

Forest Heath District Council

**DEVELOPMENT
CONTROL
COMMITTEE**

4 NOVEMBER 2015

DEV/FH/15/048

Report of the Head of Planning and Growth

**PLANNING APPLICATION DC/14/1308/FUL - LAND AT 1-10, SHARPES
CORNER, LAKENHEATH**

Synopsis:

Application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and associated matters.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee determine the attached application and associated matters.

CONTACT OFFICER

Case Officer: Charlotte Waugh
Telephone: 01284 757349

Committee Report

Date: 6th November **Expiry Date:** 5th February 2015
Registered: 2014

Case: Charlotte **Recommendation:** Approve
Officer: Waugh
Parish: Lakenheath **Ward:** Lakenheath

Proposal: Planning application – Erection of 20 no. two-storey dwellings with associated external works (demolition of existing 10 dwellings)

Site: Land At 1-10, Sharpes Corner, Lakenheath

Applicant: West Register Property Investment Ltd

Background:

This application is referred to the Development Control Committee as it is a proposal for 'major' development, of which the recommendation to grant planning permission is contrary to the response received from the Parish Council.

The application is recommended for conditional APPROVAL following completion of a S106 Agreement.

Proposal:

1. Detailed planning permission is sought for the erection of 20 dwellings. At present the site benefits from 10 existing bungalows and they would be removed to facilitate this re-development. The site would be served by three vehicular accesses from Sharpes Corner (a no-through road) on the northern boundary of the site, with a pedestrian access through to the High Street.
2. The proposed dwellings would all be two-storey in a combination of detached and semi-detached with the following mix of sizes:
 - 8 x 4 bed 6 person dwellings
 - 3 x 3 bed 4 person dwellings
 - 6 x 3 bed 5 person dwellings
 - 3 x 2 bed 4 person dwellings (affordable)
3. Materials will comprise render and buff brickwork elevations with red clay plain tile roofs and zinc projecting windows. Block paving will be used within the site to provide shared surfaces for vehicles and pedestrians.
4. Minor amendments have been made to the overall site layout during the course of the application to amend access points, provide additional car parking and to enlarge the buffer between the proposed development and residential dwellings to the south.

Application Supporting Material:

5. The planning application is accompanied by the following documents:
 - Existing and Proposed Drawings (Location Plan, Block Plan, Elevations & Floorplans, Streetscene Drawings)
 - Design and Access Statement
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Phase I Contamination Report
 - Phase I Habitat Survey, Habitat Suitability Index survey (Great Crested Newts), Bat Survey

Site Details:

6. The site is situated to the west of the village and is accessed from Sharpes Corner which connects to the High Street. Due to the shape of the site the existing bungalows are in a curved arrangement fronting onto the High Street and Sharpes Corner.
7. The site is located within the housing settlement boundary for Lakenheath and has residential neighbours to the north, south and east. Sharpes Corner is a dead end road which connects to a track, high grassed bank and river which runs adjacent to the site. The site is not within a Conservation Area or in close proximity to any listed buildings.
8. Currently the 0.6 hectare site is occupied by 10 detached two bedroom bungalows which are unoccupied and in need of renovation or demolition.

Relevant Planning History:

9. F/2008/0341/FUL – Erection of 18 two-storey dwellings (Demolition of existing 10 bungalows) – Refused due to lack of Section 106 agreement.

Consultations:

10. **Natural England** – No objections.
11. **Environment Agency** – No objections subject to a condition ensuring that the recommendations of the Flood Risk assessment are implemented.
12. **Anglian Water Services** – No objections. The foul drainage from this development is in the catchment of Lakenheath Water Recycling Centre that will have available capacity for these flows.
13. **Lakenheath Internal Drainage Board** – No objections - The site is outside the Lakenheath Internal Drainage Board District but in an area that drains into it.
14. **Suffolk County Council (Highway Authority)** – No objections subject to conditions regarding completion of accesses and parking areas and the submission and approval of details relating to cycle storage, bin storage, surface water drainage.

15. **Suffolk County Council (Archaeological Service)** – No objections subject to a condition requesting an archaeological investigation to take place on site and a post investigation report to be submitted.
16. **Suffolk County Council Planning Obligations** – No formal response received yet – to be reported verbally.
17. **FHDC (Strategic Housing)** - Support.
18. **FHDC (Land Contamination Officer)** – No objections subject to a condition requiring a remediation scheme to be submitted should contamination be found.
19. **FHDC (Ecology, Tree and Landscape Officer)** - No objections subject to conditions regarding ecology enhancements and landscaping.

