

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6 April 2016

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Number: S/1969/15/OL

Parish(es): Linton

Proposal: Residential Development of up to 50 Houses and 28 Allotments

Site address: Land South of Horseheath Road

Applicant(s): Ely Diocesan Board of Finance

Recommendation: Refusal

Key material considerations: Housing Land Supply
Principle of Development
Character and Appearance of the Area
Density
Housing Mix
Affordable Housing
Developer Contributions
Design Considerations
Trees and Landscaping
Biodiversity
Highway Safety and Sustainable Travel
Flood Risk
Neighbour Amenity
Heritage Assets

Committee Site Visit: 5 April 2016

Departure Application: Yes

Presenting Officer: Karen Pell-Coggins, Principal Planning Officer

Application brought to Committee because: A Local Member is one of the applicants.

Date by which decision due: 2 November 2015

Executive Summary

1. This proposal, as amended, seeks permission for a residential development outside the Linton village framework and in the countryside. This development would not normally be considered acceptable in principle as a result of its location. However, two recent appeal decisions in Waterbeach have shown that the district does not currently

have a 5 year housing land supply and therefore the adopted LDF policies in relation to the supply of housing are not up to date. The NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and where relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted for development unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

2. This report sets out how a number of potential adverse impacts including landscape character harm, infrastructure needs, and highway safety issues can be addressed. However, an adverse impact that cannot be fully mitigated is the limited visual harm through the loss of openness to the countryside as a result of the development and the potential impact of the development upon significant features of archaeological interest. This is considered to demonstrably outweigh the benefits that consist of a contribution of 50 dwellings towards the required housing land supply including 20 affordable dwellings, 28 allotments for the local community, a location with good transport links and a range of services, and creation of jobs during the construction period that would benefit the local economy. Given the above balance, the application is recommended for refusal.

Planning History

3. None.

National Guidance

4. National Planning Policy Framework
Planning Practice Guidance

Development Plan Policies

5. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007**
ST/2 Housing Provision
ST/5 Minor Rural Centres
6. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007**
DP/1 Sustainable Development
DP/2 Design of New Development
DP/3 Development Criteria
DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments
DP/7 Development Frameworks
HG/1 Housing Density
HG/2 Housing Mix
HG/3 Affordable Housing
NE/1 Energy Efficiency
NE/3 Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development
NE/4 Landscape Character Areas
NE/6 Biodiversity
NE/11 Flood Risk
NE/12 Water Conservation
NE/14 Lighting Proposals
NE/15 Noise Pollution
NE/17 Protecting High Quality Agricultural Land
CH/2 Archaeological Sites
SF/10 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments

SF/11 Open Space Standards
TR/1 Planning For More Sustainable Travel
TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards
TR/3 Mitigating Travel Impact

7. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):**

Open Space in New Developments SPD - Adopted January 2009
Biodiversity SPD - Adopted July 2009
Trees & Development Sites SPD - Adopted January 2009
Landscape in New Developments SPD - Adopted March 2010
Affordable Housing SPD - Adopted March 2010
District Design Guide SPD - Adopted March 2010

8. **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission - March 2014**

S/3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
S/4 Cambridge Green Belt
S/5 Provision of New Jobs and Homes
S/6 The Development Strategy to 2031
S/7 Development Frameworks
S/9 Minor Rural Centres
SS/5 Waterbeach New Town
HQ/1 Design Principles
H/7 Housing Density
H/8 Housing Mix
H/9 Affordable Housing
NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character
NH/3 Protecting Agricultural Land
NH/4 Biodiversity
NH/14 Heritage Assets
CC/1 Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change
CC/3 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy in New Developments
CC/4 Sustainable Design and Construction
CC/6 Construction Methods
CC/9 Managing Flood Risk
SC/6 Indoor Community Facilities
SC/7 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments
SC/8 Open Space Standards
SC/10 Lighting Proposals
SC/11 Noise Pollution
TI/2 Planning for Sustainable Travel
TI/3 Parking Provision
TI/8 Infrastructure and New Developments

Consultation

9. **Linton Parish Council** – Recommends refusal. Comments relate to matters including lack of community consultation, outside the village framework, provision of allotments, unsustainable location, traffic, landscape and visual impact, social cohesion, flood risk and archaeology. Full comments are set out in Appendix 1.
10. **Urban Design Officer** – Comments as amended that the revised layout has addressed the concerns about the outlook of the 8 units adjacent to the allotments by turning the units to face each other. However, this has the disadvantage of removing any opportunities for natural surveillance across the parking area.

