
MAIN CASE

Reference No: 16/00133/OUT

Proposal: Outline application for 4 market dwellings

Site Address: Land Adjacent Mount Pleasant Farm 66 Main Street
Pymoor Cambridgeshire CB6 2DY

Applicant: Mr & Mrs BL & GH Taylor

Case Officer: Barbara Greengrass, Senior Planning Officer

Parish: Little Downham

Ward: Downham Villages
Ward Councillor/s: Councillor Anna Bailey
Councillor Mike Bradley

Date Received: 3 February 2016 **Expiry Date:** 13 May 2016

[Q259]

1.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 Members are requested to REFUSE the application for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposal by virtue of its scale and location would amount to a visually intrusive form of development in this countryside location, such that it would cause significant demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the countryside and the setting of Pymoor village. As such it is contrary to Policies ENV 1 and ENV 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and paragraphs 14, 17 and 56-68 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2 The proposed development would be sited within Flood Zone 3 as identified by the Environment Agency, wherein the Sequential Test must be applied for more vulnerable uses. The proposal fails to meet the Sequential Test as there are reasonably available sites elsewhere with a lower probability of flooding contrary to Policy ENV 8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the provisions of the PPG on Flooding and Coastal Change and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF APPLICATION**

2.1 This application is in outline with all matters reserved for the erection of four dwellings. The site is 1590 sq metres in size and the indicative plan submitted shows provision of four plots measuring approximately 10.5 metres by 60 metres with a single shared access point to the north from an existing farm track entrance.

The application is accompanied by a design and access statement and a Flood Risk Assessment as the site is located within Flood Zone 3.

2.2 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.**

2.3 The application has been called to Planning Committee by Cllr Anna Bailey.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

4.1 The site is part of a larger field currently in use for agriculture and is very open with no boundary hedging. An active farm lies further south of the site and residential development lies to the north. Opposite and to the rear is open agricultural land. The site lies just outside the settlement boundary of Pymoor, separated by the settlement boundary by an existing farm track.

5.0 RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES

5.1 Responses were received from the following consultees and these are summarised below. The full responses are available on the Council's web site.

Local Highways Authority - No objection

Lead Local Flood Authority - No comments

Environmental Health – recommend contaminated land conditions requiring a survey and notification of any unsuspected contamination found.

The Ely Group Of Internal Drainage Board – No objection subject to clarification on the method of surface water drainage.

Environment Agency – The National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Planning Authorities to steer new development to areas at the lowest probability of flooding by applying a flood risk Sequential Test. If this is met then the Exception Test can be applied. Your Authority must assess whether the sustainability benefits of the development outweigh flood risk. This site is located on the edge of the Tidal Hazard Mapping extent for the 0.5% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) event, including an allowance for climate change. It is worth noting that no breach has been modelled by the Environment Agency or by the Flood Risk Assessor at Pymoor so there is some uncertainty over whether the site would be affected by such a breach. The FRA has proposed raising the floor levels 500mm above the existing ground levels and to include resilience measures within the ground floor of all the properties.

The indicated design of the properties, a two storey property with bedrooms on the first floor, will mean that safe refuge would be available if a breach were to occur and the site affected.

We recommend the following condition be appended to any approvals given.

The water drainage, we recommend development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to dispose of foul drainage has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Natural England – No comments

Parish – recommend refusal as the proposal is outside the settlement boundary and would set a precedent for other landowners to apply for development on agricultural land in the Parish.

Ward Councillors – Cllr Anna Bailey made the following comments;

"I note the objection of Little Downham Parish Council to development in this location, due to it being outside the development envelope, although this in itself cannot hold as a reason for refusal at the present time. I also note the concern of officers that the site is in Flood Zone 3. Much of Pymoor and the outlying settlements are in Flood Zone 3. Indeed, PYM 1 which is an allocated site in the Local Plan is in Flood Zone 3. The location being in Flood Zone 3 is not a reason in itself for refusal. To date, the Environment Agency has not commented; the Drainage Board has responded and does not object.

I am concerned about the impact of the proposal on the open countryside in this location, which is part of a large open field on the edge of the settlement of Pymoor. However, countering this is the fact that the proposal is for linear development, continuing the building line along Main Street, and there is already another residential building (a bungalow at Mount Pleasant Farm) further up Main Street in the direction of Little Downham. I also recognise the need for new homes; for smaller settlements like Pymoor to become sustainable they need to be allowed to develop.

Apart from the objection from the Parish Council, no other objections have been received and, despite my reservations about the effect on the character of the edge of the settlement of Pymoor I do feel this application is finely balanced. I therefore believe it would benefit from the wider view of the Planning Committee."

5.2 A site notice was posted and 7 neighbouring properties were notified and no responses have been received.

6.0 The Planning Policy Context

6.1 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015

GROWTH 2	Locational strategy
GROWTH 3	Infrastructure requirements

GROWTH 5	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
ENV 1	Landscape and settlement character
ENV 2	Design
ENV 8	Flood risk
ENV 9	Pollution
COM 7	Transport impact
COM 8	Parking provision

6.2 Supplementary Planning Documents

Design Guide
Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations

6.3 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- 6 Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- 7 Requiring good design
- 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Planning Practice Guidance on Flooding and Coastal Change

7.0 PLANNING COMMENTS

The main issues to be considered in determining this application are;

- the principle of development
- the visual impact on the character and appearance of the area
- flood risk
- highway safety
- residential amenity

