

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

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**S/0572/05/O - Highfields Caldecote  
Dwelling, Land Rear of 99 Highfields Road, Highfields Caldecote  
for Dr R Falconer and Dr S Gale**

**Recommendation: Approval  
Date for Determination: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

### Site and Proposal

1. The outline application, received on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005, proposes the erection of one bungalow on 0.08 hectares of garden land to the rear of No. 99 Highfields Road. All matters are reserved for further consideration although a 'feasibility study' plan has been submitted illustrating the siting on the land of a three bedroom bungalow of 112 sq.m. footprint.
2. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) was submitted by letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> July 2005.
3. The density of the proposed development equates to 12.5 dwellings per hectare.
4. Proposed access to the site is some 41 metres in length from the highway boundary to the bulk of the site. It passes between the blank flank walls of two hipped roof bungalows at Nos. 97 and 99 Highfields, both of which have separate garages and individual accesses. The garage of No. 97 abuts the proposed access, which is some 3.5 metres wide between the flank walls and 3 metres wide between the front garden fences of these bungalows.
5. To the north east of the site is woodland; to the north west are gardens of bungalows at Nos. 37-43 West Drive; and to the south west are gardens of properties in Highfields Road.
6. Between the front boundary of gardens at Nos. 97 and 99 Highfields Road and the carriageway is a 3 metre wide verge and a footway.

### Planning History

7. There is no relevant history on the site.
8. The applicants quote the following cases of backland development on sites to the north east:
  - (a) **S/0390/02/F** - 2 dwellings at 107a and 109a Highfields Road - approved;
  - (b) **S/2519/87/O** - 2 dwellings at 115a and 115b Highfields Road - approved;
  - (c) **S/2375/01/F** - One dwelling at 15a West Drive - approved; and
  - (d) **S/1902/01/O** - One dwelling rear of 121 Highfields Road - dismissed at appeal.

## Planning Policy

9. Policy **P1/3** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 requires a high standard of design which responds to the local character of the built environment for all new development.
10. Policy **SE4** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ('The Local Plan') identifies Highfields Caldecote as a Group Village in which residential development and redevelopment up to a maximum scheme size of 8 dwellings will be permitted 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;
  - (d) Residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly Policy **EM8** (Loss of Employment Sites).
11. Policy **HG10** of the Local Plan states that the design and layout of residential development should be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape and landscape.
12. Policy **HG11** of the Local Plan states that development to the rear of existing properties will only be permitted where the development would not:
  - (a) Result in overbearing, overlooking or overshadowing of existing residential properties;
  - (b) Result in noise and disturbance to existing residential properties through the use of its access;
  - (c) Result in highway dangers through the use of its access; or
  - (d) Be out of character with the pattern of development in the vicinity.
13. **Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3**, "Housing", advocates making more efficient use of land, while at the same time ensuring that the quality of the environment is protected. Considerations of design and layout should be informed by the wider context and development should be designed sympathetically and laid out in keeping with the character of the village.

## Consultation

14. **Caldecote Parish Council** recommends refusal:
  - (a) Overdevelopment of the site;
  - (b) Access to the site is narrow. Concerns were expressed over safety;
  - (c) Additional drainage would be required due to backland flooding.
15. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** has no objections.

16. The **Senior Building Control Officer** states that:
- (a) There will be a requirement for access to have a firm approach which is able to support a wheelchair and enable easy manoeuvrability. This may preclude a gravel drive mentioned in the FRA; and
  - (b) It may be appropriate to request evidence for the calculation of the 5 cubic metre rainwater harvesting storage tank, although the report does suggest the tank is oversized.
17. **Environment Agency** comments that the FRA is acceptable in principle, although there are no details submitted in respect of the overflow facility. In view of local soil conditions it is recommended that oversized perforated soakaway chambers provide additional storage. In addition the applicant must ensure that the entire system is contained on site to avoid impact upon third parties.

### **Representations**

18. The occupiers of No. 41 West Drive object:
- (a) Flooding of the site after heavy rain spreads to the garden of No. 41; and
  - (b) Overdevelopment of Caldecote.
19. The occupiers of No. 97 Highfields Road express the following concerns:
- (a) There may be boundary details to deal with;
  - (b) The access is not wide enough or strong enough to support construction vehicles. A considerable amount of hedging would need to be removed. Another access on to Highfields Road by a roundabout would be too dangerous; and
  - (c) The garden of No. 99 floods after heavy rain. This problem would be exacerbated if a property were to be constructed on the site.

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

20. The site is located within the village framework where there is a presumption in favour of residential development.
21. The proposal therefore needs to be assessed against the criteria incorporated in Policy HG11 of the Local Plan, which encapsulates the provisions of Policies P1/3 of the Structure Plan, SE4 and HG10 of the Local Plan, together with drainage considerations.

### ***Impact on Adjoining Properties***

22. The site, with the access drive discounted, has a depth of 36 metres and a width of 16 metres. The illustrative plan shows a single storey property occupying no more than 20% of this site area and located some 19 metres, 4 metres and 5.5 metres from adjoining garden boundaries to the north west, south east and south west respectively. In addition, the bungalows at No. 41 West Drive and 99 Highfields Road are some 30 metres and 23 metres from the north west and south east site boundaries respectively.