11. A Local Area of Play has now been added to the development. This is central and adjacent to the main route to the site but could be better laid out to promote more natural surveillance and to address the open space more positively.
12. The back-to-back distances between the new housing and existing neighbouring houses and houses east of the new access road do not appear to meet the separation distances set out in the Design Guide which suggests that this number of units may not be able to be accommodated on the site.
13. The cul-de-sac development is not permeable and any opportunities to establish new connections to neighbouring streets should be pursued.
14. **Landscape Design Officer** – Comments as amended that the character on this edge of Linton comprises of an open and gently rolling landscape with long views available both over lower land and to hills featuring wooded tops. Set above the Granta valley, the village sits between the two. The eastern built edge, adjacent to the proposed site is made up of recent detached and semi-detached bungalows and houses at Lonsdale, Harefield Rise and Kenwood Gardens, forming a harsh edge to the village. However, the development site represents a potential opportunity to improve the eastern edge in this location if handled sensitively.
15. Whilst I am not content with the landscape structure and layout shown on the revised indicative masterplan, the site does have the potential to accommodate up to 50 dwellings. Hence, the proposal is accepted in landscape terms. However, to achieve the strong landscape structure required and as described in the LVIA, it would be necessary at the Reserved Matters stage to either adjust/amend the layout, the numbers or the type of some dwellings proposed.
16. Should the development be built as the illustrative layout suggests, it has the potential to cause unacceptable landscape and visual effects. The indicative layout proposed shows a more extensive and intrusive edge than presently formed by the dwellings at Lonsdale and the adjacent bungalows at Harefield Rise, Kenwood Gardens and The Ridgeway.
17. To achieve a strong rural edge and appropriate tree planting across the site, more space for planting will be needed. I suggest that a minimum of a 5 metre strip of Landscape will be required to allow a substantial native hedge, space for trees to achieve a reasonable spread without affecting the proposed dwellings or the existing power lines, and space for maintenance access. This planting should be set within communal or public space rather than within rear gardens to ensure that the planting is managed as a whole, and will continue to receive maintenance and protection after the standard condition for a five-year maintenance period has elapsed.
18. **Ecology Officer** – Comments that the application is supported by an ecological assessment that has not identified any significant constraints to the development of an area of arable land enclosed by species poor hedgerows and grass margins. Of note from the assessment is a habitat suitable for reptiles associated with field margins such as the common lizard. Requests a reptile survey and mitigation measures if any are present on the site. Also should trees with the potential for bat roosts be removed or badger setts identified, there should be bat and badger surveys with mitigation measures.
19. The Landscape Plan identifies new planting and allotments that will bring biodiversity gain. However, consideration should be given to a wildflower buffer adjacent the hedges to avoid future lowering of hedges and trees due to shading. The landscape

buffer along the boundary should be over 5 metres wide to deliver a greater variety of trees and shrubs. Questions whether the open plot in the south eastern corner could be planted as a community orchard. Requests conditions to control the removal of vegetation during the bird breeding season and ecological enhancement measures in accordance with the recommendations in the submitted report.

20. **Local Highways Authority** – Has no objections subject to conditions in relation to vehicular visibility splays and a traffic management plan. Requests a separate plan to show the visibility splays.
21. **Cambridgeshire County Council Transport Assessment Team** – Has no objections subject to widening of the footway on the south side of Horseheath Road in the vicinity of Lonsdale between its termination point opposite Wheatsheaf Way and the site boundary to 2m in width; the installation of dropped crossings with tactile paving at the crossing over Horseheath Road near to Wheatsheaf Way; the installation of dropped crossings with tactile paving at the crossings over Lonsdale, Wheatsheaf Way, Keene Fields and the Library access road; the installation of 10 cycle parking Sheffield stands at locations to be agreed with CCC and Linton Parish Council; and a condition for a full travel plan.
22. **Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team** – Comments as amended that the planning agents have been aware of the need for pre-determination evaluation of this land parcel since 2012, owing to the presence of Saxon cemetery evidence immediately south of the proposal area and other archaeological activity in the vicinity of the site.
23. The recent submission of geophysical survey evidence for this plot presents new information for a field within which no archaeological evidence was previously known, though suspected to be present. The survey has yielded important new evidence of a ring ditch of what can easily be attributed to a barrow, or burial monument in the south-east corner of the site, 100m north of the Saxon cemetery. These monuments are typically, though not exclusively, Bronze Age in date and contain inhumations and/or cremation burials usually within the enclosed space, and sometimes within their ditches. They are occasionally used as boundary markers or moots in later periods (typically in the Saxon period).
24. Further to this are a number of linear features, some of which have been described as relating to cultivation remains (eg ridge and furrow of Medieval and later date), and ephemeral linears, not easily attributable to any specific function, but supposed to be field drains and boundaries that conform to trends showing on an Enclosure map of 1838. Other traces of linear and discrete features are present but have not been discussed and remain untested.
25. Both CgMs Consulting, the applicant's archaeological consultant, and the geophysical specialist, Headland Archaeology, have concluded that this survey data represents the sum total of archaeological presence in the plot. To aid this interpretation, CgMs cite recent work at Bartlow Road (S/1963/15, Historic Environment Record ref ECB4331), where geophysical survey data had also asserted that the sum total of archaeological evidence at that site in Linton surmounted to a few linear ditches. Evaluation evidence amended and augmented this understanding in revealing the presence of at least one early Saxon house ('sunken floored building') and associated features in the north west corner of that development area (to the south of Bartlow Rd) as well as a series of undated features located on the edge of relict channels and ponds in the floodplain of the River Granta at the southern end of the site, though this went unreported in the agent letter of 15 December 2015 and other submissions.

