



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Planning Committee held at 1:00pm on Wednesday 5th May 2021, facilitated by the Zoom video conferencing system.

PRESENT

Cllr Bill Hunt (Chairman)
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Sue Austen
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Matt Downey
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Alec Jones
Cllr Lisa Stubbs (Vice Chairman)
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Gareth Wilson

OFFICERS

Rebecca Saunt – Planning Manager
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Angela Briggs – Planning Team Leader
Tracy Couper – Democratic Services Manager
Caroline Evans – Democratic Services Officer
Angela Tyrrell – Senior Legal Assistant
Russell Wignall – Legal Assistant

IN ATTENDANCE

Parish Cllr Chris Ray – (Agenda Item 5)

3. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

No apologies or substitutions were made.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

5. MINUTES

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2021.

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 7th April 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- The meeting had been held today despite there being only one application on the agenda because the application was a large one with public interest and it was felt important not to delay a decision to a later meeting.

- Two appeals on Main Street in Witchford, on land known locally as Horse Field, had been dismissed following a recent appeal hearing. A previous Planning Inspector had allowed the two appeals on this site, which were subsequently challenged by East Cambs and those decisions quashed, leading to the recent appeal hearing and the dismissal of both applications.
- Cllr Lis Every was welcomed to the meeting having been recently appointed to the Planning Committee.

7. **20/00996/OUM – PROPOSED OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR UP TO 70 DWELLINGS AND THE DEMOLITION OF 18 WILBURTON ROAD, HADDENHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Angela Briggs, Planning Team Leader, presented a report (W7, previously circulated) recommending refusal of an outline application for a residential development of up to 70 dwellings in Haddenham. All matters were reserved except for access. She showed Members various site plans, aerial photographs, site photographs, and diagrams and photographs of the proposed access. She informed Members that the site was largely outside the development envelope of the village and that two previous applications for the site had been refused permission in August 2014 and November 2019.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **Principle of Development** – the site was outside the development envelope and, since the Council could now demonstrate a 5 Year Housing Land Supply, the proposed development was contrary to Policy Growth 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
- **Visual amenity and landscape character** – Haddenham was one of the highest points in the Fens and the application site was at a key vantage point in the district. Policy ENV1 of the Local Plan recognised the importance of edge of settlement locations and required new developments to conserve or enhance the settlement edge, space between settlements, and wider landscape setting. In terms of visual amenity, the proposed development was considered to have an adverse impact on the character and setting of Haddenham and was therefore contrary to Policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the Local Plan and the principles of paragraph 170 of the NPPF.
- **Highway safety and accessibility** – previous applications had included a different access from that detailed in the current application and that access had been a reason for refusal. The proposed new access did not result in any objection from the County Council Highways Team. In terms of highway safety and accessibility, the proposed development therefore complied with Policy COM7 of the Local Plan.
- **Biodiversity and ecology** – the Wildlife Trust had been consulted and raised no objections. In terms of biodiversity, the proposed development was therefore considered to comply with Policy ENV7 of the Local Plan, paragraph 170(d) of the NPPF, and Policy NE6 of the Natural Environment SPD.
- **Flood risk and drainage** – the application site was in Flood Zone 1 and therefore was a low risk area. A Flood Risk Assessment had been assessed by the Environment Agency, the Lead Local Flood Authority and Anglian Water. A Foul Sewerage assessment had also been considered. The proposed development was considered to comply with Policy ENV8 of the Local Plan, paragraph 155 of the NPPF, and the Flood and Water SPD.

