

Fen Ditton parish Council (FDPC)

Proposal on Affordable Housing for Local People v9

## **Agenda item 14/114 - FDPC Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

### **Background**

Cambridge ACRE undertook a survey in 2014 that identified between 8 and 10 homes were needed by residents who are in need of Affordable housing and have a local connection. The parish council or the district council have an obligation to meet this need on, which can be on green belt land if no other land is available (National Government policy). It has been explained to the parish council that *Exception site Affordable housing* is not the same as an Affordable Allocation on a development site such as Wing and under current SCDC policy the exception requirement cannot be included in the normal affordable allocation.

The Parish Council's preferred approach to meeting the housing need was to form a Community Land Trust (CLT) in partnership with Marshall's to allocate 8-10 houses on the Wing site. However, this is unlikely to be deliverable in time (or at all) to forestall other proposals meeting the need sooner. It has been indicated by SCDC officers that unless there is a change in South Cambs policies it is unlikely that the CLT is a viable solution, as the CLT homes would have to come from the market housing and not the Affordable allocation. Marshall's has indicated that using the Market Allocation is not possible as it alters the viability calculations of the project.

The parish council had considered a green belt site as having potential during a review of all sites in the village during 2014 but dropped it in favour of the CLT solution on Wing. This was considered feasible at the time as it has been done on other strategic sites in East Cambridgeshire.

Here is a link to the full document from November 2014.

<http://fenditton-pc.org.uk/docs/view.php?file=Proposals/Exception%20Site%20Proposal%20-%20Passed>

And the housing survey.

<http://fenditton-pc.org.uk/docs/view.php?file=Reports/Fen%20Ditton%20-%20Housing%20Needs%20Survey%20Results%20Report%20-%202014-02%20-%20Public.pdf>

## Summary

- A local housing need has been identified, 8-10 houses.
- The local affordable housing need cannot be met from standard affordable housing supply no matter how close to the village.
- It is up to local authorities including the PC to meet this need.
- The FDPC policy was to meet the need through a CLT in partnership with Marshall's, this option is unlikely to be feasible due to SCDC/City policy and the effect on viability of taking the affordable homes out of the market housing allocation on Wing.
- SCDC housing officers may take forward a site on Musgrave Way independent of the parish council.

## Musgrave Way Site

A site immediately east of Musgrove Way was considered by the Parish Council in 2014 in partnership with the Hastoe Housing Association. A followup letter was received from Hastoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015 stating “there is also indication that site 10 land east of Musgrove Way could potentially be available”. Proposals for August 2015 meeting.

Under 14/114 we should consider a revised Exception Site policy in the light of the rejection of the CLT proposal by all parties other than FDPC. **It is proposed we adopt one of the following mutually exclusive proposals for a policy on Green Belt Exception site housing:**

1. The Council is against any housing development on the Green Belt surrounding the village and will do everything it can to sustain that position.
2. The Council is against any housing development on the Green Belt which does not conform to the strict rules for an Exception Site, but will treat any application for an Exception Site development on its merits.
3. The Council is against any housing development on the Green Belt which does not conform to the strict rules for an Exception Site, but will actively attempt to identify a site which will satisfy the need for exception housing which has the minimum impact on the village.
4. The Council is against any housing development on the Green Belt which does not conform to the strict rules for an Exception Site, but will do all it can to promote the Musgrove Way site to satisfy the need for exception housing.
5. The Council is not against development on the Green Belt if the application is appropriate. In addition, it may be helpful for the Council to agree whether or not it feels there is benefit in attempting to instigate another survey of the need for exception housing.

Depending on the outcome of the above, there may well be more detailed aspects to consider, either at this meeting or a future one.

## **Background information**

### **Community Land Trust**

The SCDC planning officer stated in an email on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2014;

“I have spoken to one of our housing officers and she confirmed my suspicions that no priority can be given to people on local housing lists on the strategic housing sites. As these sites are proposed to meet the wider housing need they are very different to the exception sites, which are specifically to house people within the relevant parish in housing need”

In another email dated the 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2014;

“The difference with Wing is that it is in South Cambridgeshire, where different policies apply, and it has come forward as an already allocated site that is being promoted by the landowner, Marshall. Wing is a standard s.106 site for affordable housing allocations and as such has to be treated in accordance with the sub-regional housing allocation policies, as are all s.106 sites across the sub-region. At no point via the site allocation in the local plan or the Cambridge East Area Action plan has it been suggested that Marshall would be looking to do a community land trust for the delivery of housing on any of its sites.”

### **Feedback from Meetings.**

#### **1 FDPC, SCDC Housing Officers, Planning Officer, District Councillor.**

At a meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015 between the Housing officers, Councillor for Planning, and FDPC, the Planning Officer again confirmed that the option to take a small number of dwellings out of the affordable allocation on the Wing site for a CLT was against policy and could not be considered as an exception site as Cambridge City also has an interest in the affordable allocation. The only option was that the dwellings could come out of the market allocation but that this may have a detrimental impact on Wing viability.