26. It is disappointing to be presented once again with assertions that geophysical survey evidence is an accurate and true depiction of all the archaeological remains of an area, when there are so many cases that simply deny this as fact. For example, detailed geophysical surveys that have been undertaken across the landscape of the new settlement area of Northstowe in the north western area of South Cambridgeshire demonstrate this clearly as factually incorrect.
27. This is not to say that the geophysics data does not provide a certain level of archaeological understanding, indeed this office holds much store by this non-intrusive technique - but we advise that it is used as part of a suite of evaluation techniques that together provide the evidence required on which to base a sound planning decision. Excavations of part of the Phase 1 development area concluded at Northstowe in late autumn 2015, finding extensive Middle Bronze Age field systems (large ditched rectangular or square enclosures) and occupation evidence, Iron age and Roman settlement evidence and cemetery, and discrete areas of Saxon settlement, including a cemetery area of small barrows and flat graves. The Middle Bronze Age evidence, together with the Roman cemetery and all of the Saxon archaeology did not show in geophysical survey data at all - only late prehistoric and Roman settlement features, Medieval ridge and furrow and more recent field boundaries and drains.
28. In other words, robust linear features of the Iron Age and Roman settlement were evident (i.e. with 'dirty' humic fills with artefacts and charcoal present) on the survey plots but none of the discrete and ephemeral features that constitute settlement and funerary evidence (shallow cuts, usually non-humic), and interestingly not the huge, long-distance triple ditches of a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age boundary division ("territory marker"?).
29. It is unlikely that planning inspectors, when reading appellants' cases for commuting archaeological pre-determination recommendations, are aware of the scale, extent and significance of archaeological evidence found by post consent trench based evaluation and are unfamiliar with the viability tests then put in place by developers when needing to include hitherto unplanned archaeological investigation programmes and publications within their already constrained financial forecasts. It is not helpful, then, that CgMs Consulting and the applicant have presented results for planning cases for which archaeological programmes have been moved to being undertaken post-consent by a planning appeal, without also indicating what was later found on those sites and how this affected the financing and timetabling of the scheme.
30. This stance is neither helpful to applicant, developer or planning committees. Neither does it help this office in advising the LPA as to the best course for the management of the archaeological resource through the planning process. We are presently far away from understanding the character, complexity and significance of the new ring ditch/barrow and its broader landscape, let alone what the more ephemeral evidence on the geophysical survey actually represents and what more evidence the site may hold that would not be evident on a non-intrusive survey plot.
31. Lastly, and importantly, the suggested strategy of placing allotments over a burial site, surcharged or otherwise, is wholly inappropriate as this would not safeguard against future impacts, damage and destruction of human remains and funerary evidence. Allotments holders usually wish to have mains water supplies to their rented or owned holdings, and/or may 'double dig' as a horticultural device should soil improvement be needed. Where human remains can be expected on an archaeological site, as they would be within a barrow, they are to be treated with appropriate respect, an

exhumation licence being obtained and the area worked by professional excavators to lift, study and store or rebury any such remains as of if they are encountered. This is unlikely to occur in an allotment which would probably see a rotation of part-time/rented land holders without an appropriate signed legal document outlining for this to occur. Ignorance of the presence of human remains would not be a realistic excuse.

32. Given the potential for:
- * Saxon settlement and/or further funerary evidence to be located in this plot;
 - * the new barrow/funerary monument
 - * the lack of evidence regarding soil depths over archaeological remains
 - * the unknown condition, character and significance of the monument
 - * unknown archaeological character of the rest of the site
- it is advised that the results of a trench-based field evaluation should be presented prior to a planning decision being reached so that unassailable evidence is used to provide the basis for both a planning determination and the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy.
33. **Cambridgeshire County Council Flood & Water Team** – Comments as amended that the applicant has now demonstrated that surface water can be dealt with on site by infiltration into the ground or discharge into the River Granta at a run off rate not greater than the existing by using SUDS features such as permeable paving, infiltration trenches and soakaways. The applicant has there met the minimum requirements of the NPPF and no objections are raised subject to a condition to agree a detailed surface water drainage scheme that includes a restriction run-off, infiltration testing and maintenance of the drainage scheme.
34. **Environment Agency** – Has no objections as amended subject to a condition in relation to a scheme for surface water disposal. Comments that although the site lies above a principal aquifer within source protection zone 2, the proposal is not considered to be high risk in relation to contamination. Requests informatives.
35. **Anglian Water** – Comments that the sewerage system at present has available capacity for foul drainage flows from the development. Further comments that the drainage of surface water to the public water system is not acceptable as it is the last option after firstly infiltration on site and secondly discharges to a watercourse. Requires a surface water drainage scheme condition to ensure the development would not result in an increase in the risk of flooding.
36. **Environmental Health Officer** – Has no objections subject to conditions in relation to the hours of construction works and construction related deliveries to and from the site, a programme of measures to minimise the spread of dust, external lighting and a waste management strategy.
37. **Contaminated Land Officer** – Comments that the site is being redeveloped into a sensitive end use (housing) and although the site does not appear to be high risk in terms of contamination, it is a large site and potential sources of contamination on agricultural land do exist. Requests a Phase 1 Study to determine whether the site is suitable for its proposed end use. This should include soil sampling in proposed garden areas. Requires a condition for the detailed investigation of contamination and remedial measures for the removal of any contamination found.
38. **Air Quality Officer** – Has no objections providing the source of energy to the site is not by biomass boiler.

