

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 5th October 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/1133/05/RM - Steeple Morden
Erection of 6 Houses and 1 Bungalow (Phase 2)
Land at the Mill, Ashwell Road
for Hasler (HTC) Ltd**

**Recommendation: Approval
Date for Determination: 4th August 2005**

Site and Proposal

1. The "Hasler" site is located on the southern edge of Steeple Morden. The front section was formerly used in connection with a waste transfer business and features a windmill, which is currently being restored. The site has now been cleared and the development of Phase 1, the erection of 5 dwellings, has commenced. Phase 2, the subject of this application, adjoins to the rear and is predominantly open paddocks. To the north of the paddocks is an orchard and to the west and east hedging and trees, predominantly growing outside the application site.
2. The reserved matters application received on 9th June 2005 and amended on the 1st August 2005 proposes the erection of 6 houses and 1 bungalow on the 0.32 ha site (excluding access), at a density of 22 dwellings per ha. In its amended form the courtyard scheme consists of a two bedroom bungalow, five 3 bedroom houses, two of which are detached, and a 2 bedroom terraced unit. Ridge heights are below those approved on Phase 1 and range from 6.5m for the bungalow, 7.2m for the courtyard terraced units to 7.4m for the detached dwellings.
3. A design statement submitted with the application states that the design approach is to create a logical extension/termination to the approved Phase 1 to the south, incorporating a high quality scheme which is characterful and aesthetically complimentary to Phase 1. All the dwellings on site have been limited in height to roughly 1½ storeys to reduce the visual impact and to create a "soft" developed edge to the southern boundary of the village. A single storey dwelling has been incorporated on the south-western boundary, as suggested by officers, to help achieve this aim. The most relevant design consideration was the opportunity to create a courtyard terrace on the site which would compliment the more detached dwellings in Phase 1, thereby creating a diverse mix of dwellings for the overall development and a pleasing terminated view to the north of the site. The two small detached dwellings on Plots 6 and 11 are intended to create a transition from the large detached dwellings on Phase 1 via a "gateway" effect into a terraced courtyard of five dwellings.
4. The materials, with a high incidence of weatherboarding and slate roofing are intended to give the impression of barn conversions rather than new build.

Planning History

5. Outline planning permission was granted for residential development on the site in June 2002, following a public inquiry. A Section 106 agreement concerned the

restoration of the windmill. Prior to this the part of the site which was used in connection with the adjacent waste transfer business had been the subject of applications for lawful development certificates and breach of condition notices.

6. At the August 2005 meeting Members approved a further period of 1 year for the submission of reserved matters on Phase 2. The reserved matters for 5 dwellings on the adjacent Phase 1 were approved earlier this year.

Planning Policy

7. The following policies are relevant:

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

Policy P1/2 - Environmental Restrictions on Development

Policy P1/3 - Sustainable Design in Built Development

Policy P5/3 - Density

Policy P5/5 - Homes in Rural Areas

Policy P7/6 - Historic Built Environment

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

Policy SE4 - Group Villages

Policy SE8 - Village Frameworks

Policy SE9 - Village Edges

Policy HG10 - Housing Mix and Design

Policy EN28 - Development within the Setting of a Listed Building

Policy Steeple Morden 1 refers to Phases 1 and 2 and states:

“Land at The Mill, Ashwell Road, is allocated for residential development. However, planning permission will only be granted for a scheme which (a) results in the relocation of the existing waste transfer station, (b) is accompanied by measures to ensure that full internal and external structural repair of the grade II listed smock mill is undertaken and (c) provides sufficient open space around the Mill to permit a reasonable appreciation of its original setting, including removal of the present brick wall partly surrounding the building. Reinforcement of the boundary hedge along the western boundary of the site will also be required.”

The supporting text states:

“As an exceptional measure, the village framework boundary has been extended (and a residential allocation made) at The Mill, Ashwell Road. This is intended to facilitate both the relocation of the present waste transfer station and the full internal and external repair of the Grade II listed smock mill which is a rare example of its type. Because of the special reasons behind the decision to extend the village framework onto greenfield land, planning permission will not be granted unless the development proposals provide assurance that these two aims will both be met. The scheme will also be required to provide sufficient open space around the Mill to permit a reasonable appreciation of the setting that it once enjoyed. This should include removal of the existing confining brick wall and would be assisted by amendment of the boundary between the Mill House and The Mill. In addition, the western boundary hedge must be retained and reinforced to provide an appropriate degree of screening between the new development and the open countryside beyond.”

