

S/1694/16/OL – Agricultural field west of Grace Crescent – Outline planning permission with all matters reserved except for access for the erection of up to 98 dwellings (use Class C3) and associated works, including access, car and cycle parking, open space and landscaping

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Objections to Planning Applications by Hardwick Parish Council Land off Grace Crescent, August 2016

Summary

Hardwick Parish Council (HPC) welcomes the development of affordable homes in the Parish. However, these applications:

- do not comply with Policy ST/6 of the *SCDC Core Strategy, January 2007*
- exaggerates ease of access to facilities within the village, to public transport at the north edge of Hardwick, and to facilities in neighbouring villages
- bring no new facilities in the development itself, and offers inadequate funding proposals to provide significant new facilities
- add additional traffic to the congested centre of Hardwick

HPC therefore strongly objects to the proposed development.

General

The applications make a number of over optimistic assertions which can be misleading. Care should therefore be taken when consideration is given to the statements in the applications particularly by anyone without local knowledge.

Transport

The Planning Statement sections 7.68 to 7.78 claims the proposed development is sustainably located in transportation terms. HPC does not agree. The northern edge of Hardwick is well served by public transport to Cambridge and Cambourne but this is over a mile from the development taking approximately 25 minutes to walk. The historic church and pub are reasonably close to the development but the shop and primary school and community facilities are all a mile away. The shop and primary school and community facilities are accessible on foot or by cycle but not easily as has been claimed in the applications. There is no cycle path and the footpath is of poor quality in parts and poorly lit in parts.

There is frequent mention in the applications (sections 7.53, 7.71, 7.72, 11.2) of a bus stop within two minutes of the development but this service runs only once a day.

Traffic

Access to the development is through a narrow residential street (The Pastures) where traffic movement is further restricted by parked cars.

The applications propose a parking lay by to accommodate four vehicles to alleviate access to and from the site.

HPC believes that this will not sufficiently improve the access and that the use of this street for access to the site is impractical and unsafe.

HPC also has concerns about the effect of the development on traffic through the village particularly on Cambridge Road by the primary school and shop. This area is not designed to take the current levels of traffic and is congested and there have been frequent non injurious collisions between vehicles. The area is unsafe and the development will make this worse.

Bridleway access

Sections 6.10, 7.76, 7.82, 7.89, 7.101 propose to improve access from the development to the Wimpole Way bridleway. It should be noted that during wet weather the bridleway is accessible only in walking boots, by mountain bike, or on horseback.

Sustainable developments

Hardwick is classified as a Group Village within the Local Plan (Village Classification Report, June 2012). The Report concludes on Hardwick:

“Hardwick lies between Cambridge and Cambourne, has very little retail and services. It has no secondary school, doctors, library, and only a small local foodstore. It scores primarily due to being on a public transport corridor along St. Neots Road. “

Contrary to the assertion in Section 12.3, the Report concludes that Hardwick is one of the eight least sustainable villages within the District.

The policy implication of Hardwick’s Group Village classification is that it is only considered as suitable for developments of up to 8 dwellings due to the level of available facilities. Sections 7.51 to 7.58 of the Planning Statement argues that Hardwick is misclassified and should better be considered as a Minor Rural Centre and therefore suitable for larger developments within the Local Plan.

Reasons given for this include.

Hardwick already scores a total of 3 Points. The Planning Statement fails to explain that all 3 points are in respect of the good transport links enjoyed at the northern end of the village but which are over a mile away from the development. This might be a case for further development in Hardwick but not at the site of this proposed development.

It is further claimed that an additional point be awarded for secondary education because a school bus picks up children in the village to take them 2.5 miles from the proposed development to Comberton Village College. This does not appear a significant factor to HPC.

“The nearest Doctors surgery is located in Comberton which is easily accessible to Hardwick.” Not so, the surgery is located three miles away, with no footpath for much of this and crucially with no public transport link.

The village has shared use of a community room at the village school and HPC believes that this is inadequate for a village the size of Hardwick. There is no Village Hall or community centre. HPC does not believe this should warrant an additional point.

In summary HPC believes that the Planning Statement does not give adequate reasons why this would be a sustainable development.

Open Space

HPC recognises that the Planning Statement provides for outdoor play space but is concerned that it is adjacent to the attenuation pond and would like confirmation that this health and safety aspect is addressed.

The village has some sports pitches on the recreation ground (2 Football pitches and a cricket pitch combined) but these are acknowledged by SCDC as being inadequate for a village the size of Hardwick. They are overused which leads to poor, worn surfaces and both the Football and Cricket clubs have to play many of their home games outside of the village. Pitch improvement only goes so far. The village needs more land on which to provide sports pitches and this development does not provide any such additional land.

Health

Sections 7.83 and 7.84 of the planning statement.

The local GP surgeries at Comberton, Bourn and Cambourne are all full even before this proposed development and others in the area. The nearest surgery is at Comberton about three miles away by car. There is no public transport service nor even a paved footpath connecting the development with the surgery. Hardwick is the largest village in South Cambridgeshire without a doctor's surgery. Serious consideration needs to be given to a GP surgery in Hardwick.

The Planning Statement does not adequately address these issues.

Affordable Housing

The Housing Need Survey carried out by Cambridgeshire ACRE for Hardwick identified that to fulfil all current and immediate housing need in Hardwick, 44 new affordable homes would have to be built. It went on to say that this scale of need would typically justify a scheme of about 20 to 25 dwellings.

HPC supports the provision of affordable housing in Hardwick and recognises that the proposed development does so. However it is also particularly important for affordable dwellings be built on a sustainable site.

Capacity of Primary School and Pre School network

The County Council is reported to believe that the existing Primary School has sufficient capacity although it is currently full.

There appears to be a consensus that there will need to be an increase in accommodation for pre-school children in the village to meet the needs of the development. In the Planning Statement it is proposed (proposed by whom – presumably by the applicants) “that the existing community rooms at the Primary School be relocated to the new community facility on the Recreation Ground and this will then free up those rooms for pre-school use.”)

This proposal is flawed.

There is no “new community facility” and the developers are only proposing to make an insignificant contribution of £46,000 towards the provision of one.

A new community facility at the Recreation Ground would require planning permission and this is not in place.

There is an agreement of 3rd August 1978 whereby the County Council can decide “that the school should no longer be a community school and in that event will either provide... reasonably suitable alternative accommodation ... or will compensate”. There is no indication that the County Council

has agreed to go this route of taking over the community facilities. Either compensation option would involve the County Council in considerable expenditure. There is no indication that either the County Council or the developers are prepared to provide this.

Waste

Sewage pipes down Main Street have been blocked by waste in the past leading to concerns about capacity. The development will add further waste to the system. HPC would like confirmation that there is sufficient capacity to handle the additional waste.