



EAST  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee  
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange,  
Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018  
at 10.00am

### **P R E S E N T**

Councillor Joshua Schumann (Chairman)  
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith  
Councillor Sue Austen  
Councillor Derrick Beckett  
Councillor David Chaplin  
Councillor Paul Cox  
Councillor Lavinia Edwards  
Councillor Mark Goldsack  
Councillor Bill Hunt  
Councillor Mike Rouse  
Councillor Stuart Smith

### **OFFICERS**

Julie Barrow – Senior Planning Officer  
Tim Driver – Planning Solicitor  
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer  
Rebecca Saunt – Planning Manager

### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

5 members of the public

#### **161. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **162. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **163. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman did not make any announcements.

#### **164. 17/01722/RMM & 17/01723/RMM – LAND AT HIGHFLYER FARM, NORTH OF KINGS AVENUE, ELY.**

With the permission of the Chairman, and the agreement of the Committee, the Case Officer said she would present both applications together, as each item related to the same location.

The Chairman said that a separate vote would be taken on each application.

Julie Barrow, Senior Planning Officer, presented a report (S244, previously circulated) which sought reserved matters approval for details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the first phase of residential development on land at Highflyer Farm, Ely.

The site formed part of the wider North Ely scheme on land currently owned by the Church Commissioners for England, and outline planning permission was granted in June 2015 following the completion of a S106 Agreement.

The applicant intended to construct 200 dwellings, including 30 affordable dwellings and construct a fourth arm off the Thistle Corner roundabout to provide access. The scheme also included the provision of a number of areas of open space, incorporating interactive play features, together with the first phase of the attenuation pond due to be constructed in the planned Country Park.

Amended plans had been received during the course of the application addressing design changes to house types and the proposed apartment blocks.

The application was based on a number of Parameter Plans approved as part of the outline planning permission.

On a point of housekeeping, Members were asked to note that an updated list of draft conditions had been tabled at the meeting. Condition 3, (materials plan), had been changed to enable samples to be submitted, and Condition 13 had been amended requiring details of the Temporary Emergency Link from Allix Way to be submitted prior to above ground construction.

Also tabled at the meeting was a publication produced by Redrow, giving details of the proposed development and illustrations of the house types, landscaping and layout.

It was noted that the site was located at the southern end of the Highflyer Farm application site. It sat immediately north of Longchamp Drive, part of a modern residential development known as Cathedral View. The site had most recently been in agricultural use and was devoid of any defining features.

A number of illustrations were displayed at the meeting, including a map, an aerial view of the site, the layout of the proposal in terms of house numbers, affordable housing, and house types, along with computer generated images (provided by the applicant) of the scheme, and the palette of proposed materials.

The Committee noted that the main considerations in the determination of this application were:

- Principle of development;

- Housing mix & density;
- Character & appearance;
- Residential amenity;
- Green infrastructure & landscaping;
- Traffic & transportation;
- Drainage; and
- Ecology.

The Senior Planning Officer reminded Members that outline planning permission for residential development, a local centre comprising retail foodstore (A1) uses within Use Classes A1/2/3/4/5, D1 and business units (B1), primary school, pre-school nursery, playing fields, place of worship and/or community hall, together with open space, allotments, landscaping, highways, infrastructure and associated works was granted in June 2015 following completion of a S106 Agreement. The S106 Agreement attached to the planning permission secured the provision of affordable housing across the site together with allotments and open space, including the transfer of the land for the Country Park. A number of financial contributions towards matters such as outdoors sports, public transport and education were also secured through the Agreement.

This was the first phase on the Highflyer Farm development and the scheme had been designed to be harmonious with the existing built form to the south and west, whilst respecting the edge of settlement location and the fenland beyond.

It was noted that the applicant was proposing to build 170 market dwellings and 30 affordable dwellings. The mix of market dwellings included a greater number of 4 bedroom properties and it would therefore be necessary for future phases of development to make up any shortfall of smaller dwellings, dependent on market need at the time.