Representations:

20. **Lakenheath Parish Council** – Object on the following (summarised) grounds:
 - No prior consultation with the Parish Council or residents has taken place
 - There is a need for a masterplan to co-ordinate the erection of the various developments approved and planned for Lakenheath with the relevant infrastructure
 - Developments should be plan led and not developer led as we now have 5 year land supply
 - There are no plans to improve public transport and this scheme is contrary to policy CS4 as it encourages car usage (due to size of dwelling and consequent number of parking spaces)
 - Where are the footpaths and cycle ways?
 - How will schooling cope?
 - Roads will be strained with extra traffic – High Street is already congested – suggests a mini-roundabout at road junction
 - Density and layout is out of character with surrounding area – surrounding dwellings are in spacious plots
 - Unimaginative design bearing in mind loss of green spaces
 - More visitor parking should be provided
 - Concerns that no affordable homes would be provided on site
 - Concerns over upgrading the roadway and imposing on the village green
 - Wants assurances that the developer will use solar energy or ground source heat pump as mentioned in Design and Access
 - The developer should provide dog bins
 - The key principle of the core Strategy is to ensure the efficient use of land by balancing the competing demands within the context of sustainable development. This is not the case with this proposal.
21. *Officer note – The developer has agreed to provide 3 affordable dwellings within the site as detailed in the report. The road way has been amended to ensure it will not encroach on the adjacent green area.*
22. An objection has been received from 1 local resident, raising the following (summarised) concerns:
 - The houses are not in keeping with surrounding bungalows
 - Sharpes Corner is prone to sewage blockages and this development will lead to further problems.

23.A letter has been received in support of the application and makes the following (summarised) comments:

- Cleverly efficient site layout and pleasing dwelling designs
- Supports widening of Sharpes Corner providing land comes from the development site and not the village green
- Supports position of footway on Sharpes Corner
- Supports access onto the High Street for plots 1-5 (*now removed*)

Policies:

24.The following policies of the Development Plan are relevant to this application:

Core Strategy

- Policy CS1 – Spatial Strategy.
- Policy CS2 – Natural Environment.
- Policy CS3 – Landscape Character and the Historic Environment.
- Policy CS4 – Reduce Emissions, Mitigate and Adapt to future Climate Change.
- Policy CS5 – Design Quality and Local Distinctiveness.
- Policy CS9 – Affordable Housing Provision.
- Policy CS13 – Infrastructure and Developer Contributions.

Joint Development Management Policies Document

- DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- DM2 - Creating Places – Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness
- DM6 – Flooding and Sustainable Drainage
- DM7 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- DM10 – Impact of Development on Sites of Biodiversity and Geodiversity Interest
- DM11 – Protected Species
- DM12 – Mitigation, Enhancement, Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity
- DM13 – Landscape Features
- DM14 – Safeguarding from Hazards
- DM20 – Archaeology
- DM22 – Residential Design
- DM45 – Transport Assessment and Travel Plans
- DM46 – Parking Standards

25.Other Planning Policy

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Joint Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (September 2013)
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (August 2011)
- Suffolk Advisory Parking Standards (2015)

National Policy and Guidance

26.National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework):

- Core Principles
- Section 6: Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes
- Section 7: Requiring Good Design

Officer Comment

27. The issues to be considered in the determination of the application are:

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Highway safety/Parking provision
- Impact on Biodiversity
- Impact on Local Infrastructure
- Flood risk, Drainage and Pollution
- Design and Layout
- Impact on residential Amenity
- Planning Obligations

Principle of Development

28. The Core Strategy states that development will be focussed in the towns and key service centres of the District. Policy CS1 confirms Lakenheath as a key service centre due to the range of services and facilities it contains. In addition, the site is within the housing settlement boundary where there is a presumption in favour of residential development, subject to compliance with other policy considerations.

29. Furthermore, a core principle of the Framework is to encourage the effective use of land through the re-use of previously developed, or brownfield land providing it is not of high environmental value (para.111).

30. Having regard to both the national and local policy position it is considered that the location of the site represents an acceptable position for residential development. The site already has an established residential use and as such, it is not considered of high environmental value. The principle of re-development is considered acceptable.