39. **Environmental Health Officer** – Comments that the identification and assessment of the health impacts of the development are satisfactory in the revised Health Impact Assessment.
40. **Affordable Housing Officer** – Comments that the site is located outside the development framework, and should be treated as an exception site and developed for 100% affordable housing to meet the local housing need of Linton, in accordance with Policy H/10 of the Local Plan. However, if this site is not treated as an exception site, then 40% affordable housing should be provided as part of this development in accordance with policy H/9. Therefore, for this proposal of 50 dwellings, (up to) 20 affordable properties should be provided.
41. Our district wide policy for tenure split is 70/30 in favour of rented and not 50/50 as proposed by the developer. There are currently 1,600 applicants registered on the Homelink housing register in South Cambs who require good quality affordable housing, 65 of these applicants have a local connection to Linton. The highest demand both in Linton and across South Cambridgeshire is for 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation. Therefore, our preferred mix is:
- | | |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| Rented | Intermediate/Shared Ownership |
| 5 x 1 beds | 3 x 2 beds |
| 6 x 2 beds | 3 x 3 beds |
| 3 x 3 beds | |
42. **Section 106 Officer** – Comments as amended that a Local Equipped Area of Play has been provided on site to address the need for children’s play space and informal open space. Off-site contributions are required towards outdoor sports and indoor community space projects as identified by Linton Parish Council.
43. **Cambridgeshire County Council Growth Team** – Comments that there are sufficient early years, primary and secondary education places available to accommodate the development. Requires a libraries and life long learning contribution towards the reorganisation of the layout of Linton library to enable extra shelving and resources to serve the additional residents. Requires a strategic waste contribution towards an expansion in the capacity of the Thriplow Household Recycling Centre if 5 contributions have not been pooled.
44. **NHS England** – Comments that there is currently GP capacity in the Linton locality and is not requesting any contributions towards health.

Representations

45. **90 letters of objection have been received from local residents** in relation to the application. They raise the following concerns: -
- i) Outside village envelope and in the countryside.
 - ii) Adverse impact upon landscape setting of village due to level changes in area.
 - iii) Visual impact on view approaching the village from the east.
 - iv) Impact upon historic character of village.
 - iv) Scale of development in a Minor Rural Centre where maximum allowance is 30 dwellings- suburban sprawl- smaller infill developments should be encouraged.
 - v) Cumulative impact of development with proposal at Bartlow Road.
 - vi) Would set a precedent for future developments around the village.
 - vii) Increase in traffic on to the A1307 at a dangerous junction and through the village.
 - viii) Access point on to Horseheath Road where traffic speeds are high.

- ix) Safety of pedestrians along footways in village.
- x) Distance from services in village and lack of parking.
- xi) Flood risk.
- xii) Impact upon sewers.
- xiii) Loss of agricultural land.
- xiv) High density development.
- xv) Design at odds with Linton traditions.
- xvi) Village infrastructure inadequate- schools, health centre, shops, public transport, employment.
- xv) Lack of on-site parking.
- xvi) Traffic pollution.
- xvii) Poor consultation – the whole village should have been notified of the development.
- xviii) The applicants would not develop the land and the plans could be different.
- xix) Inadequate reports supporting the application.
- xx) Glebe land cannot be sold for profit.

46. **Two letters of support have been received from local residents** in relation to the application. They raise the following points: -

- i) Retention of a green space between the village and the A1307.
- ii) Much needed market and affordable housing.
- iii) Allotments to serve the village.

47. The **Headteachers of Linton Heights Junior School and Linton Infants School** are concerned about the impact upon the schools. The Junior School is a tired and unsuitable building. There is not enough space to house the current pupils so for a number of years a temporary portacabin has been used as a classroom. Any increase in children would require significant improvements. The Infant School has had a number of alterations over the years and is at maximum capacity in terms of the hall and toilets and in order to offer a quality education, 4 of 6 classrooms are undersized. Neither school would be able to welcome new families moving into the area.

48. The **applicants** have outlined the following points in support of the application:

- i) The Diocese is a not-for-profit organisation, whose income is devoted to supporting its approx.180 priests in South Cambridgeshire and elsewhere in the Diocese who provide considerable community support alongside their religious activities.
- ii) In keeping with the community status, we aim to be responsible developers.
- iii) We propose the full 40% allocation to affordable housing.
- iv) We are proposing 30 allotments to meet the need we identified when we spoke to the village.
- v) We will build a mix of houses to suit local needs if approval is granted.
- vi) We have only had five comments from members of the public and two were enquiring how they could buy the houses.
- vii) The site is not in the Green Belt.
- viii) The current lack of a 5 year housing land supply justifies granting approval.

