

Case No: 0500835OUT (OUTLINE APPLICATION)
Proposal: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1.3 HECTARES)
Location: LAND WEST OF THE PEOPLES CHURCH
MOORHOUSE DRIVE, HUNTINGDON
Applicant: HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Grid Ref: 524336 273225
Date of Registration: 16.03.2005
Parish: HUNTINGDON

RECOMMENDATION - APPROVE

This application site is located in Moorhouse Drive in Oxmoor. It is currently an area of public open space with a play area, known locally as the Spider Park. The former People's Church is also located within the application site. The application site is virtually surrounded by residential properties.

The application is for residential development of 1.5 hectares of land. It is an outline application. The application form indicates that all matters are to be reserved for subsequent approval. A detailed development brief has however been submitted in support of the application.

The land is owned by this Council.

A public exhibition was held on 15 and 16 April to publicise the proposal.

This site is an integral part of a major regeneration programme for the area being implemented by a partnership of public bodies, the voluntary sector and residents

1. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 1.1 **Planning Policy Statement 1 - Delivering Sustainable Development 2005** provides general advice on the planning system.
- 1.2 **Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 Housing 2000** - provides advice on housing related development. It stresses that the best use needs to be made of land and recommends that densities should be in excess of 30 dwellings per hectare at least and higher than this in town centre locations and in areas which are well served by public transport. It also stressed the importance of good design.
- 1.3 **Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 1991 - Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation** - discourages the use of existing open space for built development in the absence of a local authority audit to show

that the space is surplus to requirements. It does however recognise that not all open space is of equal merit and that some may be available for alternative uses. The local community is to be consulted to demonstrate that the loss of open space is supported.

2 PLANNING POLICIES

2.1 The following policies in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 are relevant -

- ◆ **P1/1** - sets out where new development should be located. Market towns like Huntingdon are identified as locations for new development
- ◆ **P1/3** - indicates that a high standard of design and sustainability will be required for all new development
- ◆ **P5/3** - indicates that densities of at least 40 dwellings per hectare will be required in areas close to a good range of services and where access to public transport is good and that densities less than 30 dwellings per hectare will not be permitted.
- ◆ **P5/4** - indicates that local plans should make provision to meet locally assessed need for -
 - Affordable housing including key workers
 - One and two bedroom homes
 - Housing suitable for elderly and those with mobility problems
 - Other groups including students, homeless, travellers, and gypsies
- ◆ **P4/3** - indicates that existing open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities should not be developed for another use if they are required to meet local needs unless alternative equally satisfactory provision can be made elsewhere in the local plan
- ◆ **P6/1** - indicates that development will only be permitted where the additional infrastructure and community benefits generated by the proposals can be secured.

2.2 The following policies in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan are relevant -

- ◆ **En25** - Indicates that the District Council will expect new development to respect the scale form materials and design of established buildings in the locality and make adequate provision for landscaping and amenity areas
- ◆ **R17** - indicates that the District Council will have regard to policy R1 and the standards set out in policy R3 and other policies of the local plan in determining whether alternative developments should be permitted on existing or proposed recreation or amenity areas including school playing fields.
- ◆ **R1** - indicates that the District Council will promote recreation and leisure projects of District wide significance

- ◆ **R3** - sets out standards for the provision of open space- in settlements of more than 1000 this is based on the standard of 2.43 ha(6 acres) per 1000 population.

2.3 The following policies in the Huntingdonshire Local plan Alteration are relevant -

- ◆ **STR1** - outlines the settlement hierarchy
- ◆ **STR3** - selects Huntingdon as a market town
- ◆ **HL5** - indicates that good design and layout will be required for all new housing development
- ◆ **HL6** indicates that housing densities will be between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare
- ◆ **AH1** defines affordable housing
- ◆ **AH2** indicates that to achieve affordable housing the District Council will require developers to undertake that the rent or purchase price of such housing is below the lowest price at which a choice of properties can be found.
- ◆ **AH3** - sets out the target for affordable housing
- ◆ **OB1** - the nature and scale of obligations sought from development will be related to the size of the development and the impact on physical infrastructure, social and community facilities and services
- ◆ **OB2** - financial contributions may be sought for the maintenance of children's play space and recreational facilities woodland or landscaping.

