
MAIN CASE

Reference No: 14/01331/OUT

Proposal: The erection of five new two storey dwellings with shared access driveway and access from Barton Close.

Site Address: Land South of 175 to 189 Main Street, Witchford, Cambridgeshire

Applicant: SGS Associates Ltd

Case Officer: Melissa Reynolds (Senior Planner - North Ely)

Ward: Haddenham

Ward Councillors: Councillor Ian Allen
Councillor Gareth Wilson
Councillor Pauline Wilson

Date Received: 1 December 2014 **Expiry Date:** 26 January 2015
Report Number [P208]

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Members are requested to **REFUSE** this application subject to the planning reasons listed below.

Reason 1

The proposed development equates to a density of 13 dwellings per hectare. Policy H2 of the East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2009 and policy HOU2 of the Draft Local Plan (pre-submission version), as modified, require new residential development to be of an appropriate density, making efficient use of land. The proposed development would fail to make efficient use of land and therefore provide a housing mix that would meet the needs of the community.

This failure to make the best use of the land, also results in a frustration of the requirement to provide affordable housing, which would normally be forthcoming on a development site of this size, if an appropriate density were applied. The development is therefore also contrary to the aim of achieving 'sustainable development' as set out in paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, by virtue of its failure to provide the housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF APPLICATION**

- 2.1 The full planning application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via East Cambridgeshire District Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <http://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/>. Alternatively a paper copy is available to view at the East Cambridgeshire District Council offices, in the application file.
- 2.2 This outline planning application seeks approval for the principle of five market dwellings on the site. All matters are to be reserved, however it is anticipated that access from the public highway would be via Barton Close, to the west of the site. A plan showing an indicative layout has been submitted with the application.

3.0 **PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1	88/01473/OUT	PROVISION OF ACCESS AND NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT	Approved	26.01.1989
	12/01137/FUM	CONSTRUCTION OF 16 NEW DWELLINGS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCLUDING NEW ACCESS ROAD	Pending (approval recommended)	-

4.0 **THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT**

- 4.1 The site is an area of unused land, largely overgrown with scrub and dense bramble. It is situated between residential development in Barton Close to the west and Ward Way to the east. To the north is a grassed access leading to the rear gardens of properties in Main Street, with open land under agricultural cultivation to the south. It lies within the development envelope of Witchford. It measures some 67 metres x 61 metres and amounts to approximately 0.38ha in area.

5.0 **RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES**

- 5.1 Responses were received from the following consultees:

- Cambridgeshire Archaeology
- Local Highways Authority
- Environmental Health
- Waste Strategy (ECDC)
- Ward Councillors
- Parish

These are summarised below. The full responses are available on the Council's website.

- 5.2 **Environment Agency** – It has reviewed the application and considers its response to the previous planning application (12/01137/FUM) at this site to still be pertinent.

In relation to the earlier application (12/01137/FUM) it had commented:

Flood risk – The site falls within flood zone 1 (low risk). The main flood risk issue to consider is the management of surface water run-off. Drainage from new development must not increase flood risk either on-site or elsewhere. It strongly encourages a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) approach to achieve these objectives. To prevent off-site flooding, the developed rate of run-off into a watercourse, or other receiving water body, should be no greater than the existing rate of run-off for the same event. Volumes of run-off should also be reduced wherever possible using infiltration and attenuation techniques.

Foul water drainage – An acceptable method of foul drainage disposal would be connection to the foul sewer. The sewerage undertaker should be consulted regarding the availability of capacity in the foul water sewer. If there is not capacity in the sewer then it must be re-consulted with alternative methods of disposal.

Surface water drainage – Only clean, uncontaminated surface water should be discharged to any soakaway, watercourse or surface water sewer. The implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) should be carefully considered, and this approach is encouraged.

Ecology – The proposed site is isolated to some degree and appears to be of limited ecological value. It recommended that Natural England be consulted.

Pollution Control – Surface water from roads and impermeable vehicle parking areas should be discharged via trapped gullies. All surface water from roofs should be piped direct to an approved surface water system using sealed downpipes. Open gullies should not be used. Site operators should ensure that there is no possibility of contaminated water entering and polluting surface or underground waters.

