

increase in height of the detached dwelling would have been acceptable given that there was some variation in the heights within the street scene, however, under the current application for a semi-detached property it was necessary to look at the adjoining property and it was considered that the additional height would be harmful to the character and appearance of the street scene.

In response to a question from Cllr Huffer, the Planning Officer explained that Officers had no concerns regarding the height of the previously submitted detached property, but it was the overall scale and design that officers had concerns with.

Cllr Goodearl proposed the Officer's recommendation for refusal explaining that although the existing dwelling was not fit in live in and required an upgrade, it still needed to suit and support the surrounding dwellings. Cllr Wilson seconded Cllr Goodearl's proposal.

Cllr Huffer agreed with Cllrs Goodearl and Wilson and stated that she also supported the Officer's recommendation for refusal.

The Chair added that the street scene did have various types of dwellings but with regard to semi-detached properties, there was an obligation to keep the two dwellings at an identical height.

It was resolved unanimously:

- i) That the planning application ref 23/00877/FUL be REFUSED for the following reason:  
The proposed replacement dwelling, due to its height, roof alignment and overall form, would visually dominate the existing semi-detached dwelling that it would be joined to, to the detriment of the visual amenity of the semi-detached pair. The dwelling, by virtue of its significant footprint, height, and overall design, is considered to be out of keeping with the existing character and appearance of the development within the wider street scene, appearing incongruous within its setting. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan as well as the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **81. 23/01338/OUM – Land at Cambridge Road, Stretham**

Holly Chapman, Senior Planning Officer presented a report (Y187, previously circulated) recommending approval for outline planning permission for the erection of up to 83 Affordable Homes with associated access, parking and landscaping with all matters reserved except for means of access and updated Members to the following minor changes within the report, of which neither change affected the recommendation:

- 7.4 of the report should read 'allowed' and not 'dismissed'
- 7.13 of the report should read 'households' and not 'individuals'

Members were shown slides of the location, proposal, highway works, planning history and site photos.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **Principle of Development** – The application site is located outside the development envelope and was a 100% affordable housing rural exception site for up to 83 units. There had been a need identified for affordable housing in Stretham and Little Ely. The application complied with the objectives of Policy HOU4 and therefore GROWTH2. Contributions would be provided regarding education and libraries in accordance with GROWTH3.
- **Access and Highway Safety** – The on and off-site highway works was to mitigate the impact of the development. An identical highways scheme has been approved under LPA Ref. 22/00180/OUM and 23/00712/OUM. The County Council's Highways Authority and Transport Assessment Team raised no objections in terms of highway safety or sustainability. The site provided capacity for on-site parking in accordance with Policy COM8.
- **Indicative Layout and Visual Amenity** – This was supported by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment. There would be adverse landscape impact during construction and completion, with the impacts diminishing with the establishment of the site and mitigative planting. The site was capable of accommodating change and the detailed design scheme could compliment the local distinctive character. Long term impacts of the development were not significant at local, national, or county scales.
- **Residential Amenity** – A number of dwellings (plots 1-54) would require Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) systems to mitigate noise impacts from the A10 highway. All dwellings proposed to be constructed in accordance with Passivhaus (passivehouse) principles. The use of MVHR/Passivhaus principles to mitigate noise was established at appeal (22/00180/OUM) and the MVHR would address any noise concerns from nearby kennels and ensure the operation of business was not unnecessarily restricted due to noise complaints.

In summary, the scheme would achieve significant benefits in bringing forward a wholly affordable housing scheme to meet robustly evidenced locally identified need, contribute to district-wide need for affordable housing with a variety of tenures indicated. The dwellings themselves would be built to sustainable Passivhaus principles, which would likely result in a development with low energy usage. These factors together would carry substantial positive weight, primarily in social benefits. Furthermore, there would be economic benefits, through local spend by future occupiers, thereby helping to sustain the village. Mechanical ventilation is an accepted mitigative measure to address residential amenity concerns. The scheme would be expected to secure net gains in biodiversity, in-line with current national and local policy, and would introduce highway upgrades which would likely also provide some very modest benefit to existing nearby

residents on the western side of the A10 highway. It is likely a detailed scheme could come forward which would positively respond to the built environment of Stretham and would not result in significant harm in the long term to the character of the countryside. Whilst the development could have potential significant harm to the immediate locality in the short term, in the long term with the establishment of mitigative planting, any resulting adverse impacts upon the landscape character and settlement at a local, county and national scale (which are likely to be at a low level) are also considered to be outweighed by the benefits of delivering a 100% affordable housing scheme to meet an evidenced local need, which itself is afforded significant weight in the decision-making process.

The Chair invited Laura O'Brien, Agent, to address the committee.