- **Residential amenity** – the application was for outline permission only, with access included but all appearance and scale elements reserved for a future reserved matters application if outline permission was granted. Several residential dwellings were in close proximity to the site and would be impacted in terms of outlook and setting. It was considered that the proposed new site could be developed in such a way as to adequately mitigate for the adverse impact by the use of soft landscaping and sufficient setback distances. In terms of residential amenity, it was considered that it would be possible to design a scheme that would comply with Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan. In addition, the Council’s Environmental Health Officer and the Council’s Scientific Officer considered that the proposal complied with Policy ENV9 of the Local Plan.
- **Impact on primary healthcare** – NHS England had not responded to the consultation, so their view was not known. One reason for refusing permission for a previous application on this site was the impact of the proposed development on Primary Health Care. The current application had a smaller number of dwellings and, in accordance with Policy Growth 3 of the Local Plan, a S106 legal agreement could be used to mitigate the impact of the development if the application was approved.
- **Other matters** – the Officer had given no weight to the Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits Statement (February 2021) since it failed to acknowledge the Council’s housing land supply of 7.01 years. As the proposal was for less than 100 dwellings, the Policy HOU1 requirement to include self-build properties did not apply, therefore that reason for refusal of a previous application was not relevant to this application. The proposal complied with Policy HOU3 of the Local Plan by including the required amount of affordable housing. There was mention of energy efficiency within the Design and Access Statement, and a Sustainability Statement could be secured by condition if the application was approved, therefore the proposed development complied with Policy ENV4 of the Local Plan and Policy CC1 of the Climate Change SPD. There had been no objection from the County’s Archaeology Team. In terms of S106 contributions, Education, SuDs, Waste and Recycling, and Affordable Housing would all be secured as part of a S106 legal agreement in accordance with Policy Growth 3 of the Local Plan if planning approval was given.

In summary, the Officer stated that the application site was outside the development envelope of Haddenham and did not fall within the exceptions listed in Policy Growth 2 of the Local Plan. She reminded Members that the Council could demonstrate a 5 year land supply (currently 7.01 years). The proposal was considered to have a significant adverse impact on the visual amenity and setting. She concluded that the proposal was contrary to Policies Growth 2 and ENV1 of the Local Plan and the principles of Chapter 15 of the NPPF, and was therefore recommended for refusal.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Team Leader for her comprehensive report and asked the Democratic Services Officer to read aloud a statement that had been submitted by a Haddenham resident, Tanya Porter:

“I am aware the planning for this site has arisen a few times over the years, however nothing has changed infrastructure wise in order to support such a development, especially 70 new buildings.”

I would like to bring to your attention the many reasons why this development is not justifiable:

1. There would be a severe impact on the increase in traffic in the village and surrounding villages for access to the A10/A14. Most households now have a minimum of 2 cars. An extra 140 cars in and out of the village would cause severe congestion especially in rush hour. The junction becomes extremely busy even now with the current level of cars that use it. It would be mayhem to add an additional residential road onto Wilburton Road. This would also have a further impact on the level of traffic through Wilburton and at the Twenty Pence Road junction for those using a route through to Cottenham.

2. In conjunction with point 1, the A10 is heavily congested already. Many commuters who rely on the A10 because they do not work on a bus service or train line route to work, already experience severe delays. Until other transport solutions are put in place to complement the A10 or as a last resort there is an upgrade to the A10, it would be inconceivable to allow cluster developments such as this in any of the surrounding villages to go ahead. The current A10 could not sustain further rise in traffic. It will inevitably have an impact, especially as development is happening at Waterbeach right on the doorstep of the A10.

3. Our doctors surgery and primary school is already over-subscribed or at least at its absolute limit. They have been under pressure for some time and the school especially relies on fundraising to provide better resources for the children and more class rooms. They do not have the room to expand and the school in particular should not have to lose the last part of their green space that is absolutely vital to children's development & wellbeing (which is also important for teaching staff), just to accommodate a further increase in headcount.

4. There is already development happening in and around Haddenham, which will have an increased impact on the existing facilities. The High Street encounters heavy congestion because there is no parking facility for those who want to use the High Street facility (or need to do school drop off that are too far for walking), therefore many people park on both sides of the road, even at the top where the double yellow lines are sometimes creating gridlock, farm traffic and the bus can struggle to get through and it is not safe for pedestrians to cross. The crossroads also encounters high levels of traffic. Although this development is in easy walking distance we cannot make assumptions that those who take up these properties will be able to walk the distance or will (i.e: stopping off at the shop on the way home!).

