

Fulbourn Forum for community action

c/o 3 Geoffrey Bishop Avenue Fulbourn Cambridge CB21 5BU

Tel: 01223 880616 Email: fulbournforum@gmail.com



Mr A Fillmore
Planning and New Communities - Development Control
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge CB23 6EA

31 October 2014

By email and post

Dear Mr Fillmore,

Planning Application No. S/2273/14/OL Residential Development of up to 110 dwellings Land at Teversham Road, Fulbourn

We write to strongly object to the above application. The proposed development is unsustainable and inappropriately sited, and will create unacceptable harm to the amenity, services and facilities of the village of Fulbourn.

The developer is seeking to seriously circumvent local planning policy and gain planning approval in the 'interregnum' before the Emerging Local Plan is adopted. This is compounded by the fact that the whole scheme, apart from the road access from Teversham Road, is clearly illustrative only (Planning Statement, paragraph 1.2) and there is no commitment to providing a workable proposal that satisfies planning obligations or the interests of the local environment, the wider village and its residents.

A summary of our nine principal grounds for objection is below, **followed by** our more detailed analysis:

1. **The site has been previously considered in detail and rejected as unsuitable** for development by South Cambs following their 'Call for Sites', part of the Draft Local Plan process.
2. **The site is outside the village development boundary** – so proposals are contrary to the current Development Plan. Any development would be unsustainable development on greenfield land in an unsuitable location and cause material harm to the village and the surrounding area, including the adjacent Conservation Area.
3. **Local Plan Emerging Policy** – Fulbourn to be a '**Minor Rural Centre**' limiting new development to no more than 30 homes. Fulbourn does not satisfy the criteria to remain a Rural Centre.
4. **Local Plan Emerging Policy** – the two fields plus Poor Well and the old Pump House garden to be designated '**Local Green Space**' giving protection from development. The land has, for decades, been extensively used by the local community for leisure activities and can be considered a public amenity space. The land is demonstrably 'special' to the community

and the character of the village thus satisfying the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. **This housing is not required** to help meet SCDC/Cambridge City Draft Local Plan housing targets, or the 5 year housing land supply obligations, as the Memorandum of Understanding between SCDC and the City satisfies these requirements.
6. **No commitment is given by the developer** to satisfying the important issue of providing the statutory percentage of **Affordable Homes**, due to their own 'abnormal development costs' because of difficult site conditions.
7. **This technically difficult, wet site**, 'prone to surface water flooding' and with high ground water levels, will become an area of relatively dense housing surrounded by marsh, water retention basins and accessed by boardwalks, creating an unsuitable environment with difficult and expensive maintenance conditions.
8. **The wider village infrastructure** will be overwhelmed – further traffic congestion in the High Street, at the school and elsewhere; there is insufficient capacity at the Health Centre and at the school.
9. **Development does not take into account** the future completion of up to 340 new homes at the Swifts and the Ida Darwin hospital, and their effect on the village.

Our detailed principal grounds for objection are as follows:

1. **Unsuitable Site for Development** – the site has been previously considered in detail against an accepted set of criteria and rejected as unsuitable for development by South Cambs following their 'Call for Sites' (SHLAA) in 2012/13 during the Draft Local Plan process. It would be inconsistent for the site to now be taken forward for development.
2. **Contrary to Local Planning Policy (Development Plan)** – the site is outside the village development boundary in an unsuitable location (see also objections 1 & 7) and will cause material harm to the village and surrounding area, including the adjacent Conservation Area. The Town & Country Planning Act 1990 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There are no material considerations to suggest that planning permission should be granted.

The proposed development is not of a scale (higher density and height (2.5 storeys) than the adjacent properties) or nature that is appropriate to the character or appearance of the conservation area. The site currently provides a rural setting to the conservation area and the important sites within it (Poor Well, the Horse Pond, the old Victorian pump house and its adjacent garden) and enhances the nature of the village as a whole. The harm caused to the Conservation Area must be given weight when assessing the application. Indeed, if any harm is caused, there is a presumption that planning permission will be refused.

