

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 7th September 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/1137/05/RM – Thriplow
Erection of 58 Dwellings and Garages on Land North of A505, Heathfield**

**Recommendation: Approval
Date for determination: 8th September 2005 (Major Application)**

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to a 1.9 hectare/4.7 acre rectangular shaped site. It is slightly undulating, rises gently towards the A505 and is currently unkempt grassland on which there is a spoil heap. A pill box sits close to the A505. Public footpath no.5, Thriplow runs at right angles to the A505 across the site, and then turns 90 degrees and continues in a southwesterly direction. Recent 2 and 3-storey residential development is situated to the northwest of the site, Hurdles Way and Duxford Service Station are to the northeast, the A505 is to the southeast and fields extend to the southwest.
2. This reserved matters application, received on the 9th June 2005 and amended by plans date stamped the 1st and 12th August 2005, proposes the erection of 58 dwellings on both sides of a loop road. Siting and design of the buildings and the layout of the site form part of the application. Landscaping does not form part of the application and will need to be the subject of a further submission. 6no. 1-bedroom flats, 14no. 2-bedroom units, 19no. 3-bedroom units, 12no. 3-bedroom plus study units and 7no. 4-bedroom units are proposed. The flats are in a block. The remaining units are comprised of 3no. detached units, 10 semi-detached units and 39 terraced units. 16 of the units are 3-storey, 10 are 2½ storey and 32 are 2-storey. The ridge and eaves heights vary from 7.7m to 10.8m and 4.8m to 7.4m respectively. The dwellings and roads are to be sited on the eastern part of the site. A 4.5m wide planting belt is proposed along the A505 boundary. A 55m wide area on the western side of the site is to be used for buffer planting and as open space. The density equates to 30.5 dwellings to the hectare.
3. The amended plans date stamped the 1st and 12th August 2005 show revisions to the layout and house types including a reduction in the number of proposed dwellings from 59 to 58, more space for planting within the development, a reduction in the number of first and second floor windows in the rear of the proposed block facing nos. 9-15 odd Hurdles Way and a reduction in the rear eaves height of the dwellings on plots 44-47 which face nos. 9-15 odd Hurdles Way.

Planning History

4. Outline planning permission for residential development on the site was granted in 2004 (**S/1219/01/O**). The accompanying S.106 Agreement covers Public Open Space and a Community Contribution.

The Community Contribution is a contribution towards the cost of erecting any community buildings with the public open space or any other public amenity area in the parish of Thriplow for use by the community and/or providing other community improvement.

5. A reserved matters application for 59 dwellings on the site was refused under delegated powers in April (reference **S/0112/05/RM**) for the following reasons:
 - a) The siting of so many 3-storey buildings on the edge of the development as proposed, and units 16-21 in particular, would not satisfactorily assimilate the development into the landscape;
 - b) Whilst, generally, the proposed grid layout with some dwellings close to the back edge of the footway is appropriate, the proposed layout does not provide for the necessary differing character areas and, in particular, does not provide adequate space for soft landscaping within the development considered appropriate and essential on this village edge site;
 - c) The layout does not provide for an adequate planting belt along the A505 boundary necessary in order to ensure that the development is assimilated into the landscape;
 - d) The development is not of the necessary high standard of design, in particular by missing the opportunity to site a focal building and/or open space at the entrance to the site in place of the proposed dwellings on plots 57 and 58;
 - e) The development turns its back on the open space and Public Footpath No.5 and proposes rear boundary fences along part of the route of the footpath. In addition to missing a design opportunity for dwellings to front this area, there would be very limited surveillance of the open space and, in particular, any equipped children's play areas within this area;
 - f) There would be serious overlooking of No.1 Hurdles Way from the first floor kitchen/dining room windows in the rear elevation of units 43 and 44 unless these windows were both obscure glazed and fixed, which would lead to a poor living environment for future occupiers of these proposed dwellings; and
 - g) The submitted proposal fails to demonstrate that all dwellings would have adequate provision for wheelie bin storage.

