 'Sustainable Design in Built Development'** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003 (Structure Plan) requires a high standard of design and sustainability for all new development, which achieves compact forms of development through the promotion of higher densities, and which responds to the

local character of the built environment.

5. **Policy P5/3 'Density'** of the Structure Plan sets out density standards for housing development. It states that densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare will not be acceptable and the need to maximise the use of land by applying the highest densities possible and which are compatible with local character.
6. **Policy P5/4 'Meeting Locally Identified Housing Needs'** of the Structure Plan sets out the requirement for Local Authorities to make provision to meet locally assessed housing need.
7. Structure Plan policy **P5/5 'Homes in Rural Areas'** permits small-scale housing developments in villages, where appropriate, taking into account three criteria which include affordable housing need, character of the village and setting, and the level of jobs, services, infrastructure and passenger transport in the immediate area.
8. **Policy SE3 (Limited Rural Growth Settlements)** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan states:
9. Development up to a maximum scheme size of 30 dwellings will be permitted within the village framework provided that:
 - a) The retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village;
 - b) The development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours;
 - c) The village has the necessary infrastructure capacity; and
 - d) Residential development would not conflict with another policy of the plan, particularly policy EM8.
10. Development should provide an appropriate mix of dwellings in terms of size, type and affordability and should achieve a minimum density of 30 dph unless there are strong design grounds for not doing so.
11. **Policy HG7** of the Local Plan confirms that an affordable housing provision of 30% will be a requirement for developments of more than 10 dwellings in villages, such as Girton, with a population of more than 3,000.
12. Policy **HG10 'Housing Mix and Design'** of the Local Plan requires residential developments to include a mix of units in terms of type, size, and affordability, making best use of land and for the design and layout of schemes to be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape and landscape.
13. Other policies of the Local Plan that are of relevance to this application include:
TP1 'Planning More Sustainable Travel'
CS2 'Water Resources'
CS10 'Education'
CS13 'Community Safety'
EN5 'The Landscaping Of New Development'
EN13 and EN14 'Protected Species'.

Consultations

14. **Girton Parish Council** recommend refusal of the application making the following comments:

- I. The impact of the proposed scheme on residents of the Airey Houses and in particular the owner-occupied properties who are being put under pressure by the District Council and Circle 33 Housing to move but have been offered insufficient compensation.
 - II. The increased density of traffic flow on an already busy, narrow residential road. The heavy vehicles and increased traffic flow during demolition and construction would cause major disturbance to the residents of Pepys Way and St Vincents Close and not least patients attending the doctors surgery at the top of Pepys Way.
 - III. The Council expressed concern over the proposal to remove the pavement on each side of the road forcing pedestrians to share a narrow road with cars.
15. The **Local Highways Authority** requests minor changes to the ramp/rumble strips within St Vincents Close.
 16. The **Landscape Design Officer** comments that there appears to be an excessively large area of hardstanding. At the very least the planting bed in front of plots 10 –11 could be extended forward without compromising visibility splays. The future maintenance of landscaped areas to the front of the properties is queried. Tree pit details will be required for some locations and recommends landscaping and tree protection conditions.
 17. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** is concerned that noise problems could result and therefore, suggests conditions on the use of power-operated machinery during construction and pile foundations. An informative regarding bonfires is also suggested.
 18. The **Ecology Officer** notes that sparrows and starlings appear to be using some of the buildings for nesting. Any demolition works must avoid breeding season unless otherwise agreed. Specialist nest boxes for sparrows and starlings must be provided as compensatory habitat. There is a pond at the rear of the empty property, which although currently devoid of vegetation, frogs were present and it is holding water. Its retention and replanting should be negotiated. He advises that a bat survey be undertaken of at least no. 30 St Vincents Close, due the number of potential roost opportunities in the weatherboarding and roof soffits. It is not clear how the boundary vegetation along Giffords Close is to be treated. The elder and bramble 'hedge' is providing day cover for sparrows and other birds. This should feature should be retained and strengthened with native hedge planting. He is pleased to see that the large apple and ash trees are to be retained, these could have bird and bat boxes placed in them.
 19. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue** do not require additional water supplies for fire fighting.
 20. The **Recycling and Waste Minimisation Officer** has confirmed that bin storage and collection provisions seem acceptable.
 21. The **Housing Development Manager** has confirmed that they have consulted with residents at Girton and Circle 33 have been in direct communication with various residents since the original consultations. We fully support the scheme which reflects the need of new additional housing in the area.
 22. Cambridgeshire Constabulary's **Architectural Liaison Officer** comments that:

