

HOLBROOK – LAND REAR OF 1 HITHER HOUSE TO HOLLYDENE, IPSWICH ROAD

Erection of 12 no. houses including access road and parking areas. Construction of new vehicular access.

Applicant: Orwell Housing Association Ltd.

Case Officer: Gareth Durrant.

SITE

1. The site has an area of 0.44 hectares with a frontage of 73 metres and a maximum depth of 60 metres. The site is an unused field to the north-west of Holbrook The application site is outside but abuts the settlement boundary of the village. Hither House, a pair of semi detached dwellings to the south of the site are grade II listed. There is a row of mature trees to the frontage of the site.

PROPOSAL

2. The application is for full planning permission and proposes the erection of twelve detached dwellings off a new vehicular access to the Ipswich Road. The dwellings are proposed to meet an identified local housing need as an exception to normal settlement policies in the Development Plan.
3. The proposed dwellings at plots 1 to 3 are a terrace of three dwellings including a pair of semi-detached cottages with a bungalow attached to one end. The height of the semi-detached dwellings to ridge is 8.7 metres. The bungalow would be 6 metres tall. Plots 4 and 5 are a pair of semi-detached cottages. These would have a ridge height of 8.3 metres. Plots 6 and 7 are also semi-detached dwellings with a height to ridge of 7.6 metres. Plots 8-10 are a terrace of three dwellings with varying ridge heights (8m – 8.8m). Plots 11 and 12 are two-storey dwellings with an attached bungalow. The height of the dwelling is 8.7 metres. The bungalow would be 6 metres tall.
4. Plots 1-7 front onto the Ipswich Road, although they are set behind the line of frontage trees. Plots 8-12 are to be sited deeper into the site behind the frontage plots. Plots 1-3 and 11-12 are sited closest to the listed building to the south.
5. A mix of materials are proposed, with red/buff bricks or render proposed to the walls and red/slate grey pantiles to the roofs. The scheme includes 1 (no.) 4-bed house, 5 (no.) 3-bed houses, 4 (no.) 2 bed houses, and 2 (no.) 1-bed bungalows.
6. The application is accompanied by a planning statement in support of the proposal, a housing needs survey undertaken in the village, an ecological appraisal and a design and access statement. These documents can be viewed in advance of the meeting by prior arrangement with the case officer. The key points/findings/conclusions are summarised as follows;

Planning Statement

- Orwell Housing Association has over 3,000 affordable homes in ownership and management, and over 40 years experience.
- Orwell has been working with Holbrook Parish Council and Babergh DC since 2002 in trying to address the affordable housing needs of the parish.
- In February 2002 Orwell completed a Housing Needs Survey in Holbrook and has since been trying to identify a suitable site for a small housing scheme.
- It would be expected that the approval of planning permission would only be made subject to a legal obligation to ensure the availability of properties for rent to meet locally identified housing needs in perpetuity.
- Babergh's Housing Register has 28 households with a local connection by address, listed for housing in Holbrook as at March 2007.
- The need for the scheme is considered well founded, justified and not excessive in relation to the need identified.
- Holbrook is a well served village and would be considered a sustainable location for development in terms of the Structure Plan. The site is immediately adjacent to the existing development boundary and is therefore well related to the form of the village and proximity to existing services.

Needs survey

- 700 survey forms were sent out with 358 sent back and completed correctly (a 51% response rate)
- The results conclude there is over-whelming support for the project in the village (only 64 replies were against affordable housing in the District).
- The results of the survey indicate that 25 households require affordable rented housing in Holbrook, with a further 4 households wishing to either rent or purchase on a shared ownership basis.
- Shared ownership housing (12 interested) was not looked at in detail in this survey.
- The survey shows the need for a mixed development of 1-4 bedroom properties.
- There was also a need expressed by older people for bungalows.