Planning Policy

6. The part of the site on which the dwellings and roads are proposed is within the village framework and forms part of housing allocation **Policy Heathfield 1** in the Local Plan 2004. The proposed open space and buffer planting along the west boundary are outside the village framework and within the countryside and Green Belt.
7. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/3** requires a high standard of design for all new development which responds to the local character of the built environment, integrates with adjoining landscapes and includes attractive green spaces.
8. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P5/3** states that Local Planning Authorities should seek to maximise the use of land by applying the highest density possible which is compatible with maintaining local character.

It also states that, in setting density standards appropriate to their area, Local Planning Authorities should take into account the following guidelines: densities of at least 40 dwellings per hectare should be sought in locations close to a good range of existing and potential services and facilities and where there is, or there is the potential for, good public transport accessibility; and densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare will not be acceptable.

9. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE5** sets out the criteria against which residential development in Heathfield will be considered and requires development to be sympathetic to the historic interests, character and amenities of the locality.
10. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE9** states that development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact of development on the countryside.
11. Local Plan 2004 **Policy HG10** states that residential developments will be required to contain a mix of units providing accommodation in a range of types, sizes (including 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings) and affordability, making the best use of the site and promoting a sense of community which reflects local needs. It also states that the design and layout of schemes should be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape and landscape. Schemes should also achieve high quality design and distinctiveness, avoiding inflexible standards and promoting energy efficiency.
12. Local Plan 2004 **Policy RT2** sets out the standards for the provision of public open space in new developments and states that an appropriate contribution shall be considered as 60 square metres per dwelling.
13. Local Plan 2004 **Policy GB2** states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. It also states that development is 'inappropriate' unless, amongst others, it comprises uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with Green belt purposes.
14. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P9/2a** states that within the Green Belt, new development, including change of use, will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.
15. A Development Brief for Heathfield Policy 2 (now Policy Heathfield 1 in the Adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004) was Adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2001.

Consultation

16. **Thriplow Parish Council** recommended refusal in relation to the original scheme stating that:

"Whilst welcoming the amendments to the scheme, still object to the proposals and would make the following comments:-

The number of houses proposed would overcrowd the site, a more open, sensitive design would have been preferred.

The 3 storey buildings are totally inappropriate in a rural setting. A bad precedent was set by allowing 3 storey dwellings in Hurdles Way but there is no reason to compound this by allowing more.

Foul sewage must not be discharged into the existing privately owned Heathfield system.

The traffic lights at the junction with the A505 should be in place before any developments starts.

Not enough parking spaces have been allowed for the inevitable number of cars this development will generate.

Buildings close to the A505 may preclude future widening of this road.”

Any comments received in relation to the amended plans will be reported verbally.

17. **Landscape Design Officer** makes the following comments in relation to the amended plans: have stated previously that there should be space for ‘normal’ trees to develop and not just fastigate type trees; and, if they wish to have a more ‘urban street scene’ to south, can the central block area be moved south and a tight street scene be created giving effective practical planting space to north road?
18. **Ecology Officer** is very disappointed in the lack of apparent willingness to make use of the pill box as a bat roost and states that he was under the impression that this relatively simple measure was to deliver an interesting ecological enhancement for the site.
19. At the time of application S/0112/05/F, the **Chief Environmental Health Officer** raised no objections subject to compliance with the conditions attached to the outline permission. His comments in relation to this application will be reported verbally.
20. **Environment Operations Manager** seeks confirmation that all roads will be to adoptable highway standard to withstand 26 tonne gross vehicle weight 6x4 vehicles. He also states that: the section of road in front of plots 24 and 25 at 3.6m wide is too narrow; each dwelling should be provided with an area for the storage of containers; he would like to see details of the communal bin for block ‘A’; and storage areas for containers should be within 30m of the collection point.
21. **Local Highways Authority** requests a fully dimensioned plan and states that it is unable to properly assess the suitability of the scheme without this information.
22. **CCC Countryside Services Team** objected to the original scheme on the grounds that the proposed housing is too close to the legal line of Public Footpath No.5, Thriplow, and the indicated western boundary planting and the Local Area for Play would obstruct the legal line of the footpath. It also requires access from Road 2 directly onto the footpath; recommends that the developer seeks to upgrade the footpath to a bridleway; and requires the developer to maintain the legal width of the footpath, seek a temporary closure order if necessary and surface the footpath with tarmac. Its comments in relation to the amended plan will be reported verbally at the meeting.
23. **Ramblers’ Association** expressed concern in commenting on the amended plans that the public footpath is clearly marked and maintained during construction work, as well as subsequently.