- 5.3 **Local Highways Authority** – *'If the carriageway were widened to 6 metres between kerbs, a half-metre maintenance strip provided and a full-sized turning head provided (and there would appear to be sufficient space available) the Highway Authority would seek adoption of the access way.*

In its current form the access way would not be suitable for adoption and the planning Authority should consider the measures to be put in place for the future maintenance of the shared area.

Otherwise the proposal should have no significant impact on the public highway, should it gain the benefit of planning permission, subject to the incorporation of the conditions and informatives requested into any permission that the Planning Authority is minded to grant in regard to this application.'

- 5.4 **Environmental Health** – Due to the location it would advise planning conditions restricting hours of construction and deliveries during the construction phase; no burning of waste during clearance or construction phases of development; and a contaminated land assessment.

5.5 **Waste Strategy (ECDC)** – will not enter private property to collect waste or recycling, therefore it would be the responsibility of occupiers to take any sacks / bins to the boundary with the public highway on collection day. The 90 degree reversing circle for a waste freighter is approx. 10 metres. This should be taken into account when deciding the road layout. Lastly, the Council can legally charge for the provision of waste receptacles – each property requires two bins at £43 per property currently.

5.6 **Historic Environment Team - Cambridgeshire County Council** – The proposed site is located to the south west of the historic core of Witchford. To the east is a large double ditched enclosure of possible Iron Age date. While to the north-west are Prehistoric or Roman cropmarked sites of settlements with associated fields systems and driveways. The archaeological character of the area and its proximity to the fen edge suggest that archaeological remains may be present within the bounds of the application site.

It would recommend that the same archaeological standard condition is placed on the development as was for prior application (12/01137/FUM) and it does not object to development from proceeding in this location provided that the site is subject to a programme of archaeological investigation to secure the preservation of the archaeological interest of the area.

5.7 **Ward Councillors** – No comments received.

5.8 **Parish** – *‘Witchford Parish Council does not object to this application but is aware that this area has been subject to problems with flooding and draws the Planning Authority’s attention to the need for drainage to be dealt with adequately in the development.’*

5.9 **Anglian Water Services Ltd** – At the time of writing no reply had been received.

5.10 **Representations** – three comments on the application have been received. Two objections have been received from occupiers at 15 Barton Close and 32 Ward Way; and a one neither objecting nor supporting the application from 177 Main Street. Full copies of all representation can be found on the Council’s website. These are summarised below:

- Loss of privacy to 177 Main Street; the boundary fence should be at least 6 ft high to provide privacy, 15 Barton Close and 32 Ward Way.
- Overlooking of 32 Ward Way.
- Overbearing impact on 32 Ward Way.
- Overshadowing of 32 Ward Way.
- Retention of unimpeded access to the rear of Main Street during construction is required.
- How the surface water issue be managed.
- How will the drainage system cope as there is a 4” drain (from no. 15) to a 6” drain then into the 8” Main Street main sewer.
- If cars are parked on both sides of the road outside nos. 13 and 15 Barton Close, how a car or emergency vehicles be able to access the site?

5.11 An email in support of the proposal was received from the applicant (summarised below), accompanied by a Marketing Appraisal (see Appendix for full report) dated 19th February 2015.

- The application addresses concerns raised to the previous application in relation to: the mains sewerage system, ground conditions and risk of surface water flooding and road traffic, given the number of houses proposed.
- There is a definite shortage of individually designed larger 4 and 5 bed dwellings on the market for sale with enough space for people to be able to work from home. As the demand is high and availability is low for people, the housing market and economy is less buoyant, the housing chain is not letting new starter homes become available, because the larger houses are not available for families who have outgrown their current houses.
- To address concerns about drainage, all dwellings will be installed with rainwater harvesting systems, reducing the impact on the sewerage infrastructure.
- The scheme will result in less vehicle movements than the previous application, reducing disruption within Barton Close to the existing residents.
- Smaller density, higher quality build enhances the area, meets the current demand for larger dwellings and is also in keeping with the detached 2 storey properties which currently make up Barton Close.
- The existing residential area of Barton Close has a mixture of dwellings, the ratio per Ha is below current density targets. The scheme of individual houses will cause minimal impact to all neighbouring properties.

