

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6 July 2016

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Number: S/2510/15/OL

Parish(es): Caldecote

Proposal: Outline planning permission for up to 140 residential dwellings (including 40% affordable housing), removal of existing temporary agricultural structures, introduction of structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children's play area, community orchard and allotments, surface water flood mitigation and attenuation, vehicular access points from Highfields Road, and associated ancillary works. All matters to be reserved with the exception of the main site access.

Site address: Land East of Highfields Road, Highfields, Caldecote

Applicant(s): Gladman Developments Ltd

Recommendation: Minded to Refuse

Key material considerations: The main issues are whether the proposed development would provide a suitable site for housing, having regard to the principles of sustainable development and housing land supply, scale of development and impact on character and landscape, residential amenity, drainage issues, services and facilities, access and transport, heritage assets and ecology.

Committee Site Visit: Tuesday 31 May

Departure Application: Yes

Presenting Officer: Paul Sexton, Principal Planning Officer

Application brought to Committee because: The application is a significant departure to planning policy.

Date by which decision due: 28 December 2015

Update to Report

Recent Appeal Decisions - paragraph 255 et seq.

1. Paragraph 261 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).

2. One of the main issues considered by the inspector, which is relevant to the determination of this application, was the whether the proposed development would provide a suitable site for housing having regard to the principle of sustainable development and the supply of housing.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.

9. In this instance paragraphs 193 - 208 of the main officer report make reference to the services, transport links and employment opportunities in Caldecote and its relationship to the surrounding villages and service centres.
10. This states that Highfields Caldecote is served by relatively few services and facilities and residents are required to commute outside the village to access many day-to-day services. The only village shop has very recently closed and there is currently no evidence to demonstrate that this additional level of development would secure its long-term viability. There are very limited employment opportunities within the village itself, and only limited employment activity on Bourn Airfield to the west. There is a limited bus service through Highfields, and the distance of bus stops on St Neots Road from the site will not encourage residents of the new development to use the bus as an alternative to the private car for most day-to-day journeys. Whilst the provision of bus stop shelters and a footpath/cycle link will improve accessibility and usability of the existing services, officers are of the view that it will not materially increase numbers choosing to travel by bus.
11. By virtue of the relatively high number of new dwellings proposed, the limited range of services and facilities in the locality, the limited bus service, the inability for residents to reasonably walk/cycle to other service centres and the limited local employment opportunities, officers do not consider the site to be sustainable location for development of this scale.
12. Officers therefore consider that the decisions in respect of Duxford and Orwell can be treated on their individual merits
13. 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.
14. The appeal decision at Duxford does not therefore change the officers' recommendation to refuse this application.

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 Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning File Ref: S/2510/15/OL, S/0276/15/OL

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