24. **Cambs Fire & Rescue Service** asks that adequate provision be made for fire hydrants.
25. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer** makes the following comments in relation to the amended plans: the new arrangements for parking for plots 14-21 make the parking for plot 14 more remote and creates an exposed side elevation for plot 15 which now should benefit from an area of clearly identifiable defensible space such as a planting strip. He is still concerned about the positioning of the pill box in the parking court, an area which should be semi-private in nature. He also states that excluding utility meters from front elevations may have an adverse effect on any subsequent Secure by Design application, particularly where there is a knock on effect of moving gates/fences to rear gardens back from the position as close as possible to the front build line.
26. **Environment Agency** states that the District Council is required to consider the flood risk and surface water drainage issues relating to the proposal but recommends Anglian Water is consulted and makes advisory comments. It understands that drainage details strictly only need to be submitted and approved before development commences but recommends that the applicant ensures that the layout takes account of drainage requirements.
27. **Anglian Water** was consulted on the recommendation of the Environment Agency and asked to comment if it was not satisfied that the sewerage and sewage disposal systems serving the development have sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional flows generated as a result of the development without causing pollution or flooding. No comments have been received.

Representations

28. None received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

29. The principle of residential development on the site has already been established by the granting of the outline permission.

Density

30. The gross density is 30.5 dwellings to the hectare. The net density (i.e. excluding the structural planting belt along the western boundary) equates to approximately 35 dwellings to the hectare.

Housing Mix

31. The proposed mix, which includes 1 and 2-bedroom units in accordance with Local Plan Policy HG10 (10% 1-bedroom dwellings, 24% 2-bedroom dwellings, 33% 3-bedroom dwellings, 21% 3-bedroom plus study units and 12% 4-bedroom dwellings) is considered to be acceptable.

Height of Development

32. Two, two-and-a-half and three-storey development is proposed. 55% of the dwellings would be 2-storey, 17% two-and-a-half storey and 28% three-storey. The adopted development brief for the site states that, in line with PPG3, historically low densities are unlikely to be sustained in new development, and there will be specific instances even in a rural context where much higher densities will be appropriate. It goes on to state that it is on this basis that development of up to three storeys can be considered appropriate at Heathfield. There is a mix of two and three-storey development on the adjacent site. The proposed mix of storey heights will provide interest in the roofscape.

Layout and Design

33. The layout is based on a loop/grid layout as advocated in the development brief. It is considered that this scheme satisfactorily addresses the reasons application S/0112/05/F was refused by: providing more space for soft landscaping within the development; siting focal buildings and an area of private open space at the entrance to the site; providing for a 4.5m wide landscaping belt along the A505 frontage; replacing the previously proposed 3-storey building in the southern corner with a 2-storey building; and providing more variety in the streetscape, including a formal 'square'. The layout remains quite 'urban' but, mindful of the guidance in the development brief, is now considered to be acceptable.

Open Space

34. The proposed development adopts a different approach to the recent development to the northeast. That scheme involved landscaping of the whole of the 50m or so belt to the west of the built development. This scheme proposes to plant a 15-20m wide belt along the western boundary and use the remainder of this area (i.e. the area between this belt and built development) as open space. I consider that a 15-20m wide planted belt is wide enough to satisfactorily assimilate the development into the landscape and has the advantage of providing a convenient, meaningful area of open space for residents of the proposed development and the recent development to the northeast. That said, I would be looking for larger stock to be used in a 15-20m belt than has been used for the adjacent development. The Local Plan requires a development of 58 dwellings to provide 3500 square metres of open space. The proposed open space, excluding the necessary boundary planting, extends to approximately 3500 square metres. No additional public open space is proposed within the development. In this respect, the development brief states that, in respect of larger developments, it is customary to prescribe a single main area to give a useful play space rather than to split up the open space into a number of smaller areas.