Design and access statement

- The proposed development lies outside the settlement boundary. However, the opposite side of Ipswich Road to the west is fully developed, both with housing and a school. Adjacent to the south are 1 and 2 Hither House and Hollydene. As such it is proposed that the location is a natural extension to the settlement.
- The dwellings in the area are varied in form, scale and age, generally using traditional materials.
- In order to maintain the character of the street, the mature trees to the west (front) are retained other than where vehicular/pedestrian accesses are required.
- Every effort has been made to produce a varied streetscene and relate to the scale and variety of the surrounding dwellings. The proposed development is set back from the road to allow space for the trees and reflect the surrounding development.
- The dwellings are 'traditional' in appearance with the use of a variety of materials. Simple brickwork detailing and the use of plinths on some properties are also included as traditional features.

Ecological Assessment

- The site has no wildlife designation. No records of protected species were known for this site, but grass snake and slow worm were recorded within 100m.
- No badger setts were found or signs to indicate badgers are present on site.
- No suitable bat roosting habitat exists on site.
- The habitat is highly suitable for reptile species such as common lizard, slow worm and grass snake. The presence of amphibians is unlikely.
- There is no potential for barn owl roosting.
- A specialist reptile survey is required to determine presence/absence of this group. This should be undertaken before any vegetation clearance. If reptiles are found then a programme of mitigation must be carried out.
- Care should be taken to avoid disturbance of nesting birds on the site or adjacent land (March to July).
- Wildlife gardening principles should be applied to the gardens on the development (gardens can be havens for wildlife if managed appropriately).
- A variety of bird nesting boxes could be installed on buildings.
- The new hedgerows should be of native species to encourage a range of invertebrate and bird species.
- Bat boxes can be incorporated into the scheme in suitable locations.
- Mature trees should be retained, fenced off and protected during site construction. Materials should not be stored next to or against such features.

RELEVANT HISTORY

7. There is no history of planning applications being submitted/determined for any development of this site.
8. The application site is part of a larger site which was promoted by a developer (not the applicant) for inclusion in the Second Alteration of the Babergh Local Plan. These proposals were examined at the Local Plan Inquiry. The Local Plan Inspector's observations are summarised as follows;
 - Holbrook is an appropriate receptor for some limited housing to meet local needs. However, development of the scale proposed (circa 70 units) would be disproportionate to meet those needs.
 - Holbrook cannot be looked at separately from the development on the Shotley peninsular as a whole, where there are outstanding permissions on brownfield sites.
 - I do not share the view of the objector that the objection site would be well contained within the current form of the settlement. Most of the existing development is on the western side of Ipswich Road and particularly at the northern end of the village there is only sporadic development and substantially surrounded by open space.

- The development of the objection site would have a considerable impact on the countryside setting of the village and be an adverse intrusion in the landscape. Apart from its convenient location in relation to the High School, the objection site is not well related to the main part of the village.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

9. PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) - relates to achieving sustainable development and high quality layout and design.
10. PPS3 – (Housing) sets out the Governments housing policies for planning, including affordable housing.
11. PPS7 - (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) – sets out the Government’s policies for rural areas.
12. PPS9 – (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) relates to planning decisions affecting biodiversity and geological conservation issues.
13. PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) – includes Government Guidance regarding (inter alia) the setting of listed buildings.

PLANNING POLICIES

The following Development Plan policies are considered relevant to this application;

Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No.2)

- EN03 (protected species)
- EN04 (retention of semi-natural features)
- EN05 (mitigation of biodiversity impacts)
- HS03 (sustainable/non-sustainable villages)
- HS04 (dwellings in the countryside)
- HS06 and HS07 (rural exception – local needs housing)
- HS27 (housing density and house type)
- HS30 (design of new housing)
- HS32 (public open space provision – small sites)
- HS34 (smaller dwellings)
- CR01 (landscape quality)
- CR07 (landscaping of development in the countryside)
- CN01 (maintaining local distinctiveness)
- CN06 (development affecting the setting of listed buildings)