Consultations (amended plans)

8. **Steeple Morden Parish Council** objects:

“Far from addressing the concerns expressed in our response to the original application, the amended version will only serve to exacerbate many of them. In particular:

Density

Whilst appreciating the reasoning behind the housing density requirements in PPG3, we feel that such an approach here would be at odds with the character and setting both of the rest of this development and with Steeple Morden as a whole. We would suggest that, for reasons of consistency, the Policy should either be applied to the entire development (i.e. including Phase 1) or not at all. There seems to be a tendency to regard the two Phases of this development as separate entities whereas, once completed, they will inevitably be viewed as a single area of new building - whereas as conceived, the two Phases currently appear to be barely on speaking terms.

However, should it be decided to accept the argument for a higher density of housing in this second Phase, we would seek a categorical assurance from the relevant body that the grossly overloaded local sewerage system can cope not only with a notional 12 extra dwellings arising from this development but also the 19 new apartments already approved for the White House development and the 10 new dwellings soon to be built in Jubilee Way, together with the 6 additional dwellings that have been constructed in Steeple Morden during the past year (not counting the extra bathrooms and WCs in extensions to existing properties). We fear there has been a tendency in the past to view this aspect of each new development in isolation - it is surely now time to examine it within the overall development context of the village.

Design

We note that the Applicant does not disagree with our previous suggestion that a courtyard design has no precedent in Steeple Morden, only claiming that it can be found in certain (unspecified) neighbouring villages. We also see no suggestion of whether such a design suits the character and setting of these unspecified villages, which may be significant.

The replacement of the two garages in the back row of houses with an extra dwelling would seem to increase still further the potential for parking congestion and clutter within the development, as well as adding to the potential dangers for any pedestrians, for whom there are still no footways indicated.

However, we note gratefully that there is now provision for moving rubbish bins behind this rear row of houses, into what has now apparently become a communal garden area (previously, it featured separate private gardens).

In General

We would suggest that the site boundaries are still unclear and may give an unclear picture of the size of the area. It would also seem that, contrary to the suggestion in the accompanying letter, only a few of the indicative trees have been removed from the plan.

As well as the full restoration of the listed Mill (for which we still look forward to seeing a definitive timetable), it will be recalled that the appeals inspector agreed for this second area to be developed for housing, on the understanding that it would part-fund the relocation of the waste transfer station formerly on this site. We await confirmation that this business has indeed been relocated, rather than simply ceased trading. Should the latter be the case, we feel there should now be sufficient equity in the site for part of it to be used for the provision of affordable housing.

We understand (and hope!) that these points will be viewed in conjunction with those we made in our response to this application in its original form.”

The original objection concerned similar issues e.g. density, inaccuracy of site boundaries, inadequate parking, turning and footways within the site, the need for landscaping and protection of existing trees, no street lighting should be installed given the rural nature of the site and fears over the restoration and maintenance of the Mill.

9. The **Local Highway Authority** comments concern the details of the access conditioned as part of the reserved matters approval of Phase 1.
10. **The Environment Agency** has no objections subject to standard conditions concerning the submission of details of surface water drainage and site contamination.
11. **Anglian Water** comments will be reported verbally.
12. **The Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** require a condition to ensure the provision of fire hydrants.
13. **The Conservation Manager** raises no objections. The alterations do not materially harm the setting of the nearby listed Mill.

Discussions are continuing concerning Phase 2 of the restoration of the Mill and a schedule of works will be produced which can be incorporated into the Section 106 Legal Agreement.

Representations

14. 3 objections to the original application were received from Station Road residents whose properties back onto the site. The main points are:
 1. The site boundaries are misleading. Most of the boundary vegetation is off-site and additional landscaping is needed.
 2. The detached houses on Plots 6 and 11 are too high and not 1½ storey as described by the applicants.
 3. Concerns expressed at the restoration and future maintenance of the Mill. The S106 agreement needs to be amended to reflect the repairs being implemented.
 4. Utility vehicles will have to reverse onto Ashwell Road.
15. A further objection has been received from 10 Ashwell Road following the submission of amended plans, concerned that the additional dwellings will adversely affect highway safety in Ashwell Road.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