2.4 The Oxmoor Action Plan is also relevant

2.5 This plan has been adopted by the Council as Interim Policy Guidance. The Action Plan deals with the land use and spatial aspects of the wider programme to regenerate the area through the government's SRB programme and the government's Sustainable Communities Programme. The Plan identifies that new development supporting the community in Oxmoor is key to the generation of necessary funding to allow improvements to come forward. It highlights that a number of sites have the potential for residential development one of which is the application site.

2.6 The Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2002 is also relevant. This provides advice on how to ensure that development schemes embody the principles of good design.

3. **PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 None

4. **CONSULTATIONS**

4.1 **Huntingdon Town Council - NO OBJECTION (Copy attached)**

4.2 **Local Highway Authority - NO OBJECTION**

- 4.3 **Head of Housing - NO OBJECTION** subject to affordable housing provision
- 4.4 **Parks Manager-** No formal comments received
- 4.5 **Environment Agency** - No comments received
- 4.6 **CC Chief Financial Planning Officer** - Contribution towards education required
- 4.7 **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** - Adequate provision will need to be made for fire hydrants
- 4.8 **County Archaeologist** - recommend that site should be subject to programme or archaeological investigation.
- 4.9 **Head of Housing** - requires provision of affordable housing
- 4.10 **Countryside Services Team CCC** - Public bridleways 32 and 32 are adjacent to the east and west of the site but would appear not to be effected.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.1 **THREE** letters of **OBJECTION** and a petition with 92 names received the concerns being -

- ◆ Loss of open space/spider park
- ◆ Increase in number of residents in Oxmoor, which will add to parking problems

- 5.2 In addition 12 residents completed the forms at the exhibition, which was held in April. As however these residents were commenting on this proposal and the proposal for California Road and other works in Oxmoor it is difficult to extract their views on this specific scheme, and the summaries set out below relate to both this scheme and the scheme at California Road. 7 residents indicated that they did not support the proposals, 2 residents indicated that they supported the proposals and 3 residents had no opinion either way.

- 5.3 The concerns of the residents who did not support the proposals are -

- ◆ Loss of public open space
- ◆ Additional traffic
- ◆ Traffic calming on bend of Moorhouse Drive a waste of money - required on other sections of the road
- ◆ Are walkways across green adjacent College to be kept open during building process
- ◆ Where will teenagers go who congregate at night
- ◆ Too many houses being built within Oxmoor - insufficient infrastructure to support it ie shops, hospitals, doctors, dentists
- ◆ Nothing is being provided for young people - need facilities like ice skating rink and larger swimming pool

- ◆ Few facilities for disabled people- need a purpose built centre for disabled people
- ◆ Moorhouse Drive is often boggy
- ◆ Concerned that play area at California Road will not be big enough for football
- ◆ Why are only houses(in California Road Scheme) to have visual impact- everyone deserves an attractive home
- ◆ Excessive density can result in social issues

5.4 The residents who support the scheme make the following comments -

- ◆ Excellent chance to improve a very scruffy area
- ◆ Good to see removal of church as it is dangerous
- ◆ More facilities needed however to accommodate extra people in area such as schooling, shops, leisure facilities and parks
- ◆ Very impressed with the Coneygear Park Plans
- ◆ Impressed with Local Authorities efforts to improve the environment

5.5 The residents who neither supported or opposed the proposals made the following comments -

- ◆ Bridge at Sapley Square needs vandal proofing
- ◆ Older people need housing that will allow downsizing not just young people
- ◆ Children need places to play football
- ◆ Issue of child safety needs to be considered
- ◆ Concerned that exhibition clashed with another event. Queried whether options had been widely advertised.
- ◆ Will disability and elderly problems be dealt with

5.6 The Huntingdon Civic Society objects to the application for the following reasons -

- ◆ The site is well used as a secure children's - developing site would force children to play at the smaller more cramped play area behind St John's School
- ◆ There is semi-wild planting around the site which provides a habitat for wildlife
- ◆ The new development adjacent the College at California Road will provide a new population to use the play area.
- ◆ If refurbished the "People's Church" could be used in conjunction with play area to provide much needed secure nursery facilities.

6. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

6.1 The issues which need to be considered relate to whether the loss of the open space is acceptable; whether the principle of providing additional housing is acceptable; the content of the Development Brief; the effect on residential amenity; the effect on highway safety; drainage; crime prevention; and the benefit of the scheme to the regeneration of the area.

Loss of open space

- 6.2 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 stresses that there is a need to consider both the quantity and quality of the open space provision. It recommends that audits should be carried out to assess the quality of open space.
- 6.3 An audit has been carried out for Huntingdon. This included an analysis of the two types of open space - formal recreational and informal open space. This found that there was a total of 47.22 hectares of formal recreational space and 113.04 hectares of informal open space in Huntingdon. Overall, it was concluded that Huntingdon had a surplus of 16.79 hectares of formal recreational open space.
- 6.4 Oxmoor is also well supported in terms of existing formal pitch provision with both Sapley Park and King George V playing fields within easy reach. The Jubilee Fields at Kings Ripton Road require car borne access but Oxmoor is the nearest part of Huntingdon to these facilities.
- 6.5 Moorhouse Road is one of four sites identified in the Oxmoor Action Plan for housing. The development of these four sites would reduce the level of informal open space in Huntingdon to 105.05 hectares. Even allowing for the development of these sites Oxmoor would still have more informal open space per residents than other more modern developments in Huntingdon. There are 4.12 ha of informal open space per thousand people in Oxmoor. In Stukeley Meadows the ratio is 4.01 Ha per thousand population in Hinchingsbrooke 2.43 Ha per thousand population and in Sapley Road 1.33 Ha per thousand population.
- 6.6 Open space is integral to the character and layout of Oxmoor. All houses are within 100 metres or 1 minute walk of open spaces associated with housing. The Oxmoor Action Plan concluded that these small pockets of open space are close and safer to access than some of the larger more remote areas. Whilst Moorhouse Road is currently a valuable area of open space because it has a play area on it this is to be relocated to the adjacent area of public open space, as the attached plan shows. The Action Plan identifies open spaces where the investment of resources gained from the loss of other open spaces will be directly used to fund quality improvements including the establishment of a new park at Coneygear Road. Plans have already been drawn up for this. A comprehensive programme of open space/greenspace improvements are being put in place to enhance the quality and usability of open space areas in Oxmoor.
- 6.7 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 indicates that proposals to develop areas of space should be supported by the local community. In preparing the Oxmoor Action Plan consultation with the local community was carried out and residents agreed that -
- ◆ There was a large amount of open space on the estate
 - ◆ It was mostly of a uniform kind managed in the same way

- ◆ There were different sorts of spaces that could be treated in distinctly different ways

6.8 Objections to the loss of the open space have however been received from nearby residents. Many of the residents however would appear to have misunderstood the proposal and not appreciated that the play area is only to be moved a short distance onto an adjacent area of open space (as the attached plan shows).

Suitability for housing

6.9 The site is located within the built up area of Huntingdon and therefore the principle of developing the site for housing is acceptable. Policy HL5 in the Alteration to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan requires the best use to be made of land and policies P5/3 in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan and Policy HL6 in the Alteration to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan require that the density of development be at least 30 dwellings per hectare and more for sites well served by public transport. The development brief indicates that the site should be developed at an average density of 40 dwellings per hectare.

Development Brief

6.10 A very comprehensive development brief has been submitted with the application and this should help to ensure a high quality scheme at reserved matters stage. If a scheme is well designed it can reduce crime problems and social issues.

Effect on residential amenity

6.11 As this is an outline application no details of the proposed dwellings are available. The concept drawings however included within the development brief indicate how the land could be developed without effecting residential amenity.