Site and Surroundings

49. The site is located outside of the Linton village framework and in the countryside. It is situated to the north east of the village and is an L shaped parcel of arable land that measures approximately 2.88 hectares in area. There is currently landscaping along the majority of the northern, western and southern boundaries. The eastern boundary is open. Residential developments lie to the south and west. A dwelling lies to the

north. A public footpath lies to the north east. A hedge and public footpath lie to the east with open agricultural land and the A1307 road beyond.

50. The site is situated within the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area on grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land. The site lies within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). No. 28 Horseheath Road is a grade II listed building that lies approximately 150 metres to the west of the site. The Linton conservation area lies 500 metres to the west.

Proposal

51. The proposal as amended seeks outline permission for a residential development on the site of up to 50 dwellings and 28 allotments. The access, layout, design and external appearance, and landscaping are matters reserved for later approval.
52. 20 of the dwellings would be affordable in nature. The mix would be 2 x one bedroom houses, 8 x 2 bedroom houses and 10 x 3 bedroom houses. The tenure would be 50% social rented and 50% intermediate. The remaining 30 dwellings would be available for sale on the open market. The mix would be 10 x two bedroom houses, 10 x 3 bedroom houses and 10 x 4 bedroom houses (should the site be capable of accommodating 50 dwellings).
53. The development is intended to be predominantly two-storeys in height with a small number of single storey bungalows. There would be a range of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties arranged around a main spine road and offset. A Local equipped Area of Play has been provided within the northern part of the development and 30 allotments would be provided to the south east.
54. The allotments would be for community use.

Planning Assessment

55. The site is located outside the Linton village framework and in the countryside where Policy DP/7 of the LDF and Policy S/7 of the emerging Local Plan states that only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside will be permitted. The erection of a residential development of up to 50 dwellings is not therefore considered acceptable in principle. However, this policy is considered out of date due to the current lack of a 5 year housing land supply.
56. Linton is identified as a Minor Rural Centre under Policy ST/5 of the LDF and Policy S/8 of the emerging Local Plan where there is a reasonable range of services and facilities and residential developments of up to 30 dwellings are supported in policy terms. The erection of up to 50 dwellings would exceed the amount of residential dwellings allowed in such locations and would not support the strategy for the location of housing across the district. However, this policy is considered out of date due to the current lack of a 5 year housing land supply.

Housing Land Supply

57. The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (NPPF) requires councils to boost significantly the supply of housing and to identify and maintain a five-year housing land supply with an additional buffer as set out in paragraph 47.
58. On the 25 June 2014 in two appeal decisions for sites in Waterbeach, the Inspector concluded that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of

deliverable housing sites. This is against the Strategic Housing Market Assessment figure for objectively assessed needs of 19,000 homes between 2011 and 2031, which he concluded had more weight than the Core Strategy figure. It is appropriate for the conclusions reached within these appeal decisions to be taken into account in the Council's decision making where they are relevant. Unless circumstances change, those conclusions should inform, in particular, the Council's approach to paragraph 49 of the NPPF which states that adopted policies which are "for the supply of housing" cannot be considered up to date where there is not a five year housing land supply. Those policies were listed in the decision letters and are: Core Strategy DPD policies ST/2 and ST/5 and Development Control Policies DPD policy DP/7 (relating to village frameworks and indicative limits on the scale of development in villages). These policies are the same in this instance.

59. Where this is the case, paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It says that where relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted for development unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, or where specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted (which includes land designated as Green Belt in adopted plans).

Scale of Development

60. This proposal for 50 dwellings (along with the proposal under planning application S/1963/15/OL for 78 dwellings and which remains undetermined) would result in a total of 128 new dwellings within Linton. Given the current lack of a 5 year housing land supply and that policy ST/5 is out of date, it therefore needs to be determined whether the scale of the development is acceptable for this location in terms of the size of the village and the sustainability of the location.
61. The Services and Facilities Study 2013 states that in mid 2012 Linton had an estimated population of 4,530 and a dwelling stock of 1,870. It is one of the larger villages in the district. An additional 128 dwellings would increase the number of dwellings by 7%. This is not considered to be out of scale and character with the size of the village.
62. Whilst it is acknowledged that the most preferable location for development is first on the edge of the city of Cambridge and secondly in Rural Centres, it is difficult to state that Linton is not a sustainable location for increased housing development. The Services and Facilities Study 2013 identifies a wide range of services and facilities in the village that include a secondary school, junior school, infant school, health centre, dentist, post office, 4 food stores plus a small supermarket, other services such as hairdressers, florists etc., 3 public houses, a village hall and 3 other community centres, a recreation ground and a bus route to Cambridge and Haverhill with a service every 30 minutes during the day Mondays to Saturdays and hourly on Sundays.
63. The majority of the services and facilities are located on the High Street. The site is situated on the edge of the village at a distance of approximately 800 metres from the shops and 600 metres from the nearest bus stop. There is an existing public footway up to the western boundary of the site that would ensure that there is easy accessibility by walking and cycling to the centre of the village.
64. The village is ranked at jointly at No. 6 in the Village Classification Report 2012 in terms of access to transport, secondary education, village services and facilities and

employment. It only falls below the Rural Centres that have slighter better accessibility to public transport. Given the above assessment, the future occupiers of the development would not be wholly dependent upon the private car to meet their day-to-day needs and wider needs could be served by public transport. Linton is therefore considered a sustainable location for a development of this scale.