The proposed development benefits from a layout of continuous fronts and backs, with parking close to the being in curtilage, thereby enhancing natural surveillance of the street scene and parking allocation. Other than to recommend the provision of street lighting to adoptable standards for the benefit of the car parking areas, and the surfaces of the parking areas be made of material different in type/colour as a symbolic barrier to reinforce the semi private nature of the space, I have no comments to make.

23. The **Building Control Officer** has no adverse comments to make.
24. The comments of the **Trees and Landscape Officer, Drainage Manager and Anglian Water Services** will be reported verbally to Committee.

Representations

25. Seventeen written representations have been received objecting to the proposals. Issues raised are summarised below:
 - a) Increased traffic and resultant highway dangers;
 - b) High volumes of traffic on Pepys Way increased, especially outside the doctors's surgery;
 - c) Size of plots proposed will have small gardens, children will play in the street and other open areas;
 - d) Increased pressure on local services, including schools and doctors;
 - e) Impact of construction noise on neighbouring residents;
 - f) Proposed dwellings are out of character with the area;
 - g) On-street car parking in the narrow road;
 - h) Existing tenants and owner-occupiers do not wish to move;
 - i) Requirement for a secure fence if the site is to adjoin the allotments;
 - j) Confusion over site boundary, does it include rear gardens to Pepys Way?
 - k) Development is out of scale and proportion with the rest of St Vincents Close and Pepys Way;
 - l) Application for 21 houses to the rear of Pepys Way on a larger site was refused in 1998;
 - m) The small size and privacy of proposed gardens;
 - n) Increase flooding due to frequent blockages in the drainage ditch to the rear of Pepys Way;
 - o) Inadequate car parking provision;
 - p) Highway dangers due to the narrowness of St Vincents Close;
 - q) Clear details are required as to whether pedestrians or cars will have right of way over the shared surface road;
 - r) Compulsory Purchase of the owner-occupied dwellings;
 - s) Lack of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) addressing social, economic and environmental costs, plus alternative options;
 - t) Density of the development is out of keeping with existing local character;
 - u) Access for emergency vehicles.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

26. The key planning issues raised in relation to this proposal include those relating to the design and layout, residential amenities, highways, affordable housing provision, drainage and services.

Design and layout

27. The layout of the proposed development includes dwellings fronting the street. Minor amendments to the layout have been requested to ensure adequate pedestrian access, landscaping and to reduce the visual impact of parked cars. Generally the scheme fits well into its surroundings. The density is in accordance with current policy and gardens are generous.
28. The design of the dwellings proposed, while not entirely characteristic of the surroundings, will use quality materials and provide a complementary appearance within the street scene. Amendments reducing the overall height of the houses have been requested, as the proposed dwellings will be 1.5 metres higher than the existing and have a greater depth.

Residential amenities

29. Acceptable distances have been achieved to ensure that both the existing neighbouring dwellings and those proposed have adequate privacy and are not unduly overlooked. Minor alterations are required to plots 9 and 15 to ensure that acceptable levels of light are achieved and that no one dwelling has an overbearing impact upon its neighbours.

Highways

30. Subject to minor amendments to the ramp/rumble strips, the Local Highways Authority has raised no objections to the proposals, which result from pre-application discussions with that authority, therefore refusal on these grounds is unjustified. The doctor's surgery is some distance away from the development and it is unreasonable to conclude that traffic from seven additional dwellings on a road serving over 160 dwellings is likely to result in a noticeable increase in traffic or significantly impact on highway safety. Some inconvenience due to construction traffic is inevitable with development but is not grounds for refusal.