Impact on highway safety/Parking provision

31. It is Government policy that planning decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable modes of transport can be maximised. However, the Framework confirms this policy needs to take account of other policies in the document, particularly in rural areas. The Framework confirms that development should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

32. Core Strategy Spatial Policy T1 aims to ensure that new development is located where there are the best opportunities for sustainable travel and the least dependency on car travel. This is reflected in Policies DM45 and CS12 which seek to encourage alternative methods of transport.

33. The Core Strategy (CS1) categorises Lakenheath as a Key Service Centre and is thus regarded as a 'sustainable' location which could support growth. Due to the size of the settlement it contains a range of services and facilities with the accompanying employment opportunities and on that basis, it must be assumed that some future occupants will use sustainable methods of transport.

34. The County Highway Engineer has been involved in the evolution of this scheme and is now satisfied that the accesses are located in safe locations. Originally the proposal included a vehicular access directly onto the High Street, where there is a current informal access. However, due to the proximity of this access to the bend at Sharpes Corner and the subsequent limited stopping distances this has since been amended. Sharpes Corner is an existing access which serves a limited number of dwellings, subject to its upgrading it is considered an appropriate access point to the development.
35. The applicant has provided a plan showing the use of shared surfaces within the site. The use of different blockwork will indicate spaces for vehicles and pedestrians with flush pavements. As well as the aesthetic benefits of these materials it should reduce traffic speeds and highway clutter. A footpath is proposed on Sharpes Corner which will connect to the existing footpath on the High Street, providing safe and accessible access into the village. In addition a pathway is proposed adjacent to plot 2 connecting directly to the High Street and adjacent bus stop. On this basis, it is considered that the applicant has provided opportunities for sustainable connections to the village centre.
36. Each dwelling is provided with 2 or 3 off road car parking spaces depending on their size, with a mix of garaging and open spaces as well as tandem parking. These have been designed to be adjacent to the dwelling where possible to prevent the use of on-street parking within the development. The Highways Authority has recently adopted revised parking standards which ensure that sufficient vehicle parking spaces are provided for each dwelling. Overall, the scheme contains 53 allocated spaces as well as 5 visitor spaces which accords with these standards.
37. Access to the proposed development is considered suitable and the development would not lead to significant highway safety issues. It is acknowledged that the Parish Council have concerns regarding highway safety but it is not considered that the additional 10 dwellings will create unacceptable congestion on the High Street and no objections have been raised by the Highway Engineer in this regard.

Impact upon biodiversity

38. The development proposals would not impact upon any European designated nature conservation sites. However, the site is in close proximity to various ditches and ponds which could accommodate great crested newts. In addition, the derelict buildings pose suitable bat habitats.
39. The application is supported by a phase 1 habitat survey as well as specific surveys relating to the potential presence of Great crested newts and bats. The reports conclude that, with respect to newts, the surrounding water bodies are unlikely to support a population and as such they are unlikely to use the site. With regard to bats, the survey indicated that no bats were roosting within the bungalows although House Martin nests were found. A condition is therefore suggested which ensures that demolition takes place outside of the bird nesting season. In addition ecological enhancements have been detailed such as, artificial House Martin nests and bat roost tiles which will improve the ecological value of the overall site.
40. Natural England has not raised any concerns or objections to the proposal, including the potential impact upon the hierarchy of designated nature conservation sites, protected species or impact on nearby SSSI's. The use of

ecological enhancements is encouraged as detailed within the submitted ecological assessments.

41. A Habitats Regulation Assessment screening has been completed which concludes that the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact on the Breckland Special Protection Area. Officers are satisfied that the development proposals would not adversely affect important sites of ecological interest in the area and would not harm populations or habitats of species which are of importance.

Impact upon local infrastructure

42. It is acknowledged that there have been significant development proposals within Lakenheath and as such, the Parish Council have raised concern over the delivery of infrastructure and capacity of services.
43. Officers note that this scheme involves the net increase of only 10 dwellings. Having regard to the evidence base, which includes the 2009 Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Appraisal (IECA) and the consultee response from Anglian Water, it is concluded that there is sufficient capacity with regard to waste water, potable water and energy supply. The Local Authority is satisfied that sufficient capacity is available for the development and it would not be reasonable to refuse the application upon these grounds.