** please note that details or extracts of policies are no longer included in reports - see page 4 of these papers*

OBSERVATIONS

14. PC – Unanimously supports this application. They ask that some traffic calming measures are included as part of the S106 arrangements. They would also like to see the proposed footpath altered so that it does not end near Butchers Corner which is held to be a potentially dangerous crossing point, but to end by plot no.1 to encourage people to cross at this more appropriate and visible point.
15. LHA - No objection but requests some minor amendments to the proposed frontage footway. There will be a requirement to remove some of the lower branches on some of the frontage trees as they obstruct visibility and also users of the new frontage footway as they are too low. Subject to the amendments being made, conditions are recommended to ensure provision of visibility splays, details of the access and internal roads, timing of provision of the access, internal roads and other parking/manoeuvring areas, and surfacing.
16. Archaeology – The proposal area lies immediately adjacent to a known prehistoric occupation complex which is highly likely to continue into the application zone. The proposed works would cause significant ground disturbance with the potential to damage any archaeological deposit that exists. There are no grounds to consider refusal of permission in order to achieve preservation *in situ* of any important archaeological deposits. Any permission granted should be subject to a condition to ensure that adequate record is made of any features or finds which would otherwise be destroyed.
17. NE – comments awaited.
18. EA – comments awaited.
19. SWT - (First letter received) We have record of grass snakes from this site and a local resident has advised us of the presence of viviparous lizard and slow worm. It is essential that a comprehensive survey for reptiles is carried out at the appropriate time of year prior to this application being determined. If reptiles are found to be present, mitigation prior to development will be necessary. Given the circumstances we consider the measures to safeguard reptiles should be made a condition of planning consent.

(Second letter received) We have been contacted by a local resident expressing concern about the removal of a number of mature trees along the boundary of the site. They mentioned the area is used by bats and have identified long-eared bats as one of the species present. We do not have any records of a bat roost associated with these trees and it would not be possible to confirm the presence of bats without a survey. Even then it can be difficult to locate a bat roost within a tree with any certainty. As a rough guide, trees which are more than 100 years old or have a girth greater than 1.5 metres at 1 metre from the base may be suitable for bats if they have suitable hollows or areas of loose bark for roosting.

If permission is granted, work should proceed with caution. Timing of the operation is very important and we advise that work should ideally be carried out in September or October, which serves to avoid the bat breeding season and hibernation period as well as the bird nesting season.

20. Head of Contract and Asset Management – The trees comprise primarily of Field Maple probably planted and previously managed as a boundary hedgerow, occasionally interspersed with poor specimen Sycamore's. Due to the poor form caused by growing proximity, the long term viability of the trees is limited unless managed as a hedgerow. For this reason the trees do not sufficiently meet the criteria for protection with a Tree Preservation Order.
21. Head of Community Development – Looking at the need for Holbrook and taking into account the proposed local needs housing scheme I would argue that the need is strong enough for the scheme and the full quota of affordable housing on this site.

At August 2007 there were 255 applicants on the housing register, of which 152 are in housing need. 32 applicants have made Holbrook their first choice for an offer. 28 applicants have a local connection by address to the village. Clearly there is sufficient need to seek affordable housing at the Hither House site.

22. Representations – Two letters have been received in support of the application from local residents. The comments are summarised as follows;
- There is little or no affordable housing in the village at the moment.
 - Young people are having to move to Ipswich.
 - There is little property available for rent.
 - The site seems quite suitable as the road is reasonably wide.
 - The village would not be extended to any great degree.
23. Representations – Seventeen letters have been received objecting to the proposal. This issues and objections raised are summarised as follows;
- The site is outside the settlement boundary and therefore contrary to the Local Plan.
 - The site was rejected for inclusion in the built up area boundary as part of the plan making process.
 - The estate of exclusively affordable housing will create a divided community, on a single access site with no direct links to the main development parts of the village.
 - There are two better sites in the village for this development.
 - The development would be harmful to the setting of the listed buildings.
 - This development will pave the way for development of the whole field because the defensible boundary of the village will have been breached.
 - This development conflicts with the findings of the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector for the residential development of the site.
 - There have been appeals against refusals of planning permission for the erection of dwellings (including single dwellings) on the east side of the Ipswich Road.
 - The scheme represents over development of the site, with no play space for children.
 - The single-storey dwellings will be extended upwards in the future.
 - Night time lighting will intrude into the countryside.
 - The building materials are inappropriate to the setting of the listed building.
 - Eight trees will be removed. These are an integral part of the village and should be protected by a Tree Preservation Order.
 - The field has become an important wildlife resource, being unused for 15 years.