23. Although the layout is illustrative only, I consider that a bungalow can be accommodated on site without resulting in overbearing, overlooking or overshadowing of existing properties, whilst paying due regard to the spacious layout of the surrounding area.

***Impact on adjoining properties through the use of the access***

24. The access between Nos. 97 and 99 Highfields Road exists, albeit not used as the principal access to the applicant's bungalow (No 99). These adjoining bungalows have blank walls abutting the access. The garage of No. 97 abuts the access. A 1.8m high close boarded fence screens the back garden of No. 97 and a hedge partly screens the back garden of No. 99.
25. Whilst there will be some disturbance caused to these gardens by the use of the access, I do not consider that the movements caused by one dwelling will be sufficient to object to the proposal, having regard to the above factors and to the ability to impose conditions regarding the treatment of boundaries either side of the access and the surface of the access.

***Highway Impact***

26. Highfields Road is subject to traffic calming and some 20 metres to the south west is a mini-roundabout at the junction with Clare Drive.
27. Vehicle visibility is good and pedestrian visibility is achieved, by virtue of the position of the footway 3 metres forward of the front boundary of adjoining properties and the presence of the drive to No. 97 adjacent to the access.
28. Whilst the access achieves the minimum width of 2.5 metres for a single dwelling, it does not meet Building Regulations requirements for fire service access width of 3.7 metres for a drive longer than 45 metres to the planned footprint. This issue can be resolved under the Building Regulations and is not a reason to refuse the application.

***Character and appearance of the area***

29. The Inspector, in his decision letter of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2002 (see Paragraph 8(d) above) noted:

“The western side of Highfields Road is characterised by frontage development comprising a mixture of bungalows and 2 storey dwellings. The rear gardens extend towards the rear gardens of similar residential properties along West Drive, a parallel road to the west. Between these two road frontages, some backland development has taken place in the form of bungalows served by private drives.

In my opinion, bungalows in a backland position between development fronting Highfields Road and West Drive have become part of the character of this area, with several such properties built or approved close to the appeal site. I recognise that the appeal proposal together with the plot to the rear of Nos. 15 and 17 West Drive would introduce a “second tier” to the line of backland properties. However, it seems to me that this, in itself, is not a reason to refuse permission if the layout remains sufficiently spacious to maintain the existing relatively loose knit pattern of development.”

30. That appeal was dismissed on grounds that the development would appear unduly cramped in relation to other backland sites, with the buildings and hard surfaces dominating (on a site discounting the access of 0.04 hectares).

31. In my opinion this application site (0.065 hectare discounting the length of drive necessary to serve the site) can accommodate a bungalow without appearing to be squeezed into the site or to be out of character with the pattern of development in the vicinity.

### ***Drainage***

32. The FRA recognises the difficulty of disposing surface water drainage due to the clay subsoil, flat nature of the site and absence of watercourses. Hence it proposes 5 cubic metres of storage in a below ground storage tank as part of a rainwater harvesting system. This is equivalent to 40 days of average rainfall and will enable the recycling of rainwater falling on to the site.
33. In order to address the comments of the Environment Agency it is suggested that a planning condition should require the details of this system for surface water drainage, including the capacity of the tank, to be submitted for approval.

### **Recommendation**

34. Approve. Subject to the following conditions:
1. SCB - Time Limited Permission (Rc B)
  2. SC1 - Reserved Matters
    - (a) The siting of the building;
    - (b) Design and external appearance of the building;
    - (c) Means of access; and
    - (d) The landscaping of the site (RC1)
  3. SC52 - Implementation of landscaping scheme (RC52)
  4. SC5(b) - Details of surface water drainage and rainwater harvesting system (RC5(b))
  5. No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a plan indicating the position, design, materials and type of boundary treatment to be erected. The boundary treatment shall be completed before the dwelling is occupied. Development shall not be carried other than in accordance with the approved details.  
(Reason - To protect the amenity of adjoining residents.)
  6. No development shall take place until details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including driveways and car parking areas have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.  
(Reason - To minimise disturbance to adjoining residents and to ensure satisfactory drainage of the site.)

7. 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 disturbance to adjoining residents.)
8. The dwelling hereby permitted shall be single-storey in height and all living accommodation contained within it shall be on the ground floor only.  
(Reason - To ensure the development is satisfactorily assimilated into the area and is in keeping with the character of adjoining dwellings.)

## **Informatives**

### **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:**  
**Policy P1/3** (Sustainable design in built development)
  - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**  
**Policy SE4** (Development in Group Villages)  
**Policy HG10** (Housing Design)  
**Policy HG11** (Backland 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:
  - Flooding, overdevelopment, access and boundary details.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- PPG3: Housing
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- File References: S/0572/05/O, S/0390/02/F, S/2375/01/F, S/1902/01/O and S/2519/87/O.

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