Flood risk, drainage and pollution

44. The application site is largely located within Environment Agency flood risk zone 1 with a small area in the south west corner within zones 2 and 3, albeit these areas are minimal and proposed as residential gardens. The flood risk assessment submitted with the planning application confirms that the risk of flooding is extremely unlikely. Surface water will be managed via sustainable drainage systems and raised floor levels will be used as specified in the building regulations. The Environment Agency has assessed the report and is satisfied that subject to the measures being conditioned the development will not increase the risk of flooding.
45. The planning application is accompanied by a Phase I contamination report. This concludes the site has not been unduly impacted by former land uses which have most recently been residential. The Council's Contamination Officer has concluded that the risk of contamination is low and has requested the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of a remediation scheme should any contamination be found.
46. The Environment Agency, Anglian Water Services and the Local Authority Land Contamination Officer have not objected to or raised concerns about the application proposals. Where mitigation is considered necessary consultees have recommended the imposition of reasonable conditions. On this basis, the scheme is considered acceptable in this regard.

Design and layout

47. The Framework states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and confirms good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning. Policy DM2 reinforces this view and states that proposals should recognise and address key features and local characteristics and create or maintain a sense of place.

48. The Design and Access Statement which accompanies the application explains how the development proposed responds to the site constraints and its surroundings, with specific reference to the design principles of the scheme including orientation, material palette and scale. The layout has evolved following comments from the Highway Authority and in an effort to rationalize the parking provision.
49. The site, due to its curved frontage and corner position is highly visible within the street scene and as such, it was important to create an attractive façade. With this in mind the site has almost been divided in two, with the eastern side set back from the road in a curved alignment and the western side, which is less visible from the public realm, featuring in depth dwellings.
50. The eastern side largely accommodates semi-detached dwellings which front onto the High street, albeit separated by an internal road and an area of landscaping. There are existing trees on this corner which are dominated by a mature Elm. The proposal retains this mature tree and will provide additional planting to act as a buffer between the site and the highway. On this basis, whilst this area of the site will be visually prominent, given the two storey nature of the dwellings, due to this set back and buffer they will not appear overly dominant in views. Nonetheless, this curved frontage will appear attractive in the street scene and provide a focal point for the area, which at present has limited strong architectural form.
51. Greater emphasis has been placed on high street facing dwellings which provide a focus and are visible from public areas, whilst the western side of the site will be visible only from within Sharpes Corner. Dwelling designs remain consistent throughout the site but the layout of the western side lacks the cohesiveness that is apparent on the eastern element. This is due partially to the need to avoid overlooking, as well as the desire for properties to have an outlook beyond the site. Additionally, the Highway standards dictate parking provision and road widths which often results in areas which appear to be dominated by hard standing. In order to address this issue, shared surfaces are proposed which will soften the appearance of the built form and create a more cohesive development.
52. Overall, the site has a density of 30 dph, although this varies with dwellings on the western and eastern edges of a larger size and more spacious curtilage. This produces a varied scheme which is considered acceptable given the differing housing needs of the area and is an efficient use of the land. As the site has previously been developed it already sits within the surrounding built form. It is noted that much of the surrounding dwellings are single storey, however, this fact alone is not reason to refuse the application. In terms of connectivity, the proposal incorporates footpaths to the High Street and as such, the development would be easily incorporated into the existing settlement. It has a comfortable relationship with adjacent dwellings in Mutford Green and despite the height changes will not appear unduly dominant.
53. Adjacent development incorporates a range of materials with varying brick colour and rendered elevations taking precedent. The materials proposed, namely; buff brick, red clay plain tiles and coloured render reflect locally used materials and enable the development to complement surrounding built form. The use of zinc on projecting front windows provides articulation to the dwelling frontages and offers a more contemporary approach to design. A

condition would be imposed to ensure the materials were appropriate but overall the mix is considered acceptable and appropriate given this context.

54. Dwellings on the current site have been empty for a number of years and are now in a state of disrepair. At present they do not contribute positively to the overall appearance of the area and present issues with regards to anti-social behaviour. As such, their removal and replacement is encouraged. The benefits brought to the character and appearance of the area through new development is considered to weigh in favour of the scheme.

Impact upon residential amenity

55. The protection of residential amenity is a key component of 'good design'. The Framework states that *good planning should contribute positively to making places better for people, as well as ensuring a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings*. Additionally, policy DM2 seeks to ensure new housing developments do not result in the loss of residential amenity.