The applicant had also met the requirement of planning condition 36 to provide a minimum of 20% of dwellings that met Lifetime Homes Standards.

Speaking next of character and appearance, the Senior Planning Officer reminded Members that the applicant had been required to prepare a Green Streets Character Area Design Code. The Code set out a character appraisal of Ely (carried out by the applicant) which sought to translate that into the streets and spaces within the development, inform car parking solutions and set out how key plots and buildings would sit within each development type.

A range of detached, semi-detached, terraced and apartment buildings were proposed in the applicant's favoured 'Arts and Craft' style. The frontage to the Green utilised a single house type arranged in pairs following the curve of the space. It was considered that the use of three storey dwellings in this location and on the key edges of the urban village

area was an appropriate response to the character of the area. The majority of the remainder of the dwellings were two storey, with two and a half storey dwellings in key gateway locations to provide both interest and defining buildings to help create a sense of place.

It was considered that the applicant had captured the essence of the Green Streets character area, creating key features that would encourage interaction between residents and ensure a strong connection to the built form to the south and west.

The scheme had been designed in accordance with the East Cambridgeshire Design Guide SPD taking into account the requirement to provide sufficient plot sizes and amenity space.

Concerns about potential flooding had been raised by residents of properties fronting the watercourse on the southern boundary, but this had been examined by the Lead Local Flood Authority and it raised no objections.

The current application site boundary was approximately 45 metres from the rear of Highflyer Farm Cottages at its closest point, and at this distance, the scheme was not considered to be overbearing or cause any significant loss of amenity.

Green Street 3 would provide a buffer between the rear of the proposed dwellings and the rear of Longchamp Drive to ensure that there was no unacceptable level of overlooking and that the proposed dwellings did not appear overbearing or result in a significant loss of light.

With regard to Green Street 2, concerns had been raised that the path came close to the front of existing buildings and that its presence would result in a loss of privacy, noise and disturbance. It was noted that the area was at present unrestricted and could be used by members of the public for recreation purposes. It was considered that the movement of the path further east would do little to change the impact of the proposal and that the use of this area as a link to the existing development would not have a significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity of existing occupiers.

A temporary emergency link was proposed off Allix Way and it would be required until the entirety of Highflyer Avenue had been constructed and was available for use. Whilst the use of the emergency link could impact on the residents of Allix Way, it was not expected to be in constant use and any disruption was likely to be short lived.

Subject to the submission of an acceptable Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), it was considered that the proposal complied with policy in respect of residential amenity.

The Senior Planning Officer next drew Members' attention to the visuals regarding green infrastructure and landscaping. It was noted that the Landscape Strategy had been examined by the Local Planning Authority's Urban Design consultants and a number of minor amendments to the planting specification had been made as a result. The applicant had also responded to concerns raised by the Wildlife Trust.

Members noted that there would be a new access to the development off Thistle Corner and the applicant was proposing to construct the first section of the Spine Road up to the Green, with future developers responsible for the remainder together with the junction at Lynn Road. There would be extremely good connectivity within the site and to adjacent development.

The majority of the dwellings had two parking spaces, with the exception of the 1 bedroom units, which had one parking space. In order to achieve the density of development anticipated by the outline planning permission, the applicant had had to include an element of tandem parking. However, there were also significant areas of on-plot side by side parking to compensate for this.

There was a shortfall of visitor parking spaces and the applicant was proposing 17 spaces alongside or close to areas of public open space. The Committee was reminded that the LHA would not adopt visitor parking bays within the highway unless they served a highway function. In this case the location of these 17 spaces was considered to meet this requirement. If the LHA was not prepared to adopt the spaces, the Council would consider their adoption, given that they were located adjacent to areas of open space that would be adopted by the Council in due course. Officers considered that this was a good compromise.