Neighbour Impact

35. The scheme has been amended to reduce the eaves height and number of windows in the proposed block facing nos. 9-15 odd Hurdles Way. Whilst the development would result in overlooking of nos. 1-15 odd Hurdles Way, I consider that the scheme as amended is acceptable.

Highway Matters and Parking Provision

36. The Local Highway Authority has requested a fully dimensioned plan and states that it is unable to properly assess the suitability of the scheme without this information.

A dimensioned plan has been requested and will be forwarded to the Local Highway Authority when received. Its formal comments in response will be reported verbally at the meeting.

37. Proposed parking provision is generally two spaces per dwelling which is considered to be acceptable in this location.
38. An amended plan has been sought to show the narrowing of the road in front of plots 24 and 25 to 3.6m widened to address the concerns of the Council's Environment Operations Manager in terms of access for refuse vehicles. With only a handful of exceptions, gates to the rear gardens of properties are within the 30m distance of the main road referred to by the Council's Environment Operations Manager in his comments on the scheme.

Pill Box

39. The development included the retention of the pill box as encouraged in the development brief.
40. Whilst accepting that it cannot be insisted upon, the Council's Ecology Officer is continuing to encourage the developers to make use of the pill box as a bat roost.

Footpath No.5 Thriplow

41. Whilst the previously refused scheme turned its back on this footpath, the development now proposed faces the footpath and makes it more attractive for users. The County Council's Countryside Services Team objected to the original layout as it encroached on the line of the footpath. An amended plan which purports to address this concern has been forwarded to the County Council. Its comments in response will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Other matters

42. The comments of the Police Architectural Officer are not considered to be reason to refuse the application. The agent has suggested, and I would agree, that utility boxes should in the main be excluded from front elevations as they can be unsightly.
43. There is no requirement for any of the dwellings to be affordable. Policy Heathfield 1 states that the development will include contributions to improve community sustainability and community improvements will take priority over securing affordable housing. The S.106 entered into prior to the outline permission being granted reflects this.
44. The following matters, some referred to by consultees, are all clearly important and still need to be approved (as required by conditions attached to the outline permission) but are not reasons to refuse this application or reason to hold up the determination of the application: fire hydrants scheme; traffic signals at A505 junction; street lighting; surface and foul water drainage; noise attenuation scheme; and landscaping.

Recommendation

45. Subject to the receipt of a further amended layout plan in response to the comments of the Local Highway Authority and showing the section of road in front of plots 24 and 25 widened to 4.5m in response to the comments of the Environment Operations Manager, and no objections being raised to the amended scheme by the Local Highway Authority or CCC Countryside Services Team:

Approval (as amended by plans date stamped 1.8.05 and 12.8.05) of reserved matters (siting and design of buildings and the layout of the site) pursuant to outline permission S/1219/01/O

Additional Conditions:

1. Before development commences, details of the foundations of the garages for plots 5, 7, 9 and 13 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details (RC – To ensure the full 4.5 metres shown on the approved layout plan for buffer planting is available for planting).
2. Before development commences, details of the precise size and position, specification of equipment, surfacing and means of enclosing a Local Area for Play (as defined by the National Playing Fields Association) to be sited on the open space shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the Local Area for Play shall be provided in accordance with the approved details before 75% in number of the dwellings hereby permitted are occupied (RC – To ensure appropriate provision is made for formal children's play space on the site as required by South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy RT2).

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) and P9/2a (Green Belt).
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:** SE5 (Residential Development in Infill Villages), SE9 (Village Edges), GB2 (Green Belt), HG10 (Housing Mix and Design) and RT2 (The Provision of Public Open Space in New Development).
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise: appearance and impact of the development; drainage; need for the traffic lights at the junction with the A505 to be in place before any developments starts; parking provision; development may prejudice future widening of the A505; impact on Public Footpath No.5, Thriplow; provision of fire hydrants; and crime.

Informatives

All roads should be to adoptable highway standard to withstand 26 tonne gross vehicle weight 6x4 refuse vehicles.

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 Refs: S/1137/05/RM, S/0112/05/RM and S/1219/01/O.

Contact Officer: Andrew Moffat – Area Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713169