5.12 A letter from the agent, dated 20th February 2015 (summarised), was received in support of the proposal:

- The site is located in the village of Witchford, a 'Limited Service Centre' within Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy 2009, where a small amount of new development will be focussed in order to support rural sustainability as these are mid-sized villages, which have limited facilities and limited access to public transport systems.
- The applicant, SGS Associates, specialises in developing sites which provide four and five bedroom executive homes.
- Older and more affluent house buyers further up the 'housing ladder' should not be discriminated against by the policy to only provide high density developments.
- The District Council's Core Strategy Policy H2 – Density, paragraph 3.2.2.2 states 'The precise density of a scheme will need to be determined having regard to a site's immediate context, on-site constraints, the type of development proposed and the level of transport accessibility...low densities may be appropriate...in villages, in areas with an open character or on the edge of settlements. In assessing what density is appropriate, priority will be given to ensuring that making use of land does not result in development that detracts from the character of the area.'

- Established housing on three sides of the site. A larger development, at density of 30 houses per hectare, would result in a cramped housing layout. The access position from Barton Close is established, which limits the layout options and would present challenges for designing dwellings which do not overlook existing site neighbouring properties, particularly on Ward Way.
- This site falls within the category of sites described within H2 3.2.2.2, where a lower density housing scheme on village sites (and also in this case on the edge of the settlement) may be appropriate to ensure that making use of the land does not result in bad design, or detract from the character of the area and the private amenity of established homeowners on neighbouring sites.

6.0 The Planning Policy Context

6.1 East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2009

CS1	Spatial Strategy
CS2	Housing
CS6	Environment
CS7	Infrastructure
CS8	Access
H1	Housing Mix and Type
H2	Density
H3	Affordable housing
S4	Developer contribution
S6	Transport impact
S7	Parking provision
EN1	Landscape and settlement character
EN2	Design
EN3	Sustainable construction and energy efficiency
EN4	Renewable energy
EN6	Biodiversity and geology
EN7	Flood risk

6.2 East Cambridgeshire Draft Local Plan Pre-submission version (as amended June 2014)

GROWTH 2	Locational strategy
GROWTH 3	Infrastructure requirements
GROWTH 5	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
HOU 1	Housing mix
HOU 2	Housing density
HOU 3	Affordable housing provision
ENV 1	Landscape and settlement character
ENV 2	Design
ENV 4	Energy efficiency and renewable energy in construction
ENV 7	Biodiversity and geology
ENV 8	Flood risk
COM 8	Parking provision

6.3 Supplementary Planning Documents

Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations
Design Guide

6.4 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- 3 Supporting a prosperous rural economy
- 4 Promoting sustainable transport
- 6 Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- 7 Requiring good design
- 8 Promoting healthy communities
- 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

6.5 Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.6 In November 2014 the Government introduced a threshold for the provision of affordable housing and tariff style planning obligations. This was included in both a Ministerial Statement and an amendment to the online Planning Practice Guidance. It should be regarded as planning policy as it was included in a Ministerial Statement. The guidance states:

'There are specific circumstances where contributions for affordable housing and tariff style planning obligations (section 106 planning obligations) should not be sought from small scale and self-build development.

- *contributions should not be sought from developments of 10-units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1000sqm*
- *in designated rural areas, local planning authorities may choose to apply a lower threshold of 5-units or less. No affordable housing or tariff-style contributions should then be sought from these developments. In addition, in a rural area where the lower 5-unit or less threshold is applied, affordable housing and tariff style contributions should be sought from developments of between 6 and 10-units in the form of cash payments which are commuted until after completion of units within the development. This applies to rural areas described under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, which includes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*
- *affordable housing and tariff-style contributions should not be sought from any development consisting only of the construction of a residential annex or extension to an existing home'*

(Paragraph: 012, National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), Revision date: 28.11.2014.)

6.7 None of the District falls within the definition of a 'rural area' and due to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure levy (CIL) tariff style contributions are not sought on development of 10 units or less.

7.0 PLANNING COMMENTS

7.1 The main issues arising from this proposal relate to the principle of development, housing provision, landscape, biodiversity, floodrisk, drainage, pollution and highways. A number of concerns have been raised during consultation that relate to reserved matters details and as such are not material considerations in the determination of this outline application.