7.1 Principle of Development

The application site lies outside of the defined development boundary. The development of the site for housing would therefore conflict with Policy GROWTH 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan which seeks to focus new housing development within defined settlement boundaries. However as the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land Policy GROWTH 2 cannot be considered up to date in so far as it relates to the supply of housing land. In this situation, the presumption in favour of development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) means that permission for development should be granted unless any adverse impacts of so doing would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, for example, where there are groups of smaller settlements development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Isolated new

homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances. There are other dwellings close to this site and it immediately adjoins the settlement boundary and in this sense the proposal would not be isolated. Although Pymoor village has a limited range of services and facilities to provide for everyday needs it is not far from the village of Little Downham which has a wider range of services and facilities. In this regard it is considered that the two settlements support the vitality of the rural community of Little Downham. The proposal would make a positive, albeit modest, contribution towards the provision of housing in the area and its construction would provide some short term economic benefits. With regard to availability and deliverability, the site is within the applicants ownership and available now, making the development deliverable within 5 years to meet the housing shortfall. The proposal therefore supports the economic dimension to sustainable development which weighs in favour of the proposal.

7.2 Visual impact

In terms of the visual impact on the character and appearance of the area, the environmental role of sustainable development seeks to in part, contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. Consideration of a developments impact on the character and appearance of the area within which it is situated is therefore integral to the environmental dimension of sustainable development, as is design.

In addition Policy ENV 1 seeks to protect landscape and settlement character and in particular, respect views into and out of settlements. These aims are reiterated in paragraph 17 of the NPPF which seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The site forms part of a sizeable field of open agricultural land immediately to the south of the settlement boundary of Pymoor and is very prominent when approaching the village from the south. The site therefore makes a valuable contribution to the open countryside and this openness would be lost by the provision of four substantial detached dwellings.

Currently, due to the appearance of the site, its undeveloped nature and its relationship with the surrounding countryside, it has a predominantly rural character that makes a positive contribution to the area. Although there are dwellings to the north they presently provide a natural physical end to the settlement and the continuation of built form to the south would introduce urban sprawl and an urbanising impact to the south of the village, which would cause significant and demonstrable harm to the character of the countryside and the village setting. The applicant argues that this would be an extension which reflects the existing built form to the north. However the proposal would result in an incursion of development into open countryside, which would significantly change its rural character and appearance. This harm weighs against the proposal to the extent that it would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of new housing provision, contrary to Policies GROWTH2, ENV 1 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

The site has been compared to the allocated site to the north of the village. However no sites are directly comparable in terms of visual impact and each site should be considered on its individual merits. The allocated site is enclosed with

defensible boundaries and is partly developed. The adopted Local Plan accepts that Pymoor can accommodate limited development on infill sites and via the existing housing allocation to ensure the settlement is not harmed by urban sprawl.

7.3 Flood risk

In addition to the harm set out above significant weight should be given to the fact that the site lies within Flood Zone 3 as identified within the Environment Agency Flood Zone Maps. Within such areas the NPPF makes it clear in paragraph 14 that even if the development plan is out of date due to the lack of a 5 year housing land supply, the harm from developing sites at risk from flooding should not be outweighed as specific policies in the Framework indicate development in such areas should be restricted. As these areas are vulnerable to flooding, the proposal needs to be assessed against Policy ENV 8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, the Planning practice Guidance on Flooding and Coastal Change and paragraphs 100-104 of the NPPF.

Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. As the development is considered to be a more vulnerable use and within Flood Zone 3, The Sequential Test must be applied to steer new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. It is considered that the test is not met because other land exists in and around Pymoor and Little Downham, which is within the same parish, which is not within Flood Zone 3 and development is not necessary on this particular site. This other available land includes the housing allocation in Little Downham.

The proposal is therefore contrary to local and national policy in this regard as set out above and should be refused. Although the Environment Agency have not raised an objection to the flood risk assessment submitted, their comments make it clear that this test only needs to be met if The Sequential Test is passed and that test is applied by the Planning Authority.

7.4 Highway safety

In respect of highway safety the County Highway Authority have raised no objection and therefore the proposal complies with policy COM 7 of the Local Plan. In addition sufficient parking could be accommodated with the site in accordance with Policy COM 8 of the Local Plan.

7.5 Residential Amenity

Although in outline, the indicative plan submitted indicates that sufficient amenity space can be provided on these plots for the future occupiers, in accordance with the Design Guide SPD. It also indicates that a sufficient distance and appropriate layout can be achieved on the site such that the residential amenities of the adjoining residents can be protected.

7.6 Other Material Matters

There is considered to be no issues relating to ecology on the site as the land has been recently farmed.

7.7 Planning Balance

The proposal provides for four additional dwellings contributing to the Councils housing provision, construction would provide some short term economic benefits and there is no harm to highway safety or residential amenity.

However, this is outweighed by the significant and demonstrable harm caused to the intrinsic character of the countryside and the landscape and settlement character and views into and out of the settlement of Pymoor, together with the harm caused by developing this site, at risk from flooding when there are reasonably available sites elsewhere with a lower probability of flooding. Other land exists in and around Pymoor and adjoining villages which is not within Flood Zone 3 so development is not necessary on this particular land.

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer(s)</u>
16/00133/OUT	Barbara Greengrass Room No. 011 The Grange Ely	Barbara Greengrass Senior Planning Officer 01353 616240 barbara.greengrass @eastcamb.gov.uk

National Planning Policy Framework -

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 -

<http://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Plan%20April%202015%20-%20front%20cover%20and%20inside%20front%20cover.pdf>