3. **Minor Rural Centre** – Policy S/9 of the Emerging Local Plan downgrades Fulbourn from a Rural Centre to a Minor Rural Centre in relation to its ability to accommodate housing development – new development shall not exceed 30 dwellings. The village, assessed against criteria set by SCDC, currently lacks and will continue to lack the range of facilities necessary for Rural Centre status. This proposal runs contrary to the properly researched planning assessment by the local authority. It should also be noted that the ratio of jobs to residents in the assessment is based on 2010 data and therefore does not take into account the Ida Darwin hospital being designated as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt for housing. As

a result this significant employment site will be lost to the village and further confirms the new downgraded designation.

4. **Local Green Space** – reflecting the special nature of the two fields in the application together with Poor Well and the old pump house garden, Policy NH/12 of the Emerging Local Plan designates the entire area as Local Green Space, a new designation in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The land has, for well in excess of 20 years, been extensively used by the local community for quiet, recreational activities and can be considered as a public amenity space, recognized as such by a Magistrate in a recent court case. By bringing the countryside, a remnant of the original fenland, into the village, the fields enhance the setting and appearance of this part of the village and contribute to retaining its rural character.

The view from Cow Lane from the centre of the southern boundary across Poor Well is much more open, especially in winter, than the totally misleading impression given in the Visual Impact Study. The backdrop to Poor Well is of high importance and visual permeability must be considered – the proposed development would be clearly visible. It should also be noted that the primary pedestrian and cycle access into the development site is via a boardwalk across Poor Well, which with lighting and other safety features would do considerable harm to this important natural feature. This land is not in the ownership of the applicant, being owned by the village through the Parish Council, and the developer will have no right to utilise the land for the purpose envisaged in the application.

Policy NH/12 states that a Local Green Space *“will be protected from development that would adversely impact on the character and particular local significance placed on such green areas which make them valued by their local community. Only in **exceptional circumstances and in discussion with the local community** would development be permitted”*.

The land is demonstrably ‘special’ to the community and to the village thus satisfying the requirements of the NPPF in its designation as Local Green Space.

5. **Housing Targets** – being rejected in the ‘Call for Sites’, this site is not now required to help meet the housing targets set by South Cambs in their Emerging Local Plan. Nor is it required to help meet their 5 year housing land supply obligations, as the Memorandum of Understanding concluded with Cambridge City ensures that jointly the two authorities have maintained the necessary land supply. The two Emerging Local Plans, South Cambs and Cambridge City, are being considered together at the Examination in Public, and the two authorities have a legal requirement to cooperate in the formulation of their respective plans. An individual council’s lack of a 5 year housing land supply should not therefore be used to argue in favour of a development in a highly unsuitable location.
6. **Lack of Affordable Housing** – the developer in their Planning Statement, paragraph 6.18, states “The amount and mix of affordable housing will be confirmed at the S106 stage and a viability assessment will be necessary to determine the level of affordable housing taking into account the **‘abnormal’** site circumstances, (and) development costs.....” In paragraph 3.6, the applicant again states that the amount of affordable housing will be confirmed at the S106 stage due to the **“‘abnormal’ site development costs”**. (See also objection 7 below)

The developer is, therefore, giving no commitment to providing the usual 40% of housing development as ‘affordable’ and is proposing that the number of affordable homes will be considered only after receipt of a planning consent. This is clearly not acceptable and is

contrary to the NPPF which makes it very clear that any proposed development should meet the size, type, tenure and range of housing required in particular locations. The proposed development does not accord with the local demand identified in Fulbourn's Housing Needs Survey and its Parish Plan, particularly with regard to the provision of affordable housing. It appears, therefore, that the scheme is financially unsustainable, and should be refused.

7. **Wet Site** – this technically difficult, wet site (previously the site of one of the main aquifers serving Cambridge) is '**prone to surface water flooding**' (Planning Statement, paragraph 6.54) and has 'elevated groundwater levels' (Planning Statement, paragraph 6.55). This is one of the reasons why the site has been rejected for development over many years. The site is at a low point in the village and the present wet conditions from the 'run-on' water into the site will be greatly exacerbated by the 'run-off' water from the proposed development.