65. In contrast, it should be noted that Waterbeach has a significantly lower score and has been considered sustainable for a greater number of dwellings.

Character and Appearance of the Area

66. The site is currently a piece of arable land that is located outside the Linton village framework and in the countryside. It forms part of the landscape setting to the village.
67. The site is situated within the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area and the landscape character of the site and its immediate surrounding are typical of East Anglian Chalk comprising large agricultural fields separated by clipped hedges, set in an open and gently rolling landscape, with long views available both over lower land and to hills featuring wooded tops. The development would result in the introduction of development in an area that is currently undeveloped and lead to some visual harm and loss of openness to the countryside.
68. While the Landscape Design Officer is not content with the landscape structure and layout shown on the revised indicative masterplan, the site nonetheless does have the potential to accommodate up to 50 dwellings and improve the eastern edge of the village. As such, the indicative layout plan should be disregarded in favour of a revised layout with improved structural landscaping. This would have a much greater potential to minimise the impact on the landscape character of the area. The existing hard eastern edge to the village could be improved with new buffer planting along the external site boundaries and the pattern of existing arable fields adjacent to the A1307, hedges along the roads and public footpath and views over the village would be retained.
69. The development is therefore capable (with almost certainly a reduction in the number of dwellings) to comply with adopted policy NE/4 and not adversely affect the landscape character of the area.

Housing Density

70. The site measures 2.24 hectares in area (net). The erection of up to 50 dwellings would equate to a maximum of 22 dwellings per hectare. Whilst this density would be below the requirement of at least 40 dwellings per hectare for sustainable villages such as Linton under Policy HG1 of the LDF, it is considered appropriate in this case given the sensitive nature of the site on the edge of the village and need for a landscape buffer along the eastern boundary.

Affordable Housing

71. 20 of the 50 dwellings (or pro rata) would be affordable to meet local needs. This would comply with the requirement for 40% of the development to be affordable housing as set out in Policy HG/3 of the LDF and Policy H/8 of the emerging Local Plan to assist with meeting the identified local housing need across the district. However, the proposed mix of 2 x one bedroom houses, 8 x 2 bedroom houses and 10 x 3 bedroom houses and the tenure mix of 50% rented and 50% intermediate is not agreed. Given that the application is currently at outline stage only, it is considered that the exact mix and tenure of the affordable dwellings could be agreed at the

reserved matters stage.

Housing Mix

72. The remaining 30 dwellings would be available for sale on the open market. The proposed mix of 10 x two bedroom houses (33.3%), 10 x 3 bedroom houses (33.3%) and 10 x 4 bedroom houses (33.3%) would comply with Policy HG/2 of the LDF that requires a mix of units providing accommodation in a range of types, sizes and affordability, to meet local needs and H/8 of the emerging Local Plan that requires market homes in developments of 10 or more homes will consist of at least 30% 1 or 2 bedroom homes, at least 30% 3 bedroom homes, at least 30% 4 or more bedroom homes with a 10% flexibility allowance that can be added.

Developer Contributions

73. Appendix 2 provides details of the developer contribution required to make the development acceptable in planning terms in accordance with Policy DP/4 of the LDF band paragraph 204 of the NPPF.
74. Members will note that the Cambridgeshire County Council Growth Team consider there is sufficient early years, primary and secondary school capacity but that this is contested by the Headteachers of both the local Junior and Infants schools. Officers will update the Committee on this issue at the meeting. NHS England consider there is sufficient GP capacity to support the development.

Design Considerations

75. The application is currently at outline stage only. All matters in terms of access to the site, the layout of the site, scale, external appearance and landscaping are reserved for later approval.
76. The amended indicative layout shows an L shaped cul-de-sac development with a linear pattern of dwellings together with small groups of two dwellings arranged around shared driveways on the western part of the site. 8 dwellings and 28 allotments for community use are shown on the south eastern part of the site. A Local Area of Equipped Play is provided alongside the main access road on the northern part of the site close to the entrance to the development. Whilst the comments of the Urban Design Officer in relation to the back-to-back distances and surveillance of the open space and allotments is acknowledged, the application is for up to 50 dwellings and the layout is considered satisfactory in principle. These reasons would not warrant refusal of the application given that the application is currently at outline stage only and would be considered in the final determination of the layout at the reserved matters stage.

Trees/ Landscaping

77. The proposal would not result in the loss of any important trees and hedges that significantly contribute towards the visual amenity of the area. The majority of the trees and hedges along the northern, southern and western boundaries of the site that are in a good condition would be retained and protected and new landscaping would be provided to enhance the development.
78. The development is therefore capable of complying with adopted policies DP/2 and DP/3.