Principle of Development

7.2 The site lies within Witchford's development envelope, which is designated a 'Limited Service Centre' in the Core Strategy. Policy CS2 permits development in such settlements for up to 9 dwellings provided there is no adverse effect on the scale and character of the area and all other planning considerations are satisfied. In the emerging Local Plan, Witchford is considered suitable for infill development. This is not defined, however, similar to policy CS2, Policy GROWTH 2 permits housing within development envelopes provided there is no significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area and all other material considerations have been met. Comments following address these matters.

7.3 A development of five dwellings would be required to contribute towards the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

7.4 All development is expected to improve economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The policies of the Local Plan help to establish this.

7.5 This is an outline application with all matters reserved. Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are not for determination at this stage. Consequently, these matters are not addressed within this report, as they are not material planning considerations.

Housing

7.6 The proposal does not specify the mix of house sizes or type, although the applicant and his agent suggest five 4/5 bedroom houses are intended. In terms of the requirements of policy HOU 1, as the proposal is for open market housing and less than ten dwellings are proposed, it would normally be expected that the developer would propose an appropriate mix at reserved matters stage and for this to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). A planning condition could secure this requirement.

7.7 Policies H2 and HOU2 encourage densities that are appropriate to the site. The gross housing density for this development is 13 dwellings per hectare (dph). Adjoining residential areas vary in density from approximately 13dph (Main Street), 21dph (Barton Close) and 31dph (Ward Close). The area is characterised by low-medium density development ranging in period from post-war to 1960s to 2000s, of varying styles and sizes. Main Street and Barton Close were developed prior to the introduction in planning of the requirement to make best use of land. This is a material change in assessing the proposal. There are no known biodiversity or

heritage assets that would limit the density of development. The site is not constrained by a need to accommodate other uses such as open space. Witchford is well served by public transport with regular services on Route 9 provided by Stagecoach linking Witchford to Chatteris, Littleport, Sutton, Ely, Waterbeach and Cambridge. Lastly, in terms of residential amenity for existing and future occupiers, the previous scheme for 16 dwellings demonstrates that an acceptable layout can be designed, with minimum back-to-back distances of 20 metres easily achieved. For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal fails to make best use of land, contrary to policy.

- 7.8 No other considerations have been raised which would justify a density of development this low, i.e. none of the consultees have raised concerns that could not be addressed by planning condition in relation to the mains sewerage system, ground conditions and risk of surface water flooding and road traffic. 16 dwellings on this site have recently been found to be acceptable in planning terms. Further, Ward Close, also on the edge of the village, achieved 31 dph.
- 7.9 The applicant and his agent have put forward the suggestion that the business model of the applicant is to provide larger homes. This is not a material planning consideration.
- 7.10 No evidence has been provided that would suggest a greywater harvesting scheme would be an abnormal cost to the developer or take up land, preventing higher numbers from being achieved on this site.
- 7.11 The applicant and his agent, supported by a marketing assessment from a local estate agent, have suggested that the size of units proposed would facilitate high levels of working from home. Officers have considered this point and sought evidence of such a need:
- Official Labour Market Statistics, produced by the Office for National Statistics, based upon the 2011 Census have identified 18.3% of the working population within the district as working from home.
 - Within the area covering Witchford itself (based on middle super output area (MSOA)) 27.8% of those in employment work from home. This is noticeably higher than the District average.
 - No information is available, relating to the Ward, to suggest there is a link between house size and working from home.
 - The issue of working from home was only raised in one representation to the Local Plan. This related to North Ely, supporting the approach proposed for it in terms of encouraging working from home. In relation to a specific need for this type of provision within Witchford, no representations were received.
 - The Inspector appointed to examine the Local Plan did not raise working from home as an issue that he was concerned about when he considered housing and employment policies at the Hearings in January 2014.

In light of the absence of compelling information in support of there being a clear housing need relating to working from need, this is also not considered to be a justification for failing to make best use of land.

