

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6th July 2016

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Numbers:	S/0746/15/OL
Parish(es):	Whittlesford
Proposal:	Redevelopment of site for residential use (outline application, all matters reserved)
Site address:	Lion Works, Station Road East, Whittlesford
Applicant(s):	Mr D Milne, Rivertree Developments Ltd.
Recommendation:	Delegated Approval
Key material considerations:	The key considerations are whether the proposed development would provide a suitable site for housing, having regard to housing land supply, the principles of sustainable development, scale of development and impact on townscape and landscape character, contamination issues, site viability, services and facilities, access and transport.
Committee Site Visit:	5 th July, 2016
Departure Application:	Yes
Presenting Officer:	Julie Ayre
Application brought to Committee because:	The application is a significant departure to planning policy.
Date by which decision due:	1 st August, 2016 (extension of time)

Update to Report –

Planning Assessment

Education Contribution – Cambridgeshire County Council Requirements.

1. As discussed under paragraphs 73 – 75, consideration has been given to the appropriate destination for the Early Years and Primary school contributions required by the County Council. Officers have been concerned that identifying schools outside of the village catchment area as beneficiaries of the contribution is not consistent with previous recommendations by the County Council that appeared to restrict contributions to the catchment area only.

2. Since the publication of the Committee report County officers have undertaken a further consultation exercise and assessment. Attached to this update is the County Council concluding report. As noted feasibility work has been commissioned to identify alternative Early Years provision within Whittlesford rather than locations away from the village. In respect of Primary provision although the Sawston Bellbird school had been identified initially, an alternative scheme to expand Duxford Primary school is now being explored.
3. Until these alternative options have been properly assessed in terms of deliverability members are asked to approve an either/or option within the s106 agreement with the proposal for the funding to go to Bellbird school as a fall back position if the preferred alternative options do not prove viable.

Recent Appeal Decision

4. Paragraph 101 of the main report refers to another appeal decision (App/W0530/W/15/3138791) has recently been issued in respect of Duxford. The appeal was allowed and grants outline planning permission for a development of up to 35 dwellings (use class C3).
5. One of the main issues considered by the inspector, which is relevant to the determination of this application, was whether the proposed development would provide a suitable site for housing having regard to the principle of sustainable development and the supply of housing.
6. In coming to this view the inspector had specific regard to objective ST/b, policy ST/2 and ST/6 of the Core Strategy and policy DP/7 of the Local Development Framework. Objective ST/b is to locate development where access to day-to-day needs for employment, shopping, recreation and other services is available by public transport, walking and cycling thus reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car. The inspector also recognised that the Council could not demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land.
7. At the date of the hearing into that appeal (15 March 2016) both the Council and the appellant, agreed within their Statement of Common Ground that none of the above policies were up to date and that the proposal should be considered in the context of paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
8. Like the Foxton and Swavesey appeals, the submission of the statements and the hearing for Duxford took place prior to the Court of Appeal decision (Richborough v Cheshire East and Suffolk Coastal DC v Hopkins Homes) dated 17 March 2016. As such the local authority's evidence and the inspectors assessment of this did not benefit from this decision and in particular the recognition by the Court of Appeal that out of date housing supply policies can still be given weight – even considerable weight – if they still maintain a planning function. The inspector did not subsequently ask the Council for a view on the implications of the Court's decision.
9. Whilst this decision does not fundamentally change an assessment of this application in terms of the weight that can be applied to the planning function of the policies, consideration should be given to the general assessment of sustainability.
10. In relation to this specific matter the inspector concluded the following key points:

Services - There would be limited access to essential shops and services needed on a day to day basis. The village is served by a primary school although not a secondary school. Nevertheless some rural centres do not have secondary schools (paragraph 20).

Employment - Duxford has good access to wide range of employment opportunities within 5 miles of Duxford. A number of the most recent employment facilities are located within walking distance of the appeal site. In addition to these opportunities The inspector found that Duxford has good access to a wide range of employment opportunities within a short distance (paragraph 21)

Transport –There is no segregated cycle route from Greenacres to Whittlesford Parkway Station and the use of the public right of way would be limited. Nevertheless, for pedestrians the route has a footpath along Moorfield Road and is lit although the distance of approximately 1.1 miles is long. The village is also served by a Citi7 bus service with links to Sawston, Saffron Walden and Cambridge.

11. In accordance with the main aims of Core Strategy Policy ST/b the inspector found the appeal site would provide a sustainable location for development. However, the inspector did clearly specify this was an on balance decision. As such, it's not reasonable to assume that all Group Villages are the same in what they offer and they do need to be considered on their individual merits and circumstances.
12. In this instance paragraphs 65-76 of the main officer report makes reference to the services, transport links and employment opportunities in Whittlesford and its relationship to the surrounding employment opportunities, villages and service centres.
13. Whilst having regard to the level of services and facilities in the village, it is a less sustainable location for the scale of development proposed, conflicting with the aims if Policies DP/7 and ST/6 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007, due to the accessibility to necessary services and facilities, including secondary education and employment opportunities by sustainable modes of transport, the proposal site, on balance, would not result in significant harm in terms of a less sustainable location. As such, the harm resulting from the less sustainable location is not significant and would not demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.
14. The proposal site is located approximately 0.7 miles to the north of the Duxford Appeal site and is considered to have similar accessibility to Employment and Transport. Officers therefore consider that the weight attributed by the inspector in this regard carries some relevancy in determining this application. However, decisions in respect of Duxford and Whittlesford can still be treated on their individual merits
15. Notwithstanding the sustainability argument on this particular site, it is considered that the Core Strategy DPD objectives (ST/a –K) and the associated suite of policies ST/2 - ST/7 and Development Control Policies policy DP/7 still maintain an important and valid planning function because they ensure that development is sustainably located and unsustainable locations are avoided. Policy ST/6 in particular can still be afforded significant weight.
16. The appeal decision at Duxford does not therefore change the officers' recommendation to approve this application and the significant weight that is afforded to those out of date policies as referenced above. However, given the proposal sites similar accessibility to those transport and employment sites that were attributed weight in the inspector's assessment of sustainability; officers would recommend that similar weight is applied in assessing the proposal site in this instance.