- The proposed development will overlook the properties of adjoining neighbours to the south and west.
- The scheme represents a conflict with the pattern of development to the east of Ipswich Road.
- The parking area (adjacent to plot 12) should be located elsewhere, away from the listed building.
- The increase in traffic movements will exacerbate the recognised danger of the adjoining Butchers Corner.
- The residents will have to cross the dangerous Ipswich Road to access the village facilities.
- The general design would fit into a town suburb not a peaceful village.
- A linear development would be more appropriate and less intrusive.
- The application is considered to be premature before the Local Development Framework Process has been consulted.
- There will be noise disruption during and following construction.
- People affected by the development should be compensated.

ASSESSMENT

24. The application proposes no housing for general needs; it proposes housing (12 units) which would be managed by a Registered Social Landlord solely to meet an identified local need. Given that the site lies in the countryside in planning policy terms, the lead planning policies in this case are Policies CS9 HS06 and HS07 relating to Local Needs Housing and Policies CRO1, HSO4 and CNO1, and HS30 of the Local Plan Alteration No 2 aimed at protecting the countryside and safeguarding it from development, securing a good quality of design for new residential development which respects the character of the area, residential amenity and road safety.
25. In these respects the following principle issues are relevant to the determination of this case:-
- **Housing Need**
 - **Sequential approach**
 - **Layout and Design**
 - **Highway Issues**
 - **Other issues**

Housing need

26. Policy HS06 states that providing schemes submitted by Registered Social Landlords are in accordance with a defined local housing need as defined in the Council Housing Survey, or similar reliable survey conducted to the satisfaction of the Council, then exceptionally planning permission for local needs housing will be granted. The Village must however be listed in Policy HS03 (which Holbrook is) and the scheme should be on a site within or abutting the built up area of the Village and acceptable in relation to the size and character of the village. Policy HS06 also requires the following criteria will need to be met:
- a) The local housing need cannot be adequately met by other planning policies including social housing provision associated with Local Plan housing allocations;

- b) The proposed development, by virtue of its size, scale and type will not exceed the identified local need;
- c) The type of dwellings to be provided are consistent with the needs identified by the Housing Needs Survey and agreed in advance by the Council.

The application is therefore assessed against these policies below.

- 27. Holbrook is a large sustainable village (Policy HS03) with a range of community facilities, including a high school, and some employment opportunities. The site proposed to accommodate the Local Needs housing scheme is located to the north east of the village, close to the High School. The site is outside but abuts the defined built up area boundary of the village.
- 28. The housing need in Holbrook is proven and given the size of need and very limited scope for infilling within the village it is highly unlikely that it would be met through social housing provision as part of windfall sites under policy HS08. Neither will the need be met by the applications of other planning policies as there are no land allocations for new housing development within Holbrook in the Local Plan where provision could also be sought under policy HS08.
- 29. If planning permission is granted for the proposed development, the number of units proposed (12) would not exceed the identified need. All of the housing would be available for rent to qualifying local families and residents. This follows the tenure type identified by the housing needs survey and this tenure type and size of the units was agreed with the Councils Housing Enabling team prior to the design and submission of this scheme.
- 30. In the light of the above, the scheme is acceptable and complies with planning policies HS06 and HS07. On this basis and having accepted the principle of development in this location, the scheme falls to be judged against the policies which seek to secure a high standard of housing layout and design in the interests of protecting the environment (including the setting of the adjacent listed buildings) whilst safeguarding residential amenity and road safety. It also has to be considered whether the proposed site is the best available in the village.