- 7.12 The application does not include the provision of affordable housing.
- 7.13 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the relevant part of the development plan is the East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy. Policy H3, in the Core Strategy, includes a threshold of 3 dwellings; however, this threshold has not been applied since the submission of the draft Local Plan with its higher threshold of 5 dwellings contained within Policy HOU3. In effect by doing this, the Council has been treating policy H3 as being out of date. Therefore regard has to be had to the other material planning considerations.
- 7.14 Being policy, the revised threshold is a material planning consideration. In addition, the draft Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and is also a material planning consideration and the weight that should be given to both of these material considerations needs to be considered. The NPPF, in paragraph 216, provides guidance on the weight to be attached to emerging plans stating:
- 'From the day of publication, decision –takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:*
- *The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
 - *The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
 - *The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the framework, the greater the weight that may be given.'*
- 7.15 It was anticipated that the Local Plan Inspector's report would have been received by now and this matter addressed by him. Unfortunately the receipt of the Inspector's report has been delayed.
- 7.16 A number of Local Authorities have questioned the new threshold and have chosen not to apply it. Many seem to be particularly concerned about the loss of the tariff style contributions. Also a legal challenge has been launched against the Government jointly by two Councils. It has, therefore, been very difficult to make a recommendation regarding whether or not this Council should seek a S106 contribution for affordable housing. However, it would be unreasonable to delay determination of applications pending receipt of the Inspector's report and the results of the legal challenge. As the local plan has not been adopted and is in conflict with the recent Ministerial Statement it is considered by Officers that more weight should be given to the Ministerial Statement than the emerging Local Plan. The weight to be given to material considerations is a matter for the decision maker.
- 7.17 Members should be aware, in reaching their decision, that this is an interim officer view and that it could change following the receipt of the Inspector's report and/or the outcome of the judicial review.

- 7.18 This is an outline application with all matters reserved for 5 dwellings in total, therefore, the floorspace of the development is unknown. However, under the new threshold it is only when floorspace does not exceed 1,000 square metres that affordable housing is not to be provided. This was explained to the agent. His views were sought regarding whether the developer would be willing to see the development restricted to a floorspace of less than 1,000 square metres (by condition) or whether affordable housing would be proposed. A condition would be accepted by the applicant as, based on anticipated floor spaces for five dwellings, affordable housing would not be provided on site by the developer. It should be noted that if more dwellings were provided, as required by policies H2 and HOU2, it is likely that affordable housing would be required.

Landscape

- 7.19 Witchford is located in the Fenland landscape character area (Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, 1991). It is on higher ground, where characteristically there is more tree cover, retained hedgerows and often extensive areas of grassland.

Currently from within the site there are views looking southwards, across Valley Bottom (The Pools), towards White Cross Hill, between Stretham and Wilburton.

The village edge is marked by hedgerows to field boundaries. The indicative plan suggests that the site would have sufficient space to ensure that the settlement boundary were marked appropriately, i.e. trees and hedgerow. In views from public vantage points, e.g. the footpath at Grunty Fen, this would help to alleviate the visual impact of the development and provide a soft edge to the village. This could be dealt with in detail at the reserved matters stage as part of a landscaping scheme. This could ensure that the loss of a green break on the edge of the village were mitigated, and the objectives of Policy ENV1 and the Design Guide SPD met.

Biodiversity

- 7.20 The Environment Agency has advised that a habitat survey be carried out between March and September. Natural England has standing advice to assist local authorities in assessing planning applications. The site is not in or near a protected site, such as SSSIs.
- 7.21 An Ecological Survey, submitted with the earlier application, highlighted that the ecological value of the site is low. However, there was a need for amphibian pond assessments to be carried out of nearby water bodies in order to determine whether the survey area is used as a terrestrial site for the specially protected great crested newt. Local representations had also indicated that bats had been seen in the area. In accordance with Natural England's standing advice, enhancement measures should be carried out in order to improve the biodiversity and habitats within the site, which could be attached by condition. No additional survey findings have been submitted with this application.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.22 The Environment Agency has not raised concerns in relation to flood risk. Its standing advice is to be applied, which advises that surface water from new development should not increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere. The use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) is strongly encouraged. In addition, the run-off rate should be no greater than existing. These are matters that could be dealt with by way of planning conditions.
- 7.23 The IDB had confirmed that the proposed rate of run off for surface water was acceptable, however, further details were required and confirmation of management of the on-site and off-site surface water systems.
- 7.24 Anglian Water had confirmed that there was capacity available for the development of 16 dwellings on this site.
- 7.25 The previous applicants had carried out a drainage survey of the area and submitted a drainage strategy, whereby it was proposed to discharge the surface water from both Barton Close and the application site into this ditch approximately 100m to the south of the application site and connect to the main sewer. To avoid the need to do this, which would involve land not within the applicant's control, greywater harvesting is proposed.
- 7.26 It is considered that flooding and surface water drainage could be addressed and as such the proposal accords with the NPPF, and polices EN7 and ENV8, provided planning conditions were added requiring a scheme for management of surface water drainage in accordance with SuDS principles. The developer would be expected to reference the Cambridgeshire SuDS Design and Adoption Handbook.
- 7.27 Anglian Water advised, in relation to the previous application, that the sewerage system has available capacity for the foul flows expected from the development of 16 dwellings. There had been no reportable instances of flooding that could be attributed to capacity limitations in the public foul sewerage system. There had been reports of blockages in the sewer which is an operational issue, resolved by Anglian Water when reported. In light of this, a condition to secure details of the foul drainage system could address this matter.