5. Improving bus connections and other routes should also be considered for Haddenham and the surrounding villages, when developments are being proposed to minimise use of cars, especially where no long term plan to improve the road network is in place. Not everyone works in Ely or can get to where they need to go from Ely. (Services through villages to Huntingdon etc, for example)

6. We also need to consider the general environmental impact. We need to remember that we are a countryside village and it is extremely important now more than ever that our countryside and wildlife is preserved, to minimise loss

of habitat and species that rely on it, to continue to improve and maintain the environment and for the general well-being of everyone. Although the latest Social, Economic & Environmental Benefits statement produced in February 2021 relating to this development mentions 1.67 hectares of open space, this is somewhat misleading as there is no mention of this being within one area and therefore, it is likely this is the total mass spread over the whole site.

In summary, this development will have a negative detrimental impact to the village's services, surrounding current infrastructure and environment as a whole."

The Chairman then asked the Democratic Services Officer to read aloud a statement that had been supplied by the applicant's Agent, AAH Planning Consultants:

"Chair, Members,

The application before you is an outline planning application for up to 70 dwellings with access considered and all other matters reserved for subsequent approval at Land to the South of 18 Wilburton Road, Haddenham. The application also seeks for the demolition of 18 Wilburton Road, to accommodate the proposed access.

The proposal is for high quality homes, which are in accessible location in Haddenham providing good access to local services and facilities as well as public transport links, to meet the everyday needs of residents. The proposal also includes 30% affordable housing, which is in accordance with Policy HOU3 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

Significant revisions have been made from previous iterations of this scheme, including a reduction in the number of units. The site design has been a landscape led approach, and although this is only indicative at this stage, a great deal of thought and care has been given to this approach. We have devoted large sections of the site to open, green space, which equate to circa 40% of the total site area, which not only provides landscape benefits but helps to deliver biodiversity improvements on the site.

During the course of the application, we have continued to work closely with officers and have submitted additional information in response to concerns expressed by Highways, Wildlife Trust, LLFA and the Councils independent landscape consultant.

The accompanying supporting detailed assessments demonstrates that the impacts of the proposals are minimal. In summary, we have demonstrated that:

- There are no significant impacts on the highway network as confirmed by the Transport Assessment and the Highway Authority's no objection to the proposals.*
- Extensive landscaping which provides for a soft transition to the surrounding area as well as providing significant open space including a community orchard for use of existing and new residents*
- Ecological and archaeological impacts are mitigated with a biodiversity net gain demonstrated*

- *There would be no increase in flood risk as a result of the proposed development.*

The accompanying documents set out the significant social, environmental and economic benefits of the scheme, which in summary are:

- *Delivery of 70 high quality family homes in an accessible location including 21 affordable dwellings, promoting sustainable and balanced communities contributing towards the affordable housing need.*
- *217 jobs generated*
- *Resident expenditure benefits would increase spending power to Haddenham estimated at £1,843,744.*
- *Provision of recreational open space for use by existing and future residents, including the inclusion of a Locally Equipped Play Area.*
- *Upgrades to the bus stops within the vicinity of the site*
- *Contributions towards the Robert Arkenstall Primary School, Witchford Village College and Haddenham Community Library.*

The substantial accompanying documents and technical reports confirm that the submitted proposals constitute Sustainable Development in accordance with the NPPF and Local Planning Policy.

We would be happy to liaise with your officers to agree suitable conditions and a legal agreement to secure the planning obligations set out in your officer's report.

We therefore respectfully ask for your support for the approval of this application. Thank you."

On the invitation of the Chairman, Parish Cllr Chris Ray (Chairman of Haddenham Parish Council) read a prepared statement:

"Although as a Council we have submitted comprehensive objections in following a public meeting taking the views of our residents on this application. I don't want to go through those comments in detail as I assume they have been read by the committee and taken into account, I just wanted to give my personal spin on the application.