Sequential approach

- 31. This proposal for development of the Ipswich Road site has followed a number of years searching for a site within or adjacent to the village by the applicant in close liaison with the Parish Council. There are two potentially realistic alternatives to the Ipswich Road (Hither House) site, and these are also outside of the settlement boundary. Both sites were promoted for general needs housing development as part of the recent review of the Local Plan and are (i) land adjacent Vine Cottage and (ii) land at Hyams Lane.

Land adjacent Vine Cottage

- 32. This is located in the Street and was promoted as a housing site at the Local Plan Public Inquiry. The Inspector concluded that the site is divorced from the main part of the village by open uses (i.e. school playing fields) and does not read as an integral part of the built up area. He also considered that the development of the site (over 1 ha in size) would be an intrusion into the countryside and have an adverse impact upon the

Dodnash Special Landscape Area. Site investigations have also revealed that vehicular access would be difficult to achieve in an acceptable manner without the clearance of mature hedgerows and it would be difficult to physically provide footpath connections to the village. Furthermore, increased traffic movements are not appropriate at this part of the Street because the carriageway narrows. For these reasons, the Ipswich Road site is clearly a superior location to accommodate a Local Needs exceptions housing development.

Land at Hyams Lane

33. The owners of this site have expressed an interest in accommodating a Local Needs scheme on their site during the public consultation exercise for this application. This is probably the best site in the village in terms of integration with village facilities (except the schools), but on a rising site close to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty there are potential landscape impact issues. Safe vehicular access can only be achieved to this site from the north and the landowner has confirmed that there are third party landowners in-between the Hyams Road site and the edge of the public highway. This 'ransom' situation casts doubt over the deliverability of a local needs scheme and could take many months or years to resolve (it has already taken a number of years to get to this point), accordingly, it is considered that the Ipswich Road site is a preferable location because it is deliverable now.
34. Notwithstanding the above comments, the application proposal would not accommodate the level of housing need identified in the village and it may be the case that a second phase of local needs housing could be delivered at the Hyams Lane site. The applicant has indicated a willingness to investigate this potential and will approach the landowner and Parish Council.

Layout and design

35. The form of the development and the proposed materials to be used is described at paragraphs 3-5 above. The scheme has been designed to reflect the linear pattern on the opposite side of the Ipswich Road by placing 7 of the units (a terrace of three and two pairs of semi-detached dwellings) in a line facing the frontage. These would sit behind the existing line of mature trees, to the site frontage. The 'in-depth' nature of proposed development (i.e. the five dwellings sited behind the frontage dwellings) reflects the layout of the existing housing development to the south of the site which is set back from the Ipswich Road.
36. Vehicle parking is provided for each dwelling and there are no large communal parking areas. No garages are proposed. The majority of the trees to the Ipswich Road frontage are to be retained as part of the development, albeit some of the low branches to the Ipswich Road side will need to be removed to provide the access with suitable visibility. The trees are not considered worthy of protection by Tree Preservation Order, nonetheless their health and wellbeing can be protected by exercising appropriate controls over the development. New planting is proposed to side and rear boundaries to soften the potential impact upon the countryside and adjacent development.

37. The orientation of the proposed dwellings and their siting has been considered in order to ensure a satisfactory relationship with adjoining residents. Given the separation between the proposed dwellings and those in the existing cul-de-sac off Ipswich Road to the south of the site, concerns regarding potential overlooking and/or dominance do not arise. Similarly, the development would not be harmful to the setting of the listed buildings to the south which back onto the site.
38. A mix of materials are proposed and a condition is recommended to ensure samples are submitted for approval. This is to ensure materials are incorporated which are sympathetic to the site's rural location, adjacent to the listed buildings.