Turning to drainage, the Senior Planning Officer stated that a site-specific surface water drainage strategy had been submitted as part of the application and the LLFA had confirmed its agreement to the details. Swales would be incorporated into the Green Streets, there would be areas of permeable paving, and a watercourse along Green Street 3. The watercourse was not expected to adversely impact the dwellings on Longchamp Drive, and it was not uncommon for dwellings in this District to have drainage ditches/watercourses running alongside their boundaries.

Members further noted that the applicant and the Church Commissioners were currently negotiating an agreement in relation to the Clayway Catchwater ditch system to the west of the site.

It was considered that as the scheme accorded with the outline planning permission and parameter plans, and that matters in relation to residential amenity, highway safety and ecology could be addressed, the application was recommended for approval.

The Senior Planning Officer next presented a report (S245, previously circulated) which sought reserved matters approval for details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the first section of spine road and the Thistle Corner junction in connection with the residential led development approved under outline application 11/01077/ESO.

The construction of a fourth arm of the Thistle Corner roundabout together with the first section of spine road, to be known as Highflyer Avenue, was required to facilitate the residential development.

A number of illustrations were displayed at the meeting, including a map, an aerial view of the site, and technical drawings of the proposal.

The Committee noted that the main considerations in the determination of this application were:

- Principle of Development;
- Traffic & transportation;
- Character & appearance; and
- Residential amenity.

The principle of a site access from the Thistle Corner roundabout was established at the outline stage together with the principle of a spine road that would connect this access point with the northern access point on Lynn Road.

Members noted that the detailed design and layout of the new access and the content of the Spine Road Statement had been subject to extensive discussions with the LHA. The details submitted in respect of the Thistle Corner access were currently being reviewed by the County Council's Road Safety Audit Team and the LHA was confident that given the principle of the access had been agreed, there would be no insurmountable reasons why an agreement could not be reached.

The Spine Road did not fall within a specific neighbourhood, as defined by the North Ely SPD, but it did form its own character area. A Highflyer Avenue Character Design Code was submitted with the application and this had been reviewed by the Council's Urban Design consultants and the Local Highway Authority.

The Design Code split the Spine Road up into sections and addressed them in accordance with the level of built form on each side and how it responded to changes in character areas across the development.

The Code also addressed the sub-urban areas where there was development on one or both sides. This included the type of traffic calming measures that would be appropriate in certain areas and matters such as materials and street lighting.

A Landscape Design Statement had been submitted which covered both reserved matters applications and provided a comprehensive contextual analysis of the area together with a detailed landscaping scheme for the whole development.

With regard to residential amenity, it was noted that to date the residents of Highflyer Farm Cottages had enjoyed open views over the adjacent farmland, out to the fenland beyond. This view would be lost through the development of Highflyer Farm, but the loss of a view was not a material planning consideration.

There would be some noise and disturbance from the construction process and this might have an impact on the occupiers of Meadow House, which lay to the east of the application site beyond Clayway Drove. However,

construction and delivery times would be limited by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and given the topography of the area, it was considered that the scheme would not have a significantly detrimental impact on residential amenity.

It was considered that as the scheme accorded with the outline planning permission and parameter plans, and that matters in relation to residential amenity and highway safety could be addressed, the application was recommended for approval.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Jake Nugent, agent, addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- These were two separate but complementary applications;
- Redrow had worked closely with the District Council, Cambridgeshire Quality Panel, the City of Ely Council and Cambridgeshire County Council;
- There had been a number of enhancements and refinements to the proposal to ensure it was an attractive development which would reflect the local character;
- The design specification of the road reflected its strategic significance;
- Homes had been purposefully laid out so as to encourage walking and sustainable means of transport;
- The housing was a mixture of 1 – 5 bedroom dwellings with 15% affordable housing;
- Three development types had been incorporated into the area;
- The soft landscaping would support flora and fauna and augment wildlife and;
- One of the sustainable features would be electric charging points and a dedicated car club space;
- The general materials palette had been agreed;
- On-plot parking had been maximised with dedicated cycle parking;
- Officers had spent a substantial amount of time reviewing the plans and he was grateful for their advice;
- The applicant wanted to deliver the best plans for Ely.