56. Dwellings on Mutford Green back on to the site. Whilst these are single storey dwellings the application site in this southern area is at a lower level with a retaining wall on the common boundary. An increased landscaping belt has been included on this boundary as well as a reduction to the parking area to ensure residents are not adversely affected by disturbance through vehicle movement. The dwellings have been positioned in order to reduce any impact on these neighbouring dwellings with plots 17, 20 and 1 featuring a single slim secondary bedroom window on the facing elevation and none on plot 13. The landscaped boundary will assist in screening these windows as well as the proposed private amenity space.

57. It is accepted that this development will result in a change to the outlook of some properties, by reason of the increased height of the dwellings. However, due to the orientation of the site in relation to its neighbours, the change in land levels, boundary wall and landscaping it is not considered that occupants would suffer a significant loss of residential amenity.

58. Whilst residential dwellings are also located to the north and east of the site, these are separated by a highway and are considered a sufficient distance to negate any loss of amenity.

Planning obligations

59. An informal reply from the County Council Development Contributions Manager highlights the uncertainty around requesting contributions for this site. On 28th November 2014 the threshold for planning obligations was raised to schemes above 10 dwellings, meaning any development of 10 or below was not required to make any contributions. However, a High Court case in 2015 outlawed this so locally adopted policies took over and once again requests were made below this threshold (in accordance with adopted policy).

60. The Court of Appeal has now allowed a government appeal on this decision which is currently in the process of being considered. As such, Suffolk County Council has advised that they may not seek contributions on this application which is on the cusp of the threshold. At the time of writing a formal response had not been received. Notwithstanding this, the applicant has agreed that 3 of the dwellings will be affordable and is happy in principle with any other CIL

compliant contributions requested by the County Council. A section 106 agreement had been drafted to this effect.

Conclusions

61. The development proposal has been considered against the objectives of the Framework and the government's agenda for growth, which identifies housing development as a key driver.
62. Lakenheath has been identified as a Key Service Centre that can accommodate growth within the Council's Core Strategy. The proposed development is within the housing settlement boundary and adjacent to established residential areas. There are a number of positive attributes which lend support to the scheme, the existing bungalows have been abandoned and as such, fail to contribute positively to the character of the area, therefore, the re-development of the site will result in a much improved appearance to the overall locality. Development of a brownfield site with the increase in housing numbers provides an efficient use of the land and will boost housing stock, in addition to the inclusion of affordable housing. A satisfactory layout has been demonstrated with dwellings respecting local character and appearance and achieving good design as well as ensuring no significant loss of amenity to adjacent residential properties or to local biodiversity interests.
63. It is considered therefore, that the scheme meets the Frameworks definition of sustainable development by fulfilling the economic, social and environmental roles. Economic benefits through housing growth, short term jobs and local spending likely to be generated by future residents. Social benefits through the improvement of the current site to create a high quality environment which meets a housing need and is accessible to local services. Environmental benefits through the use of ecological enhancements, landscaping and sustainable construction.
64. Having regard to the Framework and all other material planning considerations the proposal is considered to comply with the provisions of both national and development plan policy. On this basis, the application is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

65. That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the completion of a S106 agreement to secure 3 on site affordable dwellings as well as any additional CIL compliant contributions requested by the County Council.
66. Following completion of the planning obligation referred to above, the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services be authorised to grant planning permission subject to conditions, including:
 - Time limit
 - Materials to be submitted and approved
 - Accesses from Sharpes Corner to be completed in accordance with plans prior to occupation
 - Surface water drainage details to be submitted and approved
 - New junction with Sharpes Corner to be completed prior to commencement
 - Parking areas to be provided prior to occupation

- Details of cycle storage to be submitted and approved
- Bin storage details to be submitted and approved
- Details of lighting to be submitted and approved
- Land contamination – If found remediation strategy to be submitted
- Development to be carried out in accordance with FRA
- Archaeological assessment to be undertaken
- Archaeological post investigation report to be submitted
- Waste minimisation and recycling strategy to be submitted and approved
- Landscaping details to be submitted and approved
- Bat roost tiles and artificial house martin nests – one to be installed in each dwelling
- Demolition outside of bird nesting season (March – September inclusive)
- Development to be in accordance with approved plans

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online:

<https://planning.westsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=N8R9 PPDKKO00>

Alternatively, hard copies are also available to view at Planning and Regulatory Services, District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY