

**12/00293/OUT-MJ    ERECTION OF 11 DWELLINGS ON LAND AT  
CHURCHCROFT, BLYTHE BRIDGE ROAD, CAVERSWALL  
FOR THE EXECUTORS OF OSWALD MAC PHEARSON**

Parish: Caverswall  
Case Officer: Mrs. J E Curley

Grid Reference: 9524 4282  
Registration: 11/05/12

**THE APPLICATION**

This is an outline application also seeking approval of access, appearance, layout and scale. The proposal is for a development of eleven three bedroom cottages arranged around a new access road leading into the site from Blythe Bridge Road.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access statement (DAS), Ecology survey and Heritage statement. As usual Members are encouraged to read these documents prior to the meeting.

**SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION**

The application site extends to approximately 0.46 hectares. It occupies a very sensitive location situated as it is within the Conservation Area and also affects the setting of a number of nearby Listed buildings, notably St Peters Church and Dove House Farm. It contains a large modern bungalow (effectively the former farmhouse), a large agricultural building and land which is overgrown and unused. Land levels rise from Blythe Bride Road towards to the north eastern boundary (the cemetery) and also in north – south direction. The boundaries are a mix of stone walls, hedges and trees. None of the trees are protected. A public right of way runs along the south westerly boundary of the site.

**PLANNING HISTORY**

11/00497/OUT-MJ    Residential development (Outline). Withdrawn.

**CONSULTATIONS**

Parish Council Very serious objections on grounds of Conservation Area, access and traffic problems, narrow entrance, increased off road parking, drainage, proximity to the school and Listed buildings, inappropriate site, agricultural tie, public right of way, exceeds quota for the village and bats have been recorded in the farm buildings.

Local Highway Authority    No objection subject to conditions

County Education    Advise that they will not be requesting a contribution as schools have sufficient capacity

Policy Officer    A decision must be reached as to whether the loss of this greenfield site is justified by the provision of additional housing in a settlement identified for only limited "infill" housing, in the RSVCS. Therefore, firstly since the NPPF and RSVCS generally prioritise brownfield sites, has the applicant considered

whether there are any brownfield sites within the village which could be developed first (or demonstrated why such sites would be unviable to develop)? The scale of this scheme needs further justification. Does the submission address and does the design reflect the likely housing needs of current/future Caverswall residents, in terms of house size and tenure? A view therefore needs to be reached as to whether the applicant has justified the number of units generally. Is the density appropriate to surroundings? Could a smaller site area be developed, to retain an element of greenfield, whilst achieving an appropriate density? Regarding the Section 7 NPPF position regarding design and open spaces, does the site (and house to be demolished) have strong visual openness/aesthetic or historic value? If so, does the proposal unacceptably reduce this? See also Section 12 on Conserving the Historic Environment (refer to conservation officer). Notwithstanding SMLP H4, you need to be minded that:-

- the applicant has first demonstrated that there are no sequentially preferable (viable) brownfield sites within the village boundary; and
- the number of units need justification with regard to RSVCS Pols SS6/SS6B – is the number of units appropriate to addressing local housing needs only? Does the scale need to be reduced? And
- even if the first two bullets are satisfied, does the site (and house to be demolished) have strong visual openness/aesthetic or historic value which would override the NPPF para 14 presumption in favour of achieving (housing) targets expeditiously?

If you are not satisfied that all of these issues have been addressed, the applicant should be invited to address them. If they are unable to do so the application can not be supported on policy grounds.

Countryside Officer                      Awaited

Conservation Officer                      Object

Conservation Liaison Panel              Support in principle. Redesign of the wide gables is required. Good quality materials and details sought.

Housing Officer              No objection since the properties are situated within the development boundary and below the threshold requirements for affordable housing.

Environmental Health Officer              Awaited

Severn Trent Water                      Awaited

British Coal                      No objection

Design review Panel              Overall consider the height, scale and density to be generally acceptable. Concern about some design of some of the units and level information

Police Architectural Liaison Officer              Awaited

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

A Site Notice has been displayed and the application advertised in the local press. Immediate neighbour notified by letter.

10 letters of representation received raising the following issues:-

1. Inappropriate density, over development of the site
2. Over loading of drains
3. No affordable housing provision
4. Bungalow has an agricultural tie
5. Site is within the Conservation Area and proposal will be detrimental to it.
6. Site is within the Green Belt
7. Road access is poor and area already congested with traffic
8. Highway safety issue as next to school.
9. Decrease in value of property
10. Loss of view and privacy
11. Detrimental impact on the character of the village
12. There are bats in the barns
13. Village has already had its quota. Seven dwellings are being built at Dove House Farm
14. There are numerous houses up for sale in the village
15. The property has not been offered for sale
16. Approval has been given for Dove House barns and this will only add to the congestion.