Councillor Hunt had a number of questions for Mr Nugent. He first asked about the electric charging points and was advised that the developer would install them, although their exact location had yet to be decided.

Councillor Hunt next asked if the green areas would be maintained by the Council at their own cost; Mr Nugent replied that this had already been discussed and agreed.

Councillor Hunt wished to know if there would be any tandem parking on the development, taking into consideration the latest Local Plan and its guidance regarding tandem parking. Mr Nugent stated that there was some tandem parking, as the outline permission had been granted some years ago and set out the density of development. The applicant had attempted to maximise the side by side parking and every house would have a cycle store in the garden. It would be important to achieve the density and also try to get people to declutter their garages.

Councillor Rouse, having noted that many of the houses had four bedrooms, asked if this was to allow people to work from home. Mr Nugent said this was absolutely the case; it was one of the conditions of the outline permission that there should be a number of dwellings suitable for home working and the applicant had also had to submit a broadband strategy.

Councillor Rouse said he had also noted that the LHA had asked for bus stops. He enquired whether they would be included in this phase of the development, if there would be bus shelters, and if so, who would maintain them. Mr Nugent replied that there would be none in this phase.

Councillor Beckett asked Mr Nugent if, during the consultation on housing mix and affordable housing, people had been consulted on whether they wanted three storey dwellings. He replied that their findings had been based on densities and market research; three storey dwellings were becoming more popular.

Councillor Beckett continued, saying he had concerns about the urban village and he wished to know what parking provision there would be to ensure that people did not park on the Spine Road. Mr Nugent responded, saying that this area had the highest density and parking was in accord with current policy. The purpose of the Spine Road was to support the Highflyer Farm extension. There would be an at grade cycle lane along Highflyer Avenue; this would be constructed at the outset and would reduce parking on the Spine Road.

Councillor Ambrose Smith commented that with an ageing society, there was no accommodation for families who had older relatives living with or wanting to live with them. She could foresee garages being converted into 'granny annexes'. She asked why there were no dwellings with self-contained annexes, as this would allow older people to live with a measure of independence. Mr Nugent replied that this went back to the outline permission and the number of dwellings and density to be achieved, but there were a number of Lifetime Homes included in the development. He was unable to comment on people maybe wanting to convert their garages.

Councillor Cox raised the issue of refuse collection, saying there were frequently problems in small developments with people having to drag their refuse bins to a collection point. He therefore wished to know if all the units on the development would be accessible to the refuse trucks. Mr Nugent said there were a number of private drives with permeable paving. The LHA would not adopt them, but they had dedicated areas to which residents could take their bins to be emptied. The distances complied with RECAP guidance. The Chairman added that collections would be made on private roads as long as they were safe.

Mr Nugent stated that approximately 80% of the highway was to be adopted by the LHA and the private drives would be constructed to adoptable standards.

Councillor Smith asked if all the private roads were to be built to adoptable standards; Mr Nugent replied that they would be.

In response to a question from Councillor Beckett regarding houses alongside the Green Streets, Mr Nugent informed Members that Green Street 2 would have east to west running properties, then private roads with permeable paving.

Councillor Goldsack asked what guarantees there would be moving forward, as the 15% affordable housing was much lower than he would like to see. The Senior Planning Officer replied that this had been set at the outline stage after much viability work had been carried out. There were review mechanisms once this phase of the development was completed, but the 15% for this phase could not be changed.

Councillor Goldsack continued, saying he thought the Green Streets idea was 'fantastic' but he had concerns regarding maintenance, and he asked if the Authority was comfortable with the arrangements. The Senior Planning Officer replied that she was, as everything had been addressed in the S106 Agreement.

Councillor Rouse thought the developers had worked hard to achieve a high standard cycle link, but he made the point that if people cycled, they would come into town along the Prickwillow Road which had variable speed limits and a 200 metres stretch with no street lights; he enquired whether any thought had been given to this. The Senior Planning Officer confirmed that she was very conscious of the issues and was working with the Council's Infrastructure & Strategy Manager regarding opportunities to address them.