16. The key issues are the design and density of the proposed scheme.
17. The application was the subject of pre-application discussions following the granting of outline planning permission on appeal. As no affordable houses were required given the costs involved in restoring the Mill on Phase 1 of the site, smaller units were sought compared to the earlier phase. A mixture of 2 two bedroom and 5 three bedroom units meets that requirement. The courtyard approach was considered appropriate, contrasting with the detached house on Phase 1 and closing the vista into the site from the Ashwell Road entrance. The “farmyard” flavour of the courtyard, with extensive timber cladding, and barn-like proportions, compliments the Mill and its rural setting. Officers were keen to reduce the impact of the scheme when seen from the open countryside to the west, and a single storey unit has been introduced on Plot 10 with this aim in mind.
18. The scheme has been amended at officer suggestion to increase the density to 22 dwellings per ha, which although below the 30 dwellings per ha threshold, is appropriate to this site and its setting on the edge of the village and close to the listed Mill. The height of the 2 dwellings on Plots 6 and 11 have also been reduced to 7.4m to provide more of a transition with the Phase 1 development, whilst retaining their function as “gateway” buildings into the courtyard.
19. The Parish Council and neighbours are concerned at the number of dwellings proposed but at below 30 per ha this cannot be substantiated. There is a concern about foul water drainage but the principle of development has already been approved and at a below average density the impact will be reduced.
20. The Parish Council is also concerned at the appropriateness of a courtyard layout, but although there may not be other examples in the village it is an appropriate form in an edge of village setting, reflecting a farmyard in the disposition of buildings.
21. Neighbours were concerned at the accuracy of the site boundaries, but following the submission of amended plans I am satisfied the boundaries are correctly defined.
22. The restoration and maintenance of the Mill has long been a cause for local concern. The Phase 1 legal agreement (as amended) required works to the Mill and these have commenced and are proceeding to the satisfaction of the Conservation Manager. A Deed of Variation will be required to update the Section 106 accompanying the outline planning, and this is being prepared in conjunction with the Conservation Manager.

Recommendation

23. Subject to the prior signing of a Section 106 Legal Agreement concerning the restoration of the Mill:

Approve details of reserved matters for the siting, design and means of access for the erection of 6 houses and 1 bungalow, Phase 2, land at the Mill, Ashwell Road, Steple Morden.

In accordance with the application dated 31st May 2005 (as amended by plans franked 1st August 2005) and the plans, drawings and documents which form part of the application and in accordance with outline planning permission dated 10th June 2002 reference: S/0843/01/O.

All of the conditions, including standard Condition B contained in the above mentioned outline planning permission, continue to apply so far as the same as capable of taking effect but subject to the additional conditions set out below:

1. No development shall commence until full details of the proposed fenestration including finishes, samples of all materials to be used for the external walls and roofs have been 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 that visually the development accords with neighbouring buildings and is not incongruous.)
2. During the period of demolition and 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.
(RC - To minimise noise disturbance to adjoining residents.)
3. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 and Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order), the following classes of development more particularly described in the Order are expressly prohibited in respect of the property and each unit thereon unless expressly authorised by planning permission granted by the Local Planning Authority in that behalf:
PART 1 All Classes
PART 2 Class A
(RC - To safeguard the character of the area.)
4. Details of any proposed street lighting to be installed within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to installation. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
(RC - To protect the character of the area and amenity of adjoining residents.)
5. SC52. Implementation of Landscaping. (RC 52).
6. No development shall commence until a scheme for the provision and location of fire hydrants to serve the development to a standard recommended by the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. No development shall take place otherwise than in accordance with the approved scheme.
(RC - To ensure adequate water supply is available for emergency use.)

Informatives

The Environment Agency has the following comments:

“The application site shall be subject to a detailed scheme for the investigation and recording of contamination and a report submitted together with detailed proposals in line with current best practice for the removal, containment or otherwise rendering harmless any contamination that may be found.

Contaminated land investigations must be carried out in accordance with BS 10175.2001. Investigation of potentially contaminated sites - Code of Practice. Soil and water analysis must be fully MCERTS accredited.

Soakaways will not be permitted in contaminated ground.

Notwithstanding the above, if soakaways are proposed for the disposal of uncontaminated surface water, percolation tests should be undertaken, and soakaways designed and constructed in accordance with BRE Digest 365 (or CIRIA Report 156), and to the satisfaction of the Local Authority. The maximum acceptable depth for soakaways is 2 metres below existing ground level. If, after tests, it is found that soakaways do not work satisfactorily, alternative proposals must be submitted.

Only clean, uncontaminated surface water, should be discharged to any soakaway, watercourse or surface water sewer.

Surface water from roads and impermeable vehicle parking areas shall be discharged via trapped gullies.

An acceptable method of foul drainage disposal would be connection to the public foul sewer.”

The Chief Environmental Health Officer comments:

- “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.”

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)
 - P5/5** (Homes in Rural Areas)
 - P7/6** (Historic Built Environment)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
 - SE4** (Group Villages)
 - SE9** (Village Edges)
 - HG10** (Housing Mix and Design)
 - EN28** (Development within the Setting of a Listed Building)
 - Policy Steeple Morden 1**

2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:

- Character of the area
- Highway safety
- Future restoration and maintenance of the Mill

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 Files Ref: S/1133/05/RM, S/0843/01/O, S/1966/04/RM and S/1200/05/F

Contact Officer: Bob Morgan - Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713395