
MAIN CASE

Reference No: 20/00296/OUM

Proposal: Development of retirement care village in class C2 comprising housing with care, communal health, wellbeing and leisure facilities; and C3 affordable dwellings (comprising up to 30% on-site provision), public open space, play provision, landscaping, car parking, access and associated development

Site Address: Land Rear Of 163 To 187 High Street Bottisham

Applicant: Bottisham Farming Ltd

Case Officer: Anne James Planning Consultant

Parish: Bottisham

Ward: Bottisham
Ward Councillor/s: Charlotte Cane
John Trapp

Date Received: 26 February 2020 **Expiry Date:** 4th March 2021

V139

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Members are recommended to REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The development of the site to provide a 170 bed retirement care village and 30% affordable housing units would encroach upon the open countryside and result in substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt when compared to the nature and characteristics of the existing agricultural land. The case for demonstrating very special circumstances to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt has not been demonstrated. The proposal fails to comply with any of the exceptions within Para 145 and 146 of the NPPF and comprises inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV10 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 and section 13 of the NPPF 2019.
2. The application site lies in the open countryside, outside of the development envelope of Bottisham where development is controlled. The construction of a 170 bed retirement care village as well as 30% affordable housing units on an unallocated site in the countryside, which does not meet the aims and objectives of policy HOU6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015, due to the proposal

causing harm to the character and setting of the area, would therefore give rise to an inappropriate development with no justification to override the normal presumption against development in the countryside as set out in Policy GROWTH2 of the Local Plan. As such it is contrary to Policies ENV1, ENV2, HOU6 and GROWTH2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 that has regard to the need to protect the countryside and the setting of towns and villages.

2.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

- 2.1 This report supersedes the original Committee report which was withdrawn from the Agenda of the Planning Committee dated 7th October 2020. Following the withdrawal of the application from Planning Committee the applicant has revised the outline application which considers the matter of access, with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered at the reserved matters stage.
- 2.2 The applicants have been provided with an opportunity to amend the application to address a number of concerns highlighted by technical consultees. The applicants considered they were not provided with sufficient time to address these concerns and therefore the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Planning Manager agreed to provide the applicants with a further period in which to submit this information. As such a number of the previous reasons for refusal have been addressed. The applicants have also suggested the Council contacts the Service Director - Commissioning - People and Communities Team at Cambridgeshire County Council, however, at the time of writing no response has been received. A further update will be provided at Committee.
- 2.3 Outline permission is sought for the development of a retirement care village (Class C2) comprising housing with care, communal health, wellbeing and leisure facilities as well as C3 affordable dwellings (comprising up to 30% on-site provision), public open space, play provision landscaping, car parking, access and associated development. A new vehicular access is being created from the High Street and this will run adjacent to the western boundary. The access road will be 5.5m wide and incorporate a pedestrian footway along one side. Pedestrian access only is proposed from Rowan Close.

Bottisham Parish Council – 4th January 2021 (comments on revised proposal)

Bottisham Parish Council does not support this planning application for the reason outlined within this report.

Green Belt

This application is for a development on land currently designated as Green Belt, which provides for general exclusion of development apart from exceptional circumstances.

NPPF policy numbers 145 and 146 indicate the exceptions that may be made for development on Green Belt. In the 2009 Master Plan, developed in conjunction with ECDC, the Parish Council supported planned limited development on Green Belt off Bell Rd to provide affordable homes for the village. This is an area with limited landscape value and well away from the more historic part of the village and Conservation Area. Recently planning consent has been given for a further 50 homes (identified as BOTT 1 in the ECDC 2015 Local Plan) with provision for type 3 & 4 affordable housing. The Council sees no requirement for further affordable housing elsewhere in the village.

The proposed development adjoins the conservation area, is outside the building envelope and is on an area long recognised as of significant landscape value (see “Landscape” comment below). Parish Council has long sought to protect this area due to its unique character. During the review of the East Cambs Local Plan, we were explicitly assured by ECDC planning officers that it was not necessary to apply for Local Green Space designation, which would give a high level of protection for special green areas. We were informed that it already had a high level of protection, due to the Green Belt, Conservation Area and the village envelope, plus the Structure Plan 1995 statements. We would ask ECDC to respect this commitment given to the Council.