Biodiversity

79. The site is dominated by arable land and is surrounded by species poor hedgerows/trees and grass margins. It is considered to have a low ecological value but the margins could provide habitats for reptiles and badgers and the trees could have bat roosts. Conditions would be attached to any consent for resurveying the site for reptiles, badgers and bats prior to the commencement of any development and ecological enhancements such as bird and bat boxes in accordance with the recommendations of the submitted report and the provisions of policy NE/6.

Highway Safety and Sustainable Travel

80. Horseheath Road leads from the centre of the village to the A1307 (Cambridge to Haverhill Road). It has a speed limit of 30 miles per hour from the village to the point at the entrance to the site where it changes to 60 miles per hour.
81. The development would result in a significant increase in the level of traffic in the area. However, no objections have been raised by Cambridgeshire County Council Transport Assessment Team in relation to the impact of the development upon the capacity and functioning of the public highway. The proposal would not therefore be detrimental to highway safety.
82. The access width of the main road into the site at 5.5 metres would accommodate two-way traffic into the site and would be acceptable. The 2.0 metres footpaths on each side are adequate and would provide safe pedestrian movements. The proposed vehicular visibility splays of 2.4 metres x 90 metres to the west and 2.4 x 215 to the west are acceptable. The access would therefore accord with Local Highways Authority standards.
83. There is a bus stop on the High Street approximately 600 metres to the west of the site. This gives direct public transport access to Cambridge and Haverhill by a 30 minute service Monday to Saturdays. This is accessible by walking via a public footpath along the southern and northern side of Horseheath Road. A Section 106 legal agreement would be required to secure the provision of a 2 metre wide footway along the south side of Horseheath Road to connect to the existing footpath and dropped crossings with tactile paving across Horseheath Road and Lonsdale, Wheatsheaf Way, Keene Fields and the library access road. It is also accessible by cycling and has cycle parking available. A section 106 legal agreement would be required to secure further cycle parking in the village.
84. The Transport Statement commits to the provision of a travel plan to encourage the use of alternative modes of transport other than the private motor vehicle for occupiers of the new dwellings prior to occupation. Measures include the appointment of a travel plan co-ordinator and the provision of information packs to new residents. However, further details are required and a full travel plan would need to be submitted following first occupation of the dwellings. These would be conditions of any consent.
85. The development therefore has the potential to comply with the requirements of adopted policies DP/3, DP/4, TR/1, TR/2 and TR/3

Flood Risk

86. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). The River Granta is the most significant watercourse in the area that is located 350 metres to the south of the site. There are no other notable watercourse within the vicinity of the site. A small part of

the south western corner of the site is subject to surface water flooding (low risk). There would be no material conflict with adopted policy NE/11.

87. The surface water drainage system would comprise SUDS in the form of infiltration systems such as soakaways to accommodate surface water from a 1 in 100 year storm event plus climate change. The design of the surface water drainage system would be agreed through a condition attached to any consent along with the management and maintenance of the system.

Neighbour Amenity

88. Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be a change in the use of the land from an open field to residential dwellings, the development is not considered to result in a significant level of noise and disturbance that would adversely affect the amenities of neighbours. A condition would be attached to any consent in relation to the hours of use of power operated machinery during construction and construction related deliveries to minimise the noise impact upon neighbours.
89. The impact of the development itself on neighbours in terms of mass, light and overlooking will be considered at the reserved matters stage. It is noted that the land falls southwards. As such the development is capable of being in compliance with policy DP/3.

Heritage Assets

90. The County Council's Historic Environment Team has provided an in depth consultation response. The site is located within an area of high archaeological potential due to the number of heritage assets in the area recovered from previous developments. A geophysical survey has been submitted that provides new evidence from the development site where no evidence was previously known but was suspected to be present. This shows that the site may have important archaeological features such as a Saxon settlement and/ or further funerary evidence and a new barrow/ funerary monument that need to be protected.
91. A trench based field evaluation is required to investigate this matter further and gain evidence of soil depths over archaeological remains, details of the condition, character and significance of the monument and archaeological character of the rest of the site to ensure that an appropriate mitigation strategy is planned that would ensure that any important archaeological features are not destroyed.
92. Critically, the view is taken that this is required prior to the determination of the application in case there are any areas that need to be retained in situ that may affect the number of dwellings that could be accommodated on the site.
93. Archaeological sites need to be protected in accordance with adopted policy CH/2. The NPPF further states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and the positive contribution that their conservation can make to sustainable communities. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the asset or development within its setting. Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments should be subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

94. The County Council's concerns are considered to be real and the significance of the archaeological potential of the site has been spelled out. There is no suggestion at present that field evaluation at this stage will prevent development in principle and its objection appears to be entirely reasonable. This objection weighs significantly against the proposal at the present time.
95. The site is located 150 metres from the nearest listed building at No. 28 Horseheath Road. The development is not considered to harm the setting of the listed building as it is limited to its immediate surroundings of existing residential development.
96. The site is located 500 metres from the boundary with the conservation area. The development is considered to preserve the setting of the conservation area given that there are no views of the site from the conservation area or views from the site to the conservation area and the increase in traffic through the village is not considered significant when taking into consideration the size of the village.
97. Thus the statutory requirements in sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 respect of listed buildings and conservation areas would be met as would compliance with adopted plan policies CH/4 and CH/5.