This application is a large speculative development intrusive to the landscape and character of Haddenham. It's outside the planning envelope and the developer has not had the courtesy to consult with the residents on this or indeed any of the previous applications, hence omissions and mis-information in the submission. From our village public planning meeting and my own engagement with residents I have not met one person who is in favour of this development, it is isolated on the periphery of the village outside the planning envelope and does not suit a village such as Haddenham situated a hill with 4 approaches with stunning view. It also unnecessarily utilises prime farmland.

It is situated with poor access to the A1123 via an angled junction on a bend. In normal (i.e. pre lockdown times) the A1123 is often backed up from Hop Row to Wilburton in the morning and evenings. To avoid the difficult junction drivers will probably turn left out of the estate and access the crossroads via Duck Lane

and the High Street causing more congestion around the High Street and crossroads.

Most importantly for myself, over the last 2 years, I have led a team of Parish Councillors, volunteers together with a consultant working on our Neighbourhood Plan, including Design Codes. This is virtually complete and will be passed to East Cambs for comments soon and to the Parish Council for approval at our June 2021 meeting. There has been tremendous detailed response from our residents with over 500 returns from our resident survey.

Formulation of the Neighbourhood Plan has been a huge amount of work for our village including formulating the areas allocated for development (all within the existing planning envelope) necessary to meet our housing targets, which together with small windfall site will over achieve our targets significantly. This site is NOT included within the recommendations of that report, if approved it would increase our 10 year target for housing by over 25% which the village would be unable to cope with.

Having carried out the Neighbourhood Plan in line with ECDC planning guidelines and policies, approval of this development would make a mockery of the Neighbourhood planning process in the eyes of the Parish Council, our residents and indeed any other villages looking to take this route. Approval of such an obviously inappropriate development would render our plan useless and we would have expended a huge amount of village effort and good will, and in the process, have wasted £18,000 of grant monies in the process.

Like the previous applications on this site I urge the committee to refuse it.”

The Chairman invited questions for the Parish Council Chairman. Cllr Stubbs commended the Parish Council for embarking on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and asked Cllr Ray to confirm how far it had progressed and when it would be submitted. She also asked if the developers had been invited to speak to the Parish Council. Cllr Ray responded that they hoped to submit the draft plan to East Cambs District Council in June, following a Parish Council meeting in mid-May, and that it could then be approved at a Parish Council meeting in June or July. He confirmed that there had been no public consultation with the village by the developers.

Cllr Trapp asked about the pedestrian access from the site to the local primary school, and whether many pupils were currently driven to/from the school. Cllr Ray stated that the pedestrian route was reasonable but detailed the existing significant problems regarding parking and congestion near the school at the start and end of the school day. He explained that the Parish Council were working on options including yellow lines and speed restrictions to address these issues.

Cllr Jones commented on Cllr Ray's mention of the proposed number of dwellings on the site being a 25% increase above the village's 10 year plan, and asked how many windfall sites were included in that plan. The Parish Council Chairman replied that there was a target of 262 houses in the 10 year period and he explained that Haddenham had a significant number of windfall sites so the expectation was that the target would be comfortably met or overachieved. He also reminded Members that the school was already near its limits in terms of pupil numbers.

Cllr Ambrose Smith noted that the application under consideration included approximately 20 social houses whereas small windfall sites would not trigger the requirement for social housing. She therefore questioned whether Haddenham lacked a good proportion of social housing. Cllr Ray informed Members that Haddenham Community Land Trust (CLT) had just developed 19 affordable homes and there was a further development within the village of approximately 36 affordable homes. The CLT had good evidence of the need for affordable housing in Haddenham and were therefore talking to the developers of that site to try to ensure that the properties would be allocated to local residents rather than as part of a national scheme. He felt that the number of affordable houses already planned for the village was sufficient to meet local demand.

The Chairman then invited the Planning Officer to offer any further comments, and upon hearing she had none he invited questions from Members. Cllr Trapp thanked the Officer for her report and presentation. He commented that he remembered the site from a previous site visit for an earlier application and he questioned the additional frontage width gained by the addition of the plot of 18 Wilburton Road, suggesting that it would be a maximum of about 20m. The Officer replied that it was a wide property, sitting within a wide plot, and although she did not know the exact measurement she believed 20m to be an approximate measurement.