The Inspector supported the need to protect our Green Belt during the recent refused appeal for planning permission on a very small area of adjacent Green Belt belonging to First Copy. Reference was also made to the need to limit development outside the village envelope.

Any development in this area would be deemed as an encroachment and undermining of the rural character of the landscape and have an adverse effect on the neighbours and residents in other areas within the village and surrounding areas. It would also very significantly increase the number of houses, relative to the current size of the village, and we believe the infrastructure would not be able to cope.

If East Cambridgeshire District Council wishes to support development of a retirement village we would argue that it should be located on areas without Green Belt status. It does not merit an “exemption” on Green Belt.

Local Services

The Bottisham Surgery provides health care for two care homes in the village, plus a high dependency unit, placing significant demand on local GP resources. It was keenly noted at the parish council’s consultation that residents were concerned by

the creation of a top heavy resident demographic. This would place a significant extra strain on medical and other resources in the village.

It should be noted that Planning Permission has already been granted for a further 50 homes in Bell Road, already adding to the strain on local services.

At this stage there is no information on how the retirement village will be managed and this could seriously impinge on the care and health of the residents who come to live there. This should be clarified at an early stage, as the residents are not going to be the usual mix of ages. They will be in one particular group which would bring added requirements of support.

The Surgery will require reassurances and information on how the care for emergencies and other care issues are managed.

Travel Implications

These will apply not only for residents but staff, visitors and delivery vehicles. The public transport to other towns is considered inadequate and there is no bus service on Sundays or evenings. This will undoubtedly encourage car use by residents and be inadequate for staff who will be involved in shift work. This will bring extra traffic into the village

Staffing for the retirement village will not come from Bottisham, as the Care Homes within the village already have a high percentage of staff (including cooks, gardeners as well as carers and nursing staff) drawn from outside of the village. This will again cause an increase in traffic due to the poor local public transport. This, at a time when East Cambs District Council is encouraging a reduction in the carbon footprint.

The subsequent addition of 50+ affordable homes will exacerbate the situation further.

Sewage Works

We have always questioned the statement from Anglian Water that there is adequate capacity. Residents in the area repeatedly comment on the early morning traffic of tankers removing effluent several times a week. If the retirement village and more affordable houses are built, as well as the 50 already granted permission off of Bell Road, then it could be estimated an extra two tankers a week will be required - as well as increasing the strain on a sewage farm built for much lower volume.

We also have concerns about the sufficiency of the infrastructure in the High St conveying waste water to the sewage treatment works. Following heavy rainfall over the Christmas period, there was significant sewage contaminated flooding in the High St close to the planned entrance to the development. This resulted in 2 feet of foul water in one property, with Anglian Water instigating emergency repairs to the local pumping station. This is the third such incident in 5 years causing damage to this property. We would ask that full investigation is made into ensuring that the

infrastructure is sufficiently upgraded to cope with the added strain of over 200 more homes.

Landscape and Visual Impact

We have previously commented on the Landscape and Visual Impact of this area during several submissions to reviews. These include Green Belt policies and reviews in public, Local Plan and the review of the Structure Plan 1995. This concluded the area between the bridleway (now a public footpath) and The Grange (Hilton Park) is appropriately described as being of high landscape value and forms a clear cut, permanent and easily recognisable boundary for the Green Belt in the neighbourhood.

There is also a vista from the Nine Mile Hill to the Swaffham Road. This was referred to during the Consultation and opposition to the Nine Mile Hill application in 1991.

Any applicants will go to considerable lengths to reduce the impact of the proposal both in terms of layout, landscaping and usage. But, this will not overcome the detrimental impact on the area. Bottisham is a rural village and it is important that we preserve the Green Belt to prevent urbanisation.

Highways, parking and safety issues

This village already has significant traffic issues and we have installed traffic calming speed indicating displays within the area to them. The traffic survey is misleading, as it was done during school holidays and at times when the village was quieter.

The area of the High Street and Beechwood Avenue close to the planned site entrance already has significant parking problems due to the primary school - especially at school drop-off/pick-up times. Visibility will be impaired for residents and visitors entering and leaving the site and the increased traffic flow from this new development will significantly increase the possibility of accidents.

Approaching the site along the High Street from the village centre, there are concerns that the visibility on entering the site is impaired due to a neighbouring property's high wall.