2 letters of support received commenting as follows:-

1. As one of the few people that can overlook the site consider it to be a welcome development to replace the existing large ugly asbestos clad building
2. Site is an eyesore and this is an opportunity to improve the entrance to the village
3. Three bedroom properties would appeal to families which is what the village needs.
4. The village has 2 excellent schools, 2 pubs, 2 churches, a village hall, a post office/grocery store.
5. Will be good for the village

## **PUBLICITY**

Expiry of:-

Site notice – 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Neighbour notifications – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Press Notice - 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012

## **POLICIES**

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

H4 Housing

B13 Built Environment

National Planning Policy Framework

## **OFFICER COMMENT**

1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that this

application be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. It does however provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications (para 12).

2. In terms of the principle of development, the starting point has to be the development plan. Within the adopted Local Plan, the application site lies within the development boundary of Caverswall. Its development for housing is therefore generally in accordance with Saved Policy H4 which expects new housing development to be located within development boundaries where it can be satisfactorily and economically serviced. The sympathy of a proposal with the character of the existing settlement in terms of density as well as scale and environmental quality is a further expectation (Policies H4 and B13) and is examined further below.

3. In the emerging Core Strategy (Revised Submission Version) Caverswall is identified as a small village where limited infill development will be permitted and where development is for local needs or affordable housing. The intention is that such villages will have an Infill boundary defined within which limited development will take place. Infill boundaries have yet to be determined and will be considered as part of the Site Allocations DPD. Whilst the Core Strategy can be given much greater weight as it now been subject to formal consultation, it has yet to be submitted. The policies therein are still therefore subject to examination and the test of soundness by an Inspector.

4. The recently published National Planning Policy Framework seeks to expedite the achievement of housing targets. It says that applications for housing development should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and it requires LPA's to have a continuous 5 year supply, of deliverable housing land including an additional 5% buffer at all times. It further advises that where a LPA can not demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, the relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. The Policy Officer confirms that there is currently less than a 5 year land supply against the emerging Core Strategy figure.

5. Having regard to these matters it is considered that the fact that the site lies wholly within the Development boundary of Caverswall as defined in the adopted Local Plan together with the current lack of a continuous and deliverable 5 year supply of housing land within the District and the advice in the NPPF that housing applications should be considered favourably that these matters weigh in favour of supporting the principle of development, notwithstanding its Greenfield status and identification in the emerging Core Strategy as a small village. In these circumstances therefore no objection is raised to the principle of development. There are however other issues to consider and these include the layout and impact on neighbour amenity, design and appearance, access and ecology

#### Layout

6. The layout shows a development of 11 units arranged in three terraced blocks together with a single detached house. Generally the number, scale and siting of the buildings is starting to create a development which should be readily assimilated into the settlement. However, as has been pointed out many times to the applicant, this is a

very sensitive site, to be viewed from all directions, and it is imperative therefore that the full detail of the scheme is known and assessed at this stage. The National Planning Policy Framework requires such a rigorous approach. It says at paragraph 132 that great weight should be given to the conservation of the asset, which in this case includes the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby Listed buildings, notably St Peters Church and Dove House Farm. The more important the asset it says, the greater the weight should be.

7. The scheme has been subject to pre application discussion. Whilst the application has taken on board some of the advice given, it has not done so entirely. Indeed during the processing of the current application, the applicant's attention has been drawn to a number of short comings with the scheme. Again whilst some of these have been addressed in amended plans, there remain a number of areas of concern in terms of design. These include the fact that Plots 1 and 4 present over-wide gables with an awkward arrangement of openings, with Plot 1 being particularly prominent from the road. The three corner plots (Plots 3, 7 and 9) are clumsy and will result in awkward and overbearing roof details. These have not been addressed. There is a lack of proposed level information and the proposed street-scenes do not appear to be an accurate representation of the development as built. The Conservation Officer shares these views. She also comments that the drawings contain little detail and some elements that do not reflect the local vernacular. For example brick on edge lintels, chimneys not on the ridges, vertically sliding sash windows and slate roofs. She also comments that indicative building details and materials ought to be provided – chimneys, porches, eaves and verge details, window details, boundaries etc. for clarity about the palette of materials and details. She is concerned that for such a sensitive and historic environment, too much detail will have to be secured by condition which will create much uncertainty and has strongly objected to the application on this basis.