Affordable housing

31. The net gain in dwellings on this site is seven dwellings. This falls below the threshold at which planning policy HG7 requires an affordable housing provision to be secured. Notwithstanding, the majority of the scheme is to be affordable housing, either social rented or shared ownership with a small element to be sold on the open market. A legal agreement, in accordance with policy HG7 is not required, as the net gain of dwellings is more than ten. In addition, the Council cannot enter into a legal agreement with itself therefore, while not a planning matter, the affordable dwellings will be secured through the legal conveyance of the properties built.

Drainage

32. No objection on drainage grounds from the Environment Agency, Drainage Manager or Anglian Water has been received at the time of writing this report. The applicant's consultant engineers have written stating that a full survey of the ditch is required. They undertake to ensure that any development will not impact upon the current arrangement. Any new drainage, and site levels, will be designed to effectively flow/fall away from this area. Standard drainage conditions can ensure satisfactory provision is made for drainage without exacerbating any possible existing problems.

Other matters

33. Cambridgeshire County Council has not requested an educational contribution.

34. An EIA is not required for this type of development under current planning legislation.
35. The question has been raised as to whether two properties within the site area, that are owner occupied, would be compulsory purchased by the Council in order for the scheme to be developed. This is being looked into and a verbal report will be made to the Committee.

Recommendation

36. Subject to receipt of amended plans, no objections from the Trees and Landscape Officer, Drainage Manager and Anglian Water, delegated powers are sought to approve the application subject to the following conditions:
 1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 2. Sc5a – Details of materials for external walls and roofs (Rc5aii);
Sc5b – Surface water drainage (Rc5b);
Sc5c – Foul water drainage (Rc5c);
SC5e – Finished floor levels in relation to ground levels (Rc5e)
Sc5f – Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas (Reason – To minimise disturbance to adjoining residents);
 3. Sc51 – Landscaping (Rc51);
 4. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52);
 5. Sc57 – Protection of existing tree (Rc57);
 6. Sc60 – Details of boundary treatment (Rc60);
 7. No development shall begin until details of a lighting scheme have been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority, the development of which shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any dwelling.
Reason: In the interests of crime prevention.
 8. During the period of construction no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays) unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions.
Reason - To minimise noise and disturbance to nearby residential dwellings.

Plus additional conditions agreed by the Ecologist and Highways.

Informatives

1. Should driven pile foundations be proposed, then before works commence, a statement of the method for construction of these foundations shall be submitted and agreed by the District Environmental Health Officer so that noise and vibration can be controlled.
2. During construction there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site except with the prior permission of the Environmental Health Officer in accordance with best practice and existing waste management legislation.
3. See attached Environment Agency advice regarding soakaways.

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:

- **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:** P1/3 (Sustainable design in built development), P5/3 'Density' P5/4 'Meeting Locally Identified Housing Needs' and P5/5 'Homes in Rural Areas';
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:** SE3 (Limited Rural Growth Settlements), HG7 (Affordable Housing), HG10 (Housing Mix and Design), HG10 (Housing Mix and Design), TP1 'Planning More Sustainable Travel', CS2 'Water Resources', CS10 'Education', CS13 'Community Safety', EN5 'The Landscaping Of New Development', EN13 and EN14 'Protected Species'.
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
- Residential amenity
 - Car parking
 - Highway safety
 - Lighting
 - Emergency access
 - Character of the area
 - Density
 - Impact on local service
 - Design and layout
 - Landscaping
 - Wildlife
 - Drainage
 - Affordable housing
 - Compulsory purchase
 - Environmental Impact Assessment

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/1123/05/F and S/2553/04/F

Contact Officer: Melissa Reynolds – Senior Planning Assistant
Telephone: (01954) 713237