The entrance to the play area has yet to be defined and there may be issues with ownership at the end of Rowan Close. However, if access is via Rowan Close, there will be issues with parking there – again likely to be worse during school pick up time. We are unable to see any provision in the draft plans for parking adjacent to the additional amenities promised for the village.

Consultations

We received the original application shortly before the Covid-19 restrictions, but managed to have a well-attended meeting in order for the Village to see the plans. We were not able to have a subsequent public meeting to discuss the feedback.

However, the Parish Council held an online meeting to discuss this and has done its best to represent local views given the circumstances.

The subsequent recent late changes to the application have given us inadequate time properly to consult with the village. We have, however, done our best to inform local people in the circumstances and gather residents' views.

Conclusion

We oppose this application for the following reasons:

1. The Parish Council has previously supported planned limited development on an area of Green Belt off Bell Rd, to allow provision of affordable housing for the locality in line with NPPF exemptions (with permission for a further 50 homes recently given). This is in an area that is well away from our Conservation Area/historic parts of the village and has limited landscape value. The Parish Council does not believe there is need within Bottisham for provision of further affordable homes. There is no justification for this proposed development on an area of Green Belt long recognised as having significant landscape value and which will negatively impact the Conservation Area. It is also outside the village envelope.

The local Green Belt is the only area of Green Belt in ECDC and should be protected to prevent urban sprawl from Cambridge. ECDC has adequate supplies of available land for development elsewhere that will supply further affordable homes without requiring development on Green Belt.

2. The need for a retirement village of this scale in Bottisham (or the local area) has not been demonstrated. The expected cost means that only a few residents will be able to afford to live in the retirement village and the majority of residents will be incomers. Bottisham already has significant provision for the elderly, with three residential care facilities and the arrival of a large retirement village will, we believe, negatively impact on the provision of medical care for other residents.

3. While we fully oppose any development in this area of Green Belt, we would point out that the suggested placement of all the affordable homes in a "ghetto" is not in line with guidance that recommends no more than 15 residences in one parcel to ensure a balanced and sustainable community. This guidance will be adhered to in the planned development of BOTT 1, where the affordable housing will be well integrated within the wider development. Policy HOU 3 of the Local Plan 2015 also requires that, in the south of the district, 40% of the total number of dwellings are affordable - not the 30% currently proposed.

4. If this application is referred to Planning Committee, then we will inform the Village and also use our right to attend the meeting to speak.

5. In summary we strongly urge this application be refused. There is no demonstration of a local need for either affordable homes or a large retirement village that justifies development on a Green Belt area long recognised as deserving of protection.

Parish - 12 May 2020

The Parish Council wish to reinforce our position that as indicated in our earlier submission, we do not believe this land is suitable for development under any circumstances and we would ask that this is taken into account when the application is being considered by the officers of the Planning Dept.

Parish - 20 April 2020

Bottisham Parish Council does not support this planning application for the reasons outlined within this report.

- Impact on the Green Belt, Conservation Area and development envelope.
- Any development such as this would very significantly increase the number of houses, relative to the current size of the village, and we believe the infrastructure would not be able to cope.
- No demand for retirement homes of this kind and should be located where there are large areas of brown and greenfield land without Green Belt status.
- The Bottisham Surgery provides health care for two care homes in the village, plus a high dependency unit, placing significant demand on local GP resources. It was keenly noted at the parish council's consultation that residents were concerned by the creation of a top heavy resident demographic. This would place a significant extra strain on medical resources and like facilities in the village.
- It should be noted that Planning Permission has already been granted for 50 homes in Bell Road adding to the strain on local services.
- No information on how the retirement village will be managed and this could seriously impinge on the care and health of the residents who come to live there
- Travel implications for residents, staff, visitors and delivery services
- Sewage capacity questioned.
- Landscape and visual impact
- Highways, parking and safety issues
- The traffic survey is misleading, as it was done during school holidays and at times when the village was quieter.
- The area near to the Scout Hut on the High Street, close to the proposed access to the site, is a potential danger due to parking during school picking up times and when events are being held there. Visibility will be especially impaired for residents and visitors entering and leaving the site.
- High Street and Beechwood Avenue have significant parking problems as it stands. The increased traffic flow coming from this new development will significantly increase the possibility of accidents. This will be particularly the case at pick up and drop off times at the primary school. Parking for visitors to the site could be an issue, leading to an increase of cars parked in the High Street and Beechwood Ave close to the primary school. These are already a dangerous place for children arriving and leaving.
- Approaching the site along the High Street from the village centre, there are concerns that the visibility on entering the site is impaired due to a neighbouring property's high wall.
- The entrance to the play area has yet to be defined and there may be issues with ownership at the end of Rowan Close. However, if access is via Rowan Close, there will be issues with parking there - likely to be worse during school pick up time.