Pollution

- 7.28 The NPPF and polices EN8 and ENV9 require all new development, where there is a risk of contamination, to assess the extent and risk of any pollution. To ensure that the development proposals accord with these requirements, planning conditions would be to secure any mitigation, if needed. The Environmental Health Technical Officer has recommended planning suitable conditions.

Archaeology

- 7.29 The comments of the Historic Environment Team are noted, Policies EN5 and ENV 14 require developments that may affect sites of potential archaeological interest to carry out an assessment. A planning condition would be required.

Highways

- 7.30 The Local Highway Authority has not raised concerns about the ability to access to the site. It is noted that it would be possible to achieve an adoptable highway off Barton Close. The issues raised by it in relation the details of access arrangements could be addressed at reserved matters stage.

Residential Amenity

- 7.31 Neighbour representations received raised residential amenity as a concern. As stated previously, a scheme for residential development of sixteen dwellings, on this site, has been achieved the design principles set out in the Council's Design Guide SPD. The site is large enough to accommodate five dwellings while respecting residential amenity. The detailed relationship would be for consideration at reserved matters stage.

Conclusions

- 7.32 The application is contrary to Policies H2 and HOU2, which encourage densities that are appropriate to a site. The gross housing density for this development is 13 dwellings per hectare (dph). Density in the area is low-medium but it is considered that, in the context of Ward Way and the existence of acceptable proposals for a larger scheme of 16 dwellings on the site, that this density would not make best use of land. The applicant and agent have put forward counter views that are not considered to be sufficient to outweigh adopted and emerging planning policy.
- 7.33 This failure to make best use of land would stifle the opportunity to provide a mix of housing types and sizes and to deliver affordable housing on this site, contrary to the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Plan policy. This seeks to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes.
- 7.34 The application is therefore recommended for refusal for the reasons set out at the start of this report. All other matters could be addressed by way of planning conditions or through details required to be submitted at reserved matters stage and so do not form reasons for refusals in the recommendation.

8.0 APPENDIX

- 8.1 Appendix 1 Marketing Assessment, submitted by applicant, dated 19th February 2015.

Background Documents

Location

Contact Officer(s)

Planning file refs.:
[14/01331/OUT](#)
[12/01137/FUM](#)
88/01473/OUT

Room No. 011
The Grange
Ely

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[East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy](#)

[2009](#)

East Cambridgeshire Draft Local
Plan Pre-submission version (as
amended June 2014)

[Developer Contributions and
Planning Obligations SPD](#)

[Design Guide SPD](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework](#)

[Technical Guide to the National
Planning Policy Framework](#)

[National Planning Practice Guidance](#)



**Marketing Appraisal
Proposed Development at Barton Close / Rear of
175 - 189 Main Street, Witchford**

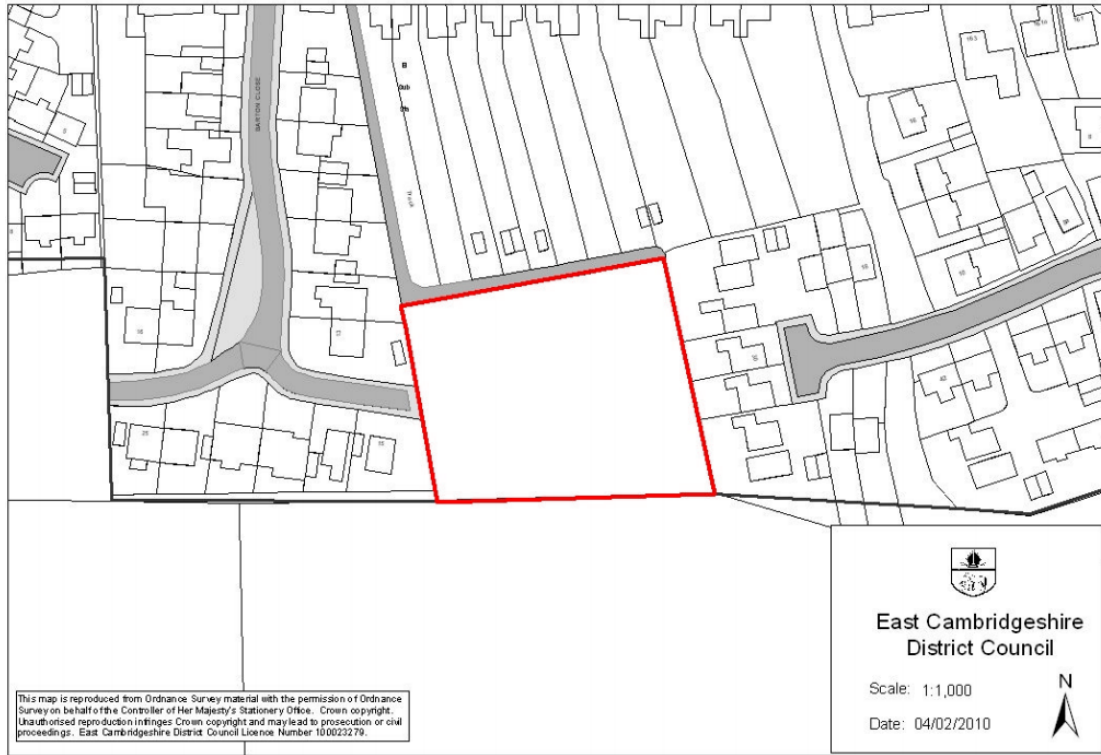
For

**S. Glover
SGS Associates**

19 February 2015

The Location

The site is situated at the rear of 175-189 Main Street and accessed through Barton Close.



The Village

Witchford is a thriving village about two miles west of Ely in Cambridgeshire. The community of Witchford has a wide range of facilities - pre, primary and secondary schools, churches, a garage, post office, Chinese takeaway, a pub, social club and a veterinary surgery.

The last development within the village that contained any number of 4 bedroom detached homes was developed by Wilcon Homes in 2002 - 2004 and these averaged around 1400 sq ft / 130m² at their largest. JCG developed a number of larger homes at about 2500 sq ft / 232m² in the Main Street but this was in the late 1990's.

Market Overview

Demand for smaller 4 bedroom detached homes on developments has been focused in larger groups within the A10 bypass over the last few years. There is little scope for more substantial detached homes in any number within Ely as the land is either not available or simple development economics means high density development is the only way forward,

Our experience has shown that less dense development of detached housing in close by villages satisfies demand for larger detached homes on larger plots. These properties also provide an 'upgrade' route for the owners of the 3/4 bedroom homes on the larger local residential estates.

During 2012 we marketed 5 detached homes at around 2700 sq ft/250 m2 in Sutton at prices around £450 - £500,000. Demand was strong and the homes sold rapidly on this low-density site.

Demand for smaller 2 – 3 bedroom homes here in Witchford is likely to be mainly from 'Buy to Let' investors as first time buyers are finding it difficult to access the appropriate funding and renting is more of an option.

Rightmove statistics show slightly more searches (1,138 more) for 4 plus bedroom homes than 2 plus bedroom property but, as stated, the 2 bedroom properties are currently more in demand from investors than first time buyers.