The Chairman then opened the debate.

Cllr Every commented that she had visited the site location and it was clear to her that a development on the site would have a huge impact on Haddenham and the local area. She was very disappointed that the developers had not consulted local residents but she was pleased to see that some of the issues raised in earlier applications had been addressed in the latest application. Overall though, she did not see any reasons to go against the Officer's recommendation to refuse the application.

Cllr Brown agreed that the developers had clearly worked to address the previous access concerns but he cautioned that the Committee should be very careful if considering approving applications against Policy Growth2 and he therefore supported the Officer's recommendation.

Cllr Wilson gave a detailed summary of the existing traffic issues in Haddenham, in particular at the junction with the A1123 to the east of the proposed site access, based on his own experiences of living in the area. He suggested that, although the Highways Authority were content with the proposal, it would create further traffic problems, not least a new traffic jam of vehicles trying to exit the proposed new cul de sac with a right turn onto an already busy road used as a "rat run" to avoid the queues at the village's crossroads. He reminded Members that applications on this site had been discussed several times before and the main reasons for refusal each time had been that the site was outside the development envelope and would devastate the view. This application was no different in those respects. Even when the Council did not have a 5 year housing land supply, the developers at that time withdrew their appeal following a refusal of the application. He concurred with the Parish Council Chairman's view that lots of houses had already been planned in the village, including a large number of affordable homes with the CLT well underway, so it was clear that the village was not averse to development in general, but this site was not a suitable location.

The Chairman commented that as the County Councillor for Haddenham he had considerable knowledge of the village and he therefore proposed accepting the Officer's recommendation to refuse the application. Cllr Wilson seconded the proposal.

Cllrs Stubbs and Jones spoke in agreement with the comments of the other Members. Cllr Trapp commented that he was in favour of truly affordable housing but, in some cases, its inclusion appeared to be a way to get around planning permissions. In this case, the proposed development was outside the development area and against the wishes of a village that could already demonstrate good land supply, and he therefore supported the Officer's recommendation.

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application ref 20/00996/OUM be REFUSED for the reasons detailed in paragraph 1.1 of the Officer's report

8. PLANNING PERFORMANCE REPORT – MARCH 2021

Rebecca Saunt, Planning Manager, presented report W8 (previously circulated) summarising the Planning Department's performance in March 2021. She drew Members' attention to the inclusion of a graph illustrating the number of applications received over the course of each calendar year since January 2019, as had been requested by Members at the previous committee meeting. She informed Members that the Appeal hearing scheduled for 11th May 2021 for land west of 19 Station Road, Fordham (18/01703/OUT) had been cancelled due to the appeal being withdrawn. The applicant had withdrawn the appeal following the previously mentioned (Minute 6) dismissal of two appeals in Witchford.

Cllr Every commented that she had seen these monthly reports in an earlier Council role as Planning Champion and had always been impressed by the department's continued positive progress. She commended Officers on the fact that this had continued despite the unprecedented conditions imposed by COVID-19. She asked the Planning Manager if there was an obvious reason for the large increase in reports of breaches of planning conditions (4 in March 2020, compared to 10 in March 2021) as shown in the final table of the report. The Planning Manager replied that the low figure in March 2020 corresponded with most sites stopping work due to the lockdown, whereas this year most sites were operational again. She explained that quite often people didn't read the detail of decision notices and therefore inadvertently breached the planning conditions. The Planning Department were therefore looking at ways to proactively help, for example by highlighting if they had outstanding planning conditions when they apply to building control for their building regulations, to avoid planning breaches and reduce the workload for enforcement officers.

The Chairman agreed with Cllr Every that the Planning Department contained an excellent team of Officers under the leadership of the Planning Manager and he thanked them all. He also thanked Members for a cooperative and positive attitude throughout the meeting.

It was resolved:

That the Planning Performance Report for March 2021 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 2:05pm.