Parking and access

6.12 Residents have expressed concern that the additional housing will increase parking problems in the Oxmoor. This will be a matter to be considered at reserved matter stage and care will need to be taken to ensure that the parking standards applied are appropriate to the area. The Highway Authority has advised that traffic calming in California Road is unnecessary.

Interim Planning Policy - Oxmoor Action Plan

6.13 The development of this site is an integral part of wider planning policies related to environmental improvements and the development of a new District Centre to serve the Oxmoor area. Both the development of this site and the new District Centre at Sapley Square are part of the government's Sustainable Communities Programme and implementation is interrelated. In considering this proposal the environmental, economic and social objectives being promoted for

Oxmoor should be accorded weight although technically the proposal will need to be referred to Full Council and the Government Office as a departure from the Local Plan should the Panel be minded to support the proposal. The Interim Planning Guidance whilst not part of the Development Plan is a material consideration which should be afforded weight in the decision making process especially as it has emerged from extensive consultation and involvement with the community and parties including the Primary Care Trust, County Council, Town Council and resident groups.

- 6.14 As part of the Oxmoor Action Plan measures are being put in place to improve the existing infrastructure. A new medical centre is under construction, which will not just include a doctor's surgery but other related health care provision. Sapley Square shops are being redeveloped. Environmental improvements are being carried out and Coneygear Park is to be improved. It would be inappropriate to provide facilities such as an ice rink or large swimming pool in Oxmoor. Central government advice is that the first choice of location for such facilities should be within town centres.

Youth, elderly and disabled issues

- 6.15 The concerns which have been expressed about the need for provision for teenagers, the elderly and disabled are noted however they do not relate specifically to the consideration of this application.

Planning obligations

- 6.16 The proposal is of a size, which would normally generate the need for contributions to -

- ◆ Affordable housing
- ◆ Open space
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Market town strategy

- 6.17 As the land is owned by this Council the level of contributions can be controlled through the sale of the land rather than through a Section 106 Agreement, which would be the usual mechanism.

- 6.18 As usual 29% of dwellings will need to be for affordable housing.

- 6.19 The Parks Manager has advised that normally for a scheme of this size the following commuted sums are required for off site play equipment and open space.

1. Children's play equipment

Capital costs £36,000
Maintenance Costs £9,500

2. **Children's and youth/adult open space**

Children's open space

Capital costs £1260

Maintenance costs £3240

Youth/adult open space

Capital costs £2,500

Maintenance costs £6,480

- 6.20 In this case however there is an existing play area which is to be moved and additional equipment is also to be added. There is therefore no requirement to provide a LEAP/NEAP. Additional equipment is also to be added to this play area. Improvements are planned for Coneygear Park and this meets the youth/adult open space requirement.
- 6.21 The Highway Authority has requested the usual contribution towards the Huntingdon Market Town Strategy. A number of Environmental Improvements have been carried out and are planned in Oxmoor and in this case, having regard to the regeneration needs of Oxmoor it is considered that it would be appropriate to concentrate expenditure directly in Oxmoor, rather than spend it throughout the town.
- 6.22 The County have requested a contribution towards education of £1,600 per dwelling.
- 6.23 In conclusion, whilst the proposal is technically contrary to the Local Plan there are material considerations, which include the surplus of open space in Oxmoor, and the regeneration benefits of the scheme to Oxmoor support this proposal. It is therefore recommended that the application be forwarded to Full Council and the Government Office as a departure from the development plan with a recommendation that permission be granted subject to conditions to include the following.

7. **RECOMMENDATION – APPROVE**, subject to conditions to include the following:

- 01001-** Details reserved
- 01003 -** Reserved matters within three years
- 01004 -** Dates for submission of details
- Nonstand -** Development brief
- Nonstand -** Grampian re contributions
- Nonstand -** Archaeology
- Nonstand -** Fire hydrants

Nonstand - Levels

Nonstand - Highway details and construction

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Application File Reference: 0500835OUT
Huntingdonshire Local Plan
Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan

Contact Officer: Sue Wheatley Development Control Team Leader
☎ 01480 388490