The applicant aims to deal with this by raising floor levels and by providing residential and roadside rills (a shallow channel for running water) (inspired by Hobson's Conduit – Design & Access Statement 16.5), feeding into water storage areas. The development will become an area of relatively dense housing, surrounded by marsh and raised water retention basins, and accessed by boardwalks, creating an unsuitable environment with difficult and expensive maintenance conditions. These 'abnormal site development costs' and future maintenance costs will result in an economically unsustainable development proposal.

The 100 years plus 30% surface water provision is clearly inadequate – the site would need to be 'future proofed'. Noting that flooding already occurs in the adjacent Cow Lane, and in the light of predicted future extreme weather events due to climate change, this site should not be developed but retained as a natural, open, climatic 'safety-valve' to help alleviate and cope with unpredictable weather events in this part of the village.

8. **The Wider Village Infrastructure** – Fulbourn has had considerable expansion in the last 50 years resulting in increasing pressure on its original radial road network (six roads lead into the village), clearly seen around the very small and often congested High Street, where there is no space for dedicated off-road parking. The additional volume of traffic generated by the proposed development will worsen these existing problems resulting in parking moving into nearby, unsuitable residential streets. The same problem will be experienced at the entrance to the Primary School in St Vigor's Road where parents' cars already cause considerable congestion in the narrow roads of the adjacent sheltered housing scheme.

It is well known in the village that there is insufficient capacity at the school and at the Health Centre to accommodate the additional population from the development. We question the accuracy and validity of the School Provision statement in the applicant's Planning Statement. They claim that there is an existing surplus at Fulbourn Primary of 34 pupil places which is not correct and clearly contrary to the fact that mobile classrooms are already in use and the conversion of old school buildings underway. The applicant does, however, accept that the development will have an adverse effect on education provision but goes no way towards addressing the problem. We request that this application is not determined until a full assessment of the situation has been provided by Cambridgeshire County Council and a full and detailed mitigation strategy is prepared and accepted as realistic.

We also question the accuracy and validity of the applicant's Healthcare statement. It is well known locally that the Fulbourn Health Centre is, as a branch practice, over-stretched in its ability to satisfy demand from out-dated premises. The applicant states that the additional

demand created by the development can be accommodated at two practices in Cherry Hinton forcing residents to travel further afield to access healthcare provision (it is noted that no consideration has been given to the effect of other planned developments on healthcare facilities in Cherry Hinton). However, local practitioners say that they do not recognize the data quoted in the Planning Statement. We, therefore, request that this application is not determined until a full assessment of the situation has been undertaken in conjunction with the local GP practices and the possibility of any proposed mitigation strategy being workable is determined.

9. **Existing Planned Development** – the applicants development proposals do not take into account the future completion and the effect upon the village of existing planning permissions at the Swifts and the Ida Darwin hospital, bringing up to 340 new dwellings, probably over 800 people, into an existing village population of 3480 (Planning Statement, paragraph 5.23) – almost a 25% increase. We have previously campaigned against this large village expansion due to the inevitability of the wider village infrastructure being overwhelmed. This current application will be a development too far and would create unacceptable impact and harm to the amenity, services, facilities, and the people of the village of Fulbourn.

In conclusion, we note that the applicant is proposing that **all** detailed matters (other than means of access) including layout, scale, appearance and landscaping will be determined as part of ‘Reserved Matters’ applications. This cannot be right for an application of this size and complexity particularly considering all the issues involved as outlined in our response above. Subsequently, all scheme details, including the environmental proposals, are just indications of what **could** be done, they are not what the developer is committed to doing and there would be no opportunity for the Parish Council or the public to comment further. An outline application must clearly state what **must** be done. Similarly, all the Section 106 planning obligations must be clearly stated as part of the planning application submission before it is put before the planning committee for determination. The applicant is clearly attempting to avoid these fundamental commitments.

Yours sincerely,

David Cottee
Secretary, on behalf of **Fulbourn Forum** for community action
01223 880616 / fulbournforum@gmail.com