Other Matters

98. The development is not considered to result in a risk of contamination providing a condition is attached to any consent to control any contamination identified during the development.
99. The site is located on grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land. The development would result in the permanent loss of this agricultural land contrary to policy NE/17. However, this policy does not apply where land is allocated for development in the LDF or sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural use of the land. In this case, this is considered satisfactory given the absence of up-to-date policies for the supply of housing in the district.
100. The lack of any employment within the proposal is not a planning consideration in this particular case as the site is not located within any designated employment area.
101. Whilst the need for allotments in the village is noted, there is no policy requirement for the provision of allotments within developments. The provision of 28 allotments would, however, make some contribution to the identified need. Any application for development of the allotments in the future would be determined upon its own merits.
102. The documents submitted with the application are sufficient to determine the application. A heritage statement is not required as the development is not considered to affect the setting of the conservation area or listed buildings. A summary of public consultation is satisfactory. The application form has been corrected.
103. The lack of consultation with the local community is regrettable as this is encouraged by the Council but would not warrant refusal of the application.
104. The ownership of the land is not a planning consideration that can be taken into account in the determination of the application.

Conclusion

105. In considering this application, adopted development plan policies ST/5 and DP/7 are to be regarded as out of date while there is no five year housing land supply. This means that where planning permission is sought which would be contrary to the policies listed above, such applications must be determined against paragraph 14 of the NPPF.
106. This report sets out how a number of potential adverse impacts including landscape character harm, infrastructure needs, and highway safety can be addressed. However, an adverse impact that cannot be fully mitigated is the limited visual harm through a loss of openness to the countryside as a result of the development and the potential impact of the development upon significant features of archaeological interest.
107. These adverse impacts must be weighed against the following benefits of the development:
- i) The provision of up to 50 dwellings towards housing land supply in the district based on the objectively assessed 19,000 dwellings target set out in the SHMA and the method of calculation and buffer identified by the Inspector (NB the developer would still need to show the scheme would be deliverable so as to directly meet that need).
 - ii) The provision of up to 20 affordable dwellings towards the need across the district.
 - iii) The provision of 28 allotments for community use.
 - iv) Developer contributions towards public open space and community facilities in the village.
 - v) Suitable and sustainable location for this scale of residential development given the position of the site in relation to access to public transport, services and facilities and local employment.
- Improvement of footpath along southern side of Horseheath Road This report sets out how a number of potential adverse impacts including visual and landscape harm, infrastructure needs, and highway safety can be addressed. However, an adverse impact that cannot be fully mitigated is the potential impact of the development upon significant features of archaeological interest.
108. This adverse impact must be weighed against the following benefits of the development:
- i) The provision of up to 50 dwellings towards housing land supply in the district based on the objectively assessed 19,000 dwellings target set out in the SHMA and the method of calculation and buffer identified by the Inspector (NB the developer would still need to show the scheme would be deliverable so as to directly meet that need).
 - ii) The provision of up to 20 affordable dwellings towards the need across the district.
 - iii) The provision of 28 allotments for community use.
 - iv) Developer contributions towards public open space and community facilities in the village.
 - v) Suitable and sustainable location for this scale of residential development given the position of the site in relation to access to public transport, services and facilities and local employment.
 - vi) Improvement of footpath along southern side of Horseheath Road
 - vii) Upgrade of crossing points
 - viii) Employment during construction to benefit the local economy.
 - ix) Greater use of local services and facilities to contribute to the local economy.

- x) While the archaeological concern is a single impact, the adverse impacts of this development are still considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, which aim to boost significantly the supply of housing and which establish a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the context of the lack of a 5-year housing land supply. Planning permission should therefore be refused.
- xi) Upgrade of crossing points
- xii) Employment during construction to benefit the local economy.
- xiii) Greater use of local services and facilities to contribute to the local economy.

While the archaeological concern is a single impact, the adverse impacts of this development are still considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, which aim to boost significantly the supply of housing and which establish a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the context of the lack of a 5-year housing land supply. Planning permission should therefore be refused.

Recommendation

109. It is recommended that the Planning Committee refuses the application for the following reason: -

Insufficient information has been submitted in relation to the impact of the proposal upon features of archaeological interest to demonstrate that the proposal could be accommodated on the site without harm to heritage assets. The proposal cannot be supported until the results of a trench-based field evaluation have been carried out prior to approval being granted. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CH/2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007 that states archaeological sites will be protected in accordance with national policy and paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 that states the effect of the proposal upon the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account when determining an application having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Background Papers:

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission 2014
- Planning File References: S/1969/15/OL and S/1963/15/OL

Report Author:

Karen Pell-Coggins
Telephone Number:

Principal Planning Officer
01954 713230