Councillor Hunt made a number of points. Whilst the applications already had outline planning permission, he assumed that as development progressed in the future, accord would be given to the Local Plan regarding parking spaces and tandem parking. It was his understanding that there would be a T junction where the Spine Road met Lynn Road and he had concerns about this. Having properties that could be used for home working was good. He also expressed concern that the District Council would be taking on responsibility for the green spaces, as he believed this should lie with the developer or City Council.

The Planning Manager responded, saying that on Councillor Hunt's latter point, contributions had been secured as part of the S106 Agreement for maintenance. She said that when Officers met with the developers at pre-application and application discussions, they would make them aware of the points raised during the meeting in relation to parking.

The Chairman added that with regard to the Local Plan, the emerging Plan could be given some, but not full weight at this point, but it was acknowledged as much as possible; it would gather more weight as it went through the process towards adoption.

Councillor Beckett wished to know if there would be access to the swales so they could be maintained, and the Senior Planning Officer replied that it was anticipated that they would be open.

There being no further comments or questions, it was proposed by Councillor Rouse that the Officer's recommendation for approval in respect of planning application reference 17/01722/RMM be accepted.

He liked the Green Streets principle and this site would be part of the transition between the Island of Ely and the fenland. The scheme would make water a feature rather than a problem, and it would complement the development. He also wished to say that he was very impressed with the Redrow Team and Mr Nugent, and the way in which they had worked with the Case Officer and the Planning department.

There was a housing crisis in this country, and this Council was doing what it could to provide more dwellings.

Councillor Hunt concurred, saying that at the moment Network Rail had a campaign to close some pedestrian crossings in the area and this could have an impact in the future, as these new houses needed to have access to the countryside. This Authority needed to support the County Council and oppose the shutting of railway crossings. The road should not be closed at Queen Adelaide, and the Princess of Wales Hospital also needed to remain open to serve existing and future residents.

Councillor Cox seconded the motion for approval.

Councillor Beckett felt that developers should be encouraged to make schemes as open as possible and a strong message should be sent to discourage tandem parking. Having driven along Longchamp Drive to Kings Avenue, he thought the dwellings looked very 'cramped in' and the garages were tiny. However, he believed that Redrow had done well to produce a scheme that would fit in with the local area and hoped they would address any problems as they came forward.

The Chairman thought the proposal was an exciting development, with a good first phase. He could understand the concerns raised by Councillors Hunt and Beckett, but the developer had worked hard to meet the requirements of the Local Plan.

Councillor Goldsack complimented Redrow on a well-designed scheme, despite there being a lot of unadopted road on the development. He also thought a lot of traffic would go through Prickwillow and Queen Adelaide, and the Council should consider the wider effect of this because it had a duty of care to the people living there. That having been said, he was totally in favour of the proposal.

The Committee returned to the motion for approval, and when put to the vote,

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application reference 17/01722/RMM be APPROVED subject to the updated conditions as tabled at the meeting, with any changes delegated to the Planning Manager.

It was next proposed by Councillor Rouse and seconded by Councillor Chaplin that the Officer's recommendation for approval in respect of planning application reference 17/01723/RMM be supported, and when put to the vote,

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application reference 17/01723/RMM be APPROVED subject to the completion of a Road Safety Audit and on receipt of confirmation from the Local Highway Authority that the access details are agreed, and subject to the recommended conditions as set out in the Officer's report, with any changes or additional conditions delegated to the Planning Manager in consultation with the Chairman.

The Chairman concluded by asking to have placed on record his particular thanks to Julie Barrow, Senior Planning Officer, for all her hard work, saying that it had not gone unnoticed. He also thanked the Redrow Team, Members and Officers for their attendance at this additional meeting of the Planning Committee.

The meeting closed at 11.10am