Highway issues

39. The views of the views of Local Highway Authority have been received (para. 16 above) and they have requested a minor amendment to the frontage footpath to the south of the proposed vehicular access. An amended plan has been submitted to illustrate the changes requested and this has been forwarded to the Authority for further comment. It is anticipated that the amendment will be accepted by the Local Highway Authority and there will be no highway safety concerns arising from the development, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

Other issues

40. Policy HS32 of the Local Plan Alteration No. 2 requires the provision of public open space and play equipment in proportion to the number of dwellings proposed. Developers can either provide a financial contribution or provide 10% of the application site as open space. In this case and as the scheme relates to affordable housing provision on an exceptions basis no such provision is being sought in accordance with the terms of the policy.
41. The number of dwellings proposed falls below the threshold for education contributions and therefore no such payment is sought.
42. Given the views of the SWT which indicate that protected species have been detected at the site, the applicant has submitted an ecological survey of the site. This document has been forwarded to NE and SWT for comment. Any further comments received in advance of the meeting will be reported separately.

Conclusion

43. A granting of planning permission for the proposed development would not be at odds with the conclusions of the Local Plan Inspector regarding this site (paragraph 8 above). The Inspector considered a general needs housing proposal on a larger site (circa 70 dwellings) for formal inclusion into the Local Plan. The current application is for a small Local Needs exception housing scheme on a smaller site and is subject to different policies (including over-riding Government policies). Accordingly, a comparison with the 'Local Plan scheme' cannot reasonably be made. Furthermore, a grant of planning permission for this local needs housing scheme outside the settlement boundary would not set a precedent for general needs housing development adjacent to the site or elsewhere in the village or district because this particular development is supported by national and local policies (general needs housing development outside of settlement

boundaries has no support in the Development Plan, other than, where fully justified, barn conversions or agricultural workers' dwellings).

REASONS FOR APPROVAL

44. (Subject to no adverse comments or objections being received from LHA, NE or SWT) Having regard to the housing needs of the Holbrook village, the location of the site abutting the built up area boundary of the village, close to the high school and within reasonable walking distance of other village facilities and the lack of alternative sites capable of delivering an affordable housing scheme, the proposal is an acceptable exceptions based local needs housing scheme and is in accordance with the provisions of policies HS06 and HS07 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2 (2006). Furthermore, the proposal complies with Development Plan policies EN03, EN04, EN05, HS27, HS30, CR01, CR07, CN01 and CN06. These seek to protect the countryside, setting of listed buildings, biodiversity interests and trees and hedgerows from inappropriate development. They also seek to secure quality layouts and designs in new housing developments which respect the local context and do not adversely affect highway safety interests. The application represents an acceptable proposal in housing need and design terms which would not have unacceptable adverse impacts on traffic/pedestrian road safety, residential amenity, biodiversity interests or the character of the area, the setting of the adjacent listed buildings or the environment in general.

RECOMMENDATION

- A. Subject to no adverse comments being received from i) the Local Highway Authority, ii) Natural England and/or iii) The Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and following the completion of an Agreement under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to secure the affordable housing and rental status of the dwellings in perpetuity, the Chief Planning Control Officer be authorised to grant planning permission subject to conditions, including:

- Samples of external building materials.
- Details of surfacing to access road and parking spaces.
- Landscaping scheme.
- Tree protection (including protective fencing and routes of services).
- Schedule of works to frontage trees.
- Details of means of enclosure.
- Withdrawal of permitted development rights for extensions and alterations.
- Withdrawal of permitted development rights for outbuildings (to plots 1, 11 and 12 only).
- As reasonably recommended by LHA.
- As reasonably recommended by EN and/or SWT.
- Standard archaeology condition.

Otherwise,

- B. Refuse planning permission. Reasons

- As reasonably recommended by CHA, EN and/or SWT.

- Housing development in the countryside (in the event that the S106 Agreement is not completed).

DECISION