The idea to build an extra 8-10 dwellings for the CLT is not feasible due to all the additional work involved in assessing the impact etc.

SCDC indicated they are interested in taking forward a site on Musgrave Way as an exception site. The PC chairman informed the officers that this site maybe the preferred option of the parish council if the CLT option was not available, and would discuss this with Marshall's and at the next PC meeting.

#### **2 Marshall's, District Councillor, FDPC**

At a meeting of Marshall's, District Councillor, FDPC, on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015 the idea of putting 8-10 houses into a CLT from the market allocation was discussed. Marshall's confirmed that using any of the market allocation would not be possible.

It was suggested that a CLT as a vehicle to meet the affordable housing needs for locals may be consistent with the housing needs selection criteria but would need some research followed by policy update from SCDC.

## Agenda item 15/115

### Fleam End Farm Site - Application number S/1289/15/OL

A Green Belt site has been put forward for development as an Exception Site, this time on High Ditch Road (Site 339). Application number S/1289/15/OL is a mix of Affordable and Market housing.

#### Previous Applications

SCDC considered an application for the Fleam End Farm site (339) in July 2013. There have also been previous applications C/0383/60/, C/179/58/, C/261/71. All were rejected due to the green belt etc.

[https://www.scamb.gov.uk/sites/www.scamb.gov.uk/files/documents/78.%20Appendix%20iv.%20-%20Fen%20Ditton\\_0.pdf](https://www.scamb.gov.uk/sites/www.scamb.gov.uk/files/documents/78.%20Appendix%20iv.%20-%20Fen%20Ditton_0.pdf)

#### Supporting Planning Statement in application S/1289/15/OL

While the Planning statement makes numerous references to “local community needs” and frequently uses the word “exception”, *nothing in the application* can be found to describe how the Affordable homes as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework are owned and managed, for example through a Housing Association or Community Land Trust to ensure they are only available to local candidates from the Housing Lists in perpetuity.

Here are some extracts from the statement;

3.7 “Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should avoid “ isolated new homes in the countryside” unless there are “special circumstances”, and then goes on to give non-exhaustive examples. However, despite being outside of the designated village framework boundary and in the green belt the proposal is not for “isolated new homes in the countryside”. Although the proposed new dwellings would at face value be an **exception to normal policy**, they are nonetheless fully justified in this case (as set out below).

3.10 “In any event, pursuant to paragraph 89, one of the **exceptions** to the concept of “inappropriate development” is “...limited affordable housing for **local community** needs under policies set out in the Local Plan”, which is at the core of the Application proposal, together with its **enabling market development**.”

4.3.1 “Providing affordable housing, at a rate of up to 60%, to meet the needs of the **local community**;”

6.3 “In the present case, the proposal it is necessary to consider the green belt position; the proposal is potentially not “inappropriate development” (as it comes **within the exceptions to that concept**), but in any event there are “very special circumstances” justifying the grant of planning permission.”

## Proposals for the Green Belt Application S/1289/15/OL

Planning application S/1289/15/OL is an application for building 10 Affordable and 8 market houses on Green Belt land at Fleam End Farm. This response proposes that the application be rejected for the following reasons:

- Green Belt land may only be released for housing to provide exclusively affordable housing to meet local needs in perpetuity<sup>1</sup>. The application is neither for exclusively affordable housing, nor does it refer in any way to constraining tenure, and it is therefore wholly inappropriate.
- The site falls within an area where development would have a significant adverse impact on Green Belt purposes and functions<sup>2</sup>
- The agricultural character of the village is very important especially at the eastern end of the village, along High Ditch Road, where (converted) barns line the road and there are views of the fine group of farm buildings. The linear nature of much of the village also means that views out into the open fields surrounding Fen Ditton can be seen from many parts of the village. The site is outside the natural village boundary (the 30MPH constriction) where is a clear edge to the village on the eastern edge of the site, with two properties at right angles to the road facing out across the site. Development would have a significant adverse impact on this setting<sup>2</sup>.
- Cambridge City Council's Cambridge Local Plan urges resistance to development of the Green Belt. *Towards 2031: issues and options report*<sup>3</sup> published June 2012 states "Development of land to the South of Fen Ditton would reduce the extent of separation between the village and urban Cambridge from 300m to effectively coalescence".
- SCDC classify Fen Ditton as a Group Village where there is a limitation of the number of dwellings that may be developed. This allocation has already been attained with 13 houses on The Blue Lion site, and 2 by Orchard House.

[1] [http://www.planning-applications.co.uk/ppg3\\_housing\\_update1.pdf](http://www.planning-applications.co.uk/ppg3_housing_update1.pdf)

[2] [https://www.scams.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/78.%20Appendix%207iv%20-%20Fen%20Ditton\\_0.pdf](https://www.scams.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/78.%20Appendix%207iv%20-%20Fen%20Ditton_0.pdf)

[3] <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/local-plan-review-issues-and-options-report.pdf>

Mark Easterfield

1<sup>st</sup> August 2015

## Background Information

Previous reasons for rejecting outline planning application for Fleam End Farm site .