8. In terms of the relationship with neighbouring dwellings, the Councils Space about dwelling standards are met. Both numbers 1 and 2 Church Terrace sit at a much lower level to the site. Views into the rear of No 2 are already available from the public footpath. That position will not change as a result of the proposed development and the fact that the closest property, Plot 4 is orientated such that its principal windows face away from this property will ensure that there is no issue of loss of privacy/overlooking as a result of the proposed scheme. In respect of no 1 Church Terrace, this property is largely hidden from view from the application site owing to the presence of a substantial outbuilding and mature vegetation. For similar reasons above, it is not considered that this property will suffer any adverse loss of amenity. Church House also sits at a lower level. It has much larger garden area to the front (south) of the house. It is considered that there is sufficient space between this property and proposed Plot 1 for there not to be any undue loss of amenity.

9. In terms of the Councils space about dwelling standards, in a number of instances the plots have private rear gardens below the guideline of at least 65 square metres as set out in the Local Plan. For example Plots 1 and 2 have gardens of approximately 50 sq metres. Whilst some relaxation of the guidelines for these smaller properties may be tolerable, Plot 3 which is a relatively large 3 bedroom unit has only 55 square metres of private amenity space. This is considered to be unacceptable.

10. The conclusion to be drawn therefore is that the scheme is too vague for this very

sensitive site in the Conservation Area, contains illustrative drawings that are not correct, includes several buildings of poor form and alignment, poor building detailing and in parts does not provide a satisfactory standard of amenity. There is conflict therefore with B13 of the Local Plan and national advice in the NPPF.

#### Access

11. A new access is proposed onto Blythe Bridge Road. This will be 5m in width with footpaths connecting into the existing right of way. Visibility splays of 2.4m by 43m can be achieved in each direction. Within the site the access becomes a shared surface. A new 2m footpath is also proposed along the entire site frontage. The submitted plans show 22 car parking spaces equating to two per dwelling.

12. The Local Highway Authority raises no objection to the application subject to conditions. These include a requirement to provide dropped crossings of the new footway to link the development to the existing footway on the opposite side of Blythe Bride Road. There is also a requirement for the visibility spays to remain clear of any obstruction over a height of 600mm.

#### Ecology

13. An ecology survey has been submitted with the application. This has revealed that there are no issues with Great Crested Newts, bats or birds. The comments of the Countryside Officer are awaited and will be reported at the meeting.

#### Other Issues

14. The site is below the threshold for the provision of affordable housing.

#### Overall balance and conclusions

15. The NPPF presumes in favour of sustainable development. It says that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that Councils should have a continuous and deliverable 5 year supply of housing land. Paragraph 58 says developments should respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and material and be visually attractive. Paragraph 64 says that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way that it functions.

16. Currently the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply. In circumstances such as this, the test at paragraph 14 is whether the adverse impacts of a grant of permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. In this particular case and for the reasons outlined above it is concluded that the scheme is too vague, contains illustrative drawings that are not correct, includes several buildings of poor form and alignment, poor building detailing and in parts does not provide a satisfactory standard of amenity. The proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of the nearby Listed buildings and it is considered that this harm would significantly and demonstrably override the provision of housing in this particular case. A recommendation of refusal is therefore made.

#### Parish Council Views



The comments of the Parish Council have been addressed above

#### Public Views

The views expressed by the public have been addressed above. Loss of property value is not a material planning consideration.

#### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

That planning permission is refused for the following reason:-

This is a very sensitive site which lies within the Conservation Area and affects the setting of nearby Listed buildings, St Peters Church and Dove House Farm. It is also a prominent site marking the entrance to the village of Caverswall. Such a sensitive and historic environment demands a scheme of sufficient detail and execution to ensure that it is appropriate in context and improves the character and quality of the area. In this case it is considered that the scheme is too vague, contains illustrative drawings that are not correct, includes several buildings of poor form and alignment, poor building detailing and in part does not provide a satisfactory standard of amenity. The recently published National Planning Policy Framework presumes in favour of sustainable development and seeks to boost housing land supply, particularly in cases such as this where the Council can not demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land. However the NPPF confirms that seeking good design is a means to securing sustainable development and that permission should be refused for development of poor design. It is considered that in this case the adverse harm of a grant of permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the provision of additional housing. As such, the proposal conflicts with Policy B13 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and advice in the National Planning Policy Framework.