“The application before you seeks approval for 83 affordable homes and follows a previous approval for 38 similar homes on broadly the same site. The scheme is brought forward in association with Stonewater Housing Group, a registered affordable housing provider who will be developing the site. The scheme has been developed in consultation with the Council's Planning and Housing Officers and in order to achieve the best mix of affordable housing tenures to meet local housing needs informed by both the Council's Housing Register and the Local Housing Needs Survey specifically undertaken for the villages of Stretham and Little Thetford. The development will be entirely affordable but will incorporate a mix of tenures to meet demand; this will comprise of 42 rented homes, 16 shared ownership homes and 25 rent to buy homes. The demand for rent to buy tenure was specifically identified by the Local Housing Needs Survey providing a pathway to home ownership by giving a 20% discounted rent to allow residents to save for a deposit, with an option to buy their home outright or a shared ownership within five years. The proposed mix of tenures, including shared and full homeownership will ensure that the development promotes social cohesion and provides housing options for a wide range of local people. The Officer's report sets out in detail the clear and significant need for affordable housing in the borough and more generally in the Parish of Stretham specifically. As part of Stonewater's commitment to building sustainable homes for the future within the development will be constructed following Passivhaus principles, as previously mentioned, to provide highly energy efficient home that will in turn provide low energy and water costs for future residents. We note that there are no objections to the proposal from statutory consultees, including the Highways Authority and the Lead Local Flood Authority. Furthermore, the application has received significant support from local residents including 70 comments from people who wish to support affordable housing in the area. In addition, CIL contributions to the application are already agreed to make substantial 106 contributions towards education, libraries, and open space enhancements. To conclude, we believe that this is an excellent scheme, and we trust that you will follow your officer's recommendations and approve.”

The Chair invited Members to ask questions of Laura O'Brien.

Cllr Huffer asked how residents would be able to cross the busy A10 highway in order to access the schools, doctors and shops and stated that she could not support the application when residents would need to 'take their life in the hands' to cross the A10.

In answer to a question from Cllr Wilson, the Agent confirmed that Stonewater Housing Association would manage the affordable housing and the Planning Manager confirmed that the Section 106 ensured the properties were retained as affordable housing properties in perpetuity.

Cllr Trapp approved of the housing be built to Passivhaus standards but had concerns regarding the continuous flow of traffic along the A10.

The Chair asked if the development would receive certification in regard to the Passivhaus principles as this would enable the Council to check that standards had been adhered to. The Senior Planning Officer explained that the conditions only imposed the Passivhaus principles and not the standards and therefore did not require certification. It was also confirmed that there would be a play area on the development. The Senior Planning Officer clarified that there had been no technical objections to this scheme with regard to transport and highways and there was no proposal for traffic lights on the A10. It was also confirmed that all statutory consultees had been consulted.

In response to a question from Cllr Lay, the Senior Planning Officer confirmed that housing would be offered to local residents initially before being offered to the wider parishes and then further out.

Cllr Goodearl asked why a Highways representative had not attended the meeting as he had significant concerns with the crossing of the A10 and that during the site visit earlier in the day, Members were unable to cross the road, and this was not at peak travel time. The Planning Manager reiterated that no objections had been received from Highways and as Planning Officers were not experts in highways, the Planning Officer had consulted both the Highways Teams on more than one occasion. The Planning Manager pointed out to Members that there were no technical highways objections and permission had been granted on the two previous occasions, therefore a refusal would need to explain the difference that 83 dwellings made to the agreed 30+ on site.

Cllr Goodearl stated that the two previous applications had not come before the committee and Members were of the opinion that the road was unsafe, he therefore proposed a postponement until discussions could take place with highways regarding their decision. The Planning Manager advised that Highways could not be forced to attend Planning Committee meetings, but an alternative option would be to request a third party to carry out an independent traffic assessment.

Cllr Huffer seconded the proposal made by Cllr Goodearl to defer the item until further information was received. Cllr Huffer added that she fully supported affordable housing but could not support the current application.

Cllr Whelan added that it was her experience that the traffic was fast and busy along that section of the A10, with cars travelling 50-60mph instead of the enforced 40mph. Cllr Whelan was concerned with the potential amount of people attempting to cross the road, it would result in a major traffic collision. The queue to the nearby roundabout was heavy and therefore she supported refusing the application on the grounds of safety, noise, and speed of vehicles.

The Chair explained he could not support an application that would expose over 200 people to the danger of crossing the A10, he agreed with Cllr Whelan and stated that his opinion was that the scheme was also damaging to the character of the area and hurtful to the views of the open countryside.

Cllr Trapp commented that the affordable housing would be built to a high standard and the application was a good scheme but he was concerned with the proposed access.

It was resolved unanimously:

- i) That the planning application ref 23/01338/OUM be DEFERRED for further information via a traffic report/assessment.
- ii) That the Planning Manager be delegated to arrange an independent traffic report/assessment on the safety of the proposed highways scheme and if it mitigates the additional number of houses from the 38 already approved. The application will then come back to committee once the traffic report/assessment information has been received.
- iii) That this request is made without prejudice to the final decision to be made by the Planning Committee.

## **82. Planning performance report – February 2024**

David Morren, Interim Planning Manager, presented reports (Y188 previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in February 2024.

It was resolved unanimously: That the Planning Performance Reports for February 2024 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4:32pm

Chair.....

Date.....