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Demand Report for Ely at 7AM, Thursday, 19 Feb, 2015

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Maximum Price:	£550,000
Total Searches :	14705

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Minimum Bedrooms:	2 or more
Minimum Price:	£175,000
Maximum Price:	£200,000
Total Searches :	13567

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The approach to the development area is through predominantly detached bungalows with a higher number of over 55's than any other age group. Traffic levels to reach the site would tend to favour lower density development in order to keep disturbance and road activity to a minimum.

The provision of larger homes occupied by members of higher income groups are more likely to provide the local micro-economy with much needed revenue to keep the village small businesses viable and sustainable. It is a policy of the Village Vision for Witchford to resist the loss of community facilities.

From the Village Vision:

<i>Witchford</i>	
<i>Population¹</i>	2,330
<i>Dwellings²</i>	990
<i>New dwellings built 2001-2011 (net)</i>	80
<i>Estimated new dwellings 2012-2031</i>	
<i>Employment³</i>	37% work from home, 52% travel up to 20km to work, 11% travel over 20km to work
<i>Existing public transport services</i>	Regular services to Ely and Cambridge (Monday-Saturday) (as at June 2012)

¹ Population for Witchford parish (mid-2010), Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group

² Dwellings in Witchford parish (mid-2010), Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group

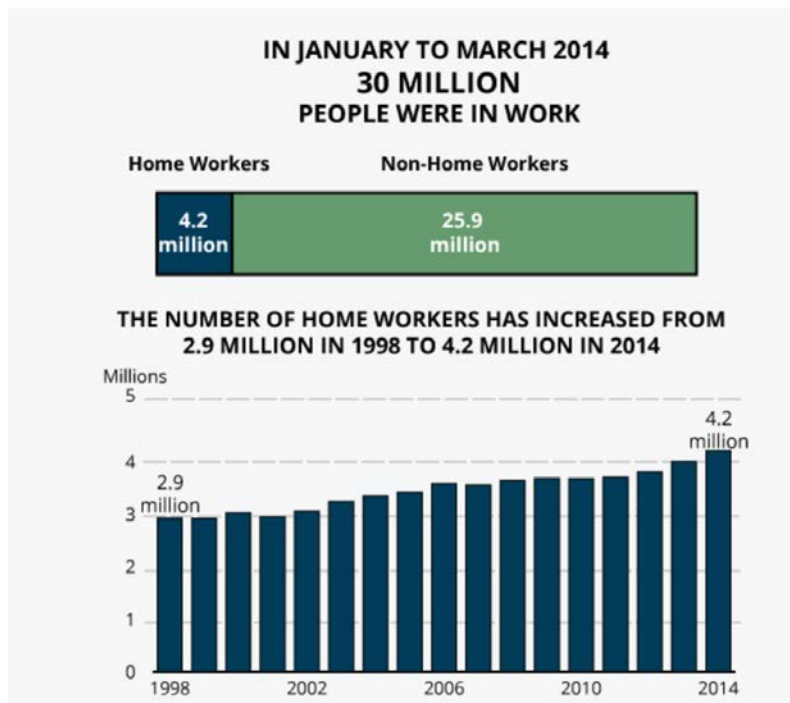
³ Distance travelled to work, East Cambridgeshire UV80 Haddenham ward (covering Haddenham, Aldreth, Wentworth, Witchford), Census 2001

Quite a large proportion of the existing population of Witchford works from home - 37% as stated in the Vision document.

The ONS states there were 4.2 million home workers in January-March 2014, or 13.9% of those in work. This was the highest rate of home working since comparable records began in 1998.

Of these home workers, around 1.5 million (or 5% of those in work) worked within their home or its grounds, while the remaining 2.7 million people (8.9% of those in work) used their home as a base but worked in different places.

The number of home workers has grown by 1.3 million since 1998, at which time there had been just 2.9 million. However over the same period the number of people in work has also been rising. The percentage of those in work who work from home (also known as the home working rate) increased from 11.1% in 1998 to stand at a rate of 13.9% in January to March 2014 which is the highest than at any point in the past decade and a half.



Source: Office for National Statistics

These statistics would tend to suggest that the provision of larger homes allowing more scope for home workers, given that more than double the national number of these people reside in Witchford.

Conclusion

Given the foregoing we recommend that the site be developed with a maximum of 5 detached homes with provision for significant office space within the properties in order to maximise the gross development value and saleability.

David M Clark MARLA FNAEA
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