- Green Belt
- Proposed development would spoil the character of the area
- Does not appear to meet the criteria for an Exception site, as follows;

The site is within the Green Belt (GB).

### Green Belt Purposes

- Maintains and enhances the quality of Cambridge's setting
- Prevents coalescence between settlements and with Cambridge
- Function with regard to the special character of Cambridge and its setting:
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages
- A landscape which retains a strong rural character
- Site falls within an area where development would have a significant adverse impact on GB purposes and functions. The Landscape Design Associates' Green Belt Study (2002) identifies the rural landscape separating the inner necklace villages, and separating those villages from Cambridge, as critical in preserving the separate identities of these villages and therefore the immediate landscape setting of the city. (page 59) The site is within an area of supportive townscape / landscape; such areas support the character of the historic core and areas distinctive to the city. They provide the backdrop and ambience, and bolster the sense of place of the city and its approaches (page 62), the most essential areas to be safeguarded and preserved in their current form (page 73).

## Village Classification Report June 2012

SCDC classify Fen Ditton as a Group Village where there is limitation of up to 8 dwellings or up to 15 on brownfield. This allocation is already at a maximum with 13 dwellings being built on the Blue Lion brownfield site and permission recently granted for two dwellings by Orchard House on High Ditch Road.

Extracts from the policy document;

- **Group villages** – Policy ST/6 identifies 37 Groups villages and the indicative number of houses that would be allowed in a new development within the village framework.
- “Policies restrict the scale of development, reflecting that significant scales of development would be unsustainable by creating disproportion numbers of car trips. Group Villages (named to reflect that developments up to 8 dwellings are permitted in principle, historically called ‘group developments’), with up to 15 dwellings allowed on a brownfield site to make best use of land, have a Primary School. “

## Heritage considerations

Listed Buildings – there are several Grade II Listed buildings along High Ditch Road, including numbers 6, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23 and 25; the closest is approximately 130m to the west.

Non-statutory archaeological site - The site is located to the south of the route of the Fleam Dyke, an earthwork boundary of Saxon date.

## Environmental and Wildlife

Biodiversity features - Fenland landscapes support species and habitats characterised by intensive agriculture due to the high quality soil. This has restricted biodiversity in some parts. However, drains, hedges and field margins provide refuge for species such as barn owl, corn bunting and skylark. Washlands provide temporary areas of flooded grassland that are important for plants such as the marsh foxtail, tufted hair-grass and narrow-leaved water dropwort. Important numbers of wintering wildfowl maybe found on flooded fields. The network of drainage ditches in places still retain water voles with otters occasionally found into the fens where suitable fish stocks are found. The development proposals should show how features of biodiversity value have been protected or adequately integrated into the design.

## Townscape and landscape

The South Cambridgeshire Village Capacity Study (1998) describes Fen Ditton as close to the north eastern edge of Cambridge, on the eastern bank of the River Cam and bordered by the water meadows of the river. It is a linear village, with a 'cross-roads' form. The whole village is historic, with low density development, including historic farmhouses, interspersed with cottages.

The Fen Ditton Conservation Area Appraisal (2006) describes Fen Ditton as an essentially linear village which has resulted in a very narrow, serpentine form with an almost complete absence of backland development, the only exceptions being a few modern houses. The village has an unmistakably rural feel with its grass verges, large trees and its bucolic riverside setting. The high proportion of good quality buildings and spaces means that the streetscene and townscape are of exceptional quality even though the scale is modest.

Little Ditton is the area south of High Ditch Road which was Little Ditton Field and farmed as open-field arable in 1790. It contains part of the filled in Fleam Dyke which although Anglo-Saxon in its final phase of construction, may have been built upon Iron Age works. Parts of Fleam Dyke are designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The agricultural character of the village is very important especially at the eastern end of the village, along High Ditch Road, where (converted) barns line the road and there are views of the fine groups of farm buildings. The linear nature of much of the village also means that views out into the open fields surrounding Fen Ditton can be seen from many parts of the village.

Development would have a significant adverse impact on townscape and the landscape setting of the village.

## Highways

The Highways Agency comment that sites at the southern end of this group are likely to be well integrated with Cambridge though clearly there could be some additional pressure on the M11 and A14. Sites around Fen Ditton are more likely to generate pressure on the A14 corridor, particularly to and from employment along the northern fringe of Cambridge.

## Local Plan Proposal

Cambridge City Council's Cambridge Local Plan urges resistance to development of the green belt

“Towards 2031 - issues and options report” (Published June 2012) states:

“Development of land to the South of Fen Ditton would reduce the extent of separation between the village and urban Cambridge from 300 metres to effectively coalescence. Land to the west of Horningsea Road has been found in studies to be of “very high” and land to the east of “high” importance to the green belt. The north east Cam corridor is identified as an area of open quality landscape that is important to the setting and special character of Cambridge, with particular qualities to be safeguarded”