- Contrary to policies of the NPPF and the development plan.

Cllr Charlotte Cane, Bottisham Ward Councillor – 21st January 2021

I will not repeat the concerns which I have raised elsewhere, but would summarise my objections by saying this is a Green Belt site, so the presumption should be that it will not be developed unless an exceptional case can be made. The applicant is arguing that the exception is the need for provision for elderly people. I accept there is a general need for such provision, but I share the County Council's view that such need is not evidenced in Bottisham, not least because Bottisham already has significant provision. Such provision should be spread geographically so that people can stay within areas which they know and so that local infrastructure is not put under too much pressure.

There are two new points to address - the affordable housing and the biodiversity net gain.

There is undoubtedly a need for affordable housing in Bottisham. The Parish Council is well aware of this and has a record of supporting appropriate applications, such as the land off Bell Road. This proposal will put all the affordable housing in one separate area, rather than integrated throughout the development. It is also cut off from views across the public open space and there is no indication of the size of the suggested play space. The proposed access road does not appear to go to the area for affordable housing, so it is unclear how they are to access their homes. I note the commitment is for 'up to 30% of the total number of eligible units within the C2 development'. This is a very unclear commitment - they are merely saying they won't build more than 30%. Our policy for the South of the District is for 40%. If this development were to be given consent it would be as an exception, in which case we should be requiring at least 40% affordable housing properly integrated within the development. I cannot support this proposal as it currently stands.

The biodiversity net gain in this scheme has reduced from the original 10.35% to just 4.82%. This reduction is unacceptable - we should be requiring at least the original 10.35% - again, this is a Green Belt site, we should expect better than the bare minimum. I entirely agree with the CPRE's statement that "this application remains an inappropriate development that will cause severe and lasting damage to the local landscape and to the village character of Bottisham."

I consider that this application should be refused. If you are minded to recommend approval I should like it to go to Planning Committee.

16 March 2020

I have significant concerns about this application and ask that it should go to Planning Committee, if you are minded to approve the application.

It is an application which will impact beyond the village of Bottisham and East Cambridgeshire District Council. I therefore ask that you also formally consult the South Cambridgeshire Councillors for Fen Ditton & Fulbourn ward and the neighbouring Parish Councils. I should also be grateful if you could make

arrangements for them to present their case to the Planning Committee along with Bottisham Parish Council and the Bottisham ward Councillors.

Bottisham already has one of the largest nursing homes in the East of England, in Hilton Park Care Home, as well as Queen's Court, a residential and dementia care home. It is therefore very hard to see a justification for a retirement village.

The Bottisham Surgery provides excellent primary health care to residents of Bottisham and the surrounding villages. They already have a high proportion of elderly patients and have stated that 'the sudden expansion in our practice population associated with the retirement village will create additional demand for services which we are unable to resource'.

The site is within Green Belt and therefore the presumption should be that it is not developed. With Hilton Park Care Home, Queen's Court and the bungalows in Downing Court and around Bottisham, there is ample provision for retired people from initial downsizing through to full care.

I note that the applicant considers that the site 'lends itself to sustainable travel negating the need to commute by private car.' Unfortunately, I cannot agree with this. The staff will work shifts which will include night time and Sunday shifts. At these times there are no bus services and it is a significant distance to cycle from Newmarket or Cambridge railway stations. In any event, a 40 minute bus ride (plus up to 60 mins wait to change from train to bus) will be unattractive to people, who will thus be likely to use their cars instead. Similarly, families visiting their relatives will find public transport both inconvenient and expensive and are thus likely to drive. The residents are likely to want to travel outside of Bottisham and sometimes outside of the hours when buses run - eg they cannot return home by public transport after an evening out in Cambridge. They are therefore likely to want a car and to use it even when there would be public transport options. If approved this development would add to traffic on already busy roads and could add to parking issues within Bottisham.

For these reasons, I would ask that the application be rejected. But if you are minded to approve the application, I should like it to be considered by the Planning Committee.