
Case No: 0102801OUT (OUTLINE APPLICATION)

Proposal: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (5.2 HECTARES)

Location: FORMER JEWSONS, FORMER LORDGATE, LEL & ADJOINING LAND LONDON ROAD, ST IVES

Applicant: MEYER INTERNATIONAL FINANCE AND PROPERTY PLC

Grid Ref: 530679 270194

Date of Registration: 03.01.2002

Parish: HEMINGFORD GREY

RECOMMENDATION - APPROVAL

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 The application site comprises some 5.2ha of land lying on the east side of A1096, London Road, south of St Ives. The site comprises mostly cleared, previously developed industrial land but it also includes some currently used (B2) industrial buildings and a nightclub. It has three permitted access points to the highway of which only the southernmost is currently operational.
- 1.2 Opposite, across London Road to the east are the residential estates of Greenfields/Mayfields and Elizabeth Court. To the south, some former farm buildings and dwelling now in use as riding stables and car repair service. To the north, the St Ives Motel and residential estate of The Limes. To the west, open farmland. The whole site lies in an area prone to flooding and within Huntingdonshire's Landscape and Townscape Assessment River Valleys landscape character area. The site lies within the defined settlement limits of Fenstanton/Hemingford Grey where only infilling will normally be supported. The site has been identified as being contaminated from previous uses.
- 1.3 This is an outline proposal for residential development with all matters reserved. Supporting documentation outlines the rationale for the proposal and the benefits that would accrue through application of Government guidance, PPG3/PPS3, PPG13 and Regional Planning Guidance. A design brief has been prepared for the site in conjunction with the Council. Heads of terms for any S106 Agreement have been advanced dealing with contributions towards recreation, affordable housing, education, transport and health issues.
- 1.4 The progress of the application has been slow due to several factors including the Alteration Local Plan process, the need to address flood, contamination, noise pollution, transportation and design concept issues. It has only recently been made complete by the finalisation of a design brief and the applicant making a commitment to deliver the infrastructure/community benefits.

- 1.5 The design brief indicates a scheme of some 155 dwellings of mixed style and accommodation with 62 (40%) dwellings proposed as affordable at a net density of 44 units per ha, set in landscaped grounds with casual and equipped play space, addressing drainage and flooding issues and connectivity. The design brief also provides a schematic layout and examples of house/building design. The built form is set back from the main road with a single vehicular access point and within a proposed landscaped setting allowing edge of countryside softening and opportunity for bio-diversity.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 **RPG6 - 'Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia' (2000)**
- 2.2 **PPS1 - 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (2005)**
- 2.3 **PPS3 - 'Housing' (2006)**
- 2.4 **PPS7 - 'Sustainable development in Rural Areas' (2004)**
- 2.5 **PPG13 - 'Transport' (2000)**
- 2.6 **PPG17 - 'Planning for Sport and Recreation' (2002)**
- 2.7 **PPG23 - 'Planning and Pollution Control' (2004)**
- 2.8 **PPG24 - 'Planning and Noise' (1994)**
- 2.9 **PPS25 - 'Development and Flood Risk' (2006)**

3. PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 The current Development Plan comprising the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (SP) and Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 as altered by the Local Plan Alteration 2002 (HLP) does not support this scale of residential development although there are issues concerning re-use of previously developed land particularly in sustainable locations. The Alteration Local Plan does not identify this site for residential use.
- 3.2 The site is within the Cambridge sub-region as identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003.
- ◆ **P1/1** – Approach to development
 - ◆ **P1/2** – Environmental restrictions on development.
 - ◆ **P5/1** – Housing distribution
 - ◆ **P6/1** – Development related provision
 - ◆ **P6/3** – Flood defence
 - ◆ **P7/4** – Landscape
 - ◆ **P8/1** – Sustainable development – links between development and transport.
 - ◆ **P9/1** – Housing distribution and affordable housing – Cambridge sub-region.

3.3 The following policies of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration 2002 are relevant -

- ◆ **STR1** - settlement hierarchy
- ◆ **STR3** - settlements designated as Market Towns
- ◆ **STR6** - settlements designated as infill villages
- ◆ **HL5** - good design and layout
- ◆ **HL6** - housing densities
- ◆ **HL7** - re-using brownfield land and buildings
- ◆ **AH4** - site targets for affordable housing
- ◆ **OB1** - nature and scale of obligations
- ◆ **OB2** - maintenance of open space

3.4 RSS - East of England Plan (draft) 2004;

The plan has had its examination in public and the Government has published the proposed changes (Dec 2006). The changes generally seek to bring about sustainable development (policy SS1), adopt an approach which prioritises the use of previously developed land in and around urban areas to the fullest extent possible while ensuring an adequate supply of land for development consistent with the achievement of a sustainable pattern of growth and the delivery of housing(SS2) and in respect of development in Towns, support urban and rural renaissance, secure appropriate amounts of new housing, including affordable housing and improve the towns accessibility especially by public transport (SS4).

3.5 The emerging Core Strategy 2006 (eCS) does not differ significantly from the HLP with regard to location of development. The submission to the Secretary of State includes strategies and policies which are reflective of the wider National and strategic policy guidance and draft RSS that place a heavy emphasis upon utilising previously developed land for housing albeit alongside the need to ensure that development takes place in sustainable locations and delivers housing objectives.

3.6 Policy E3-redevelopment of office, industrial land and warehouse sites does indicate that a development proposal should not entail the loss of established industrial estates as shown on the proposals map – (the site is not so identified) – and in respect of other sites used or last used –(which this is) – a development proposal should not entail their loss unless it can be demonstrated that its use for employment is no longer feasible, its use gives rise to unacceptable environmental or traffic problems, or an alternative use or mix of uses offers greater potential benefits to the community.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 There is a substantial history mainly relating to employment uses on the land. Recent history has not tested residential use at any appeal although permission was refused in 1995. The site was previously rejected during the preparation of the Huntingdonshire Alteration Local Plan 2002.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 **Hemingford Grey PC – OBJECTION** (Copy attached). A response from the Parish Council is yet to be received following a request to reconsider the proposal in the light of the amended design brief. The Parish Council are now generally supportive of the proposal. (copies attached)
- 5.2 **Fenstanton PC (Adjoining PC) - OBJECTION** (Copy attached).
- 5.3 **Local Highways Authority (County Council) – NO OBJECTION** subject to the submission of a detailed access scheme and a contribution of £2k per dwelling towards transport initiatives in the St Ives Market Town Strategy.
- 5.4 **Environment Agency (EA)** – Initially had objections to the proposal because of lack of a flood risk assessment. Subsequent to information being provided, the EA maintained a position that only a certain percentage of site coverage should be allowed, finished floor levels should be above known flood levels, and any development should be on a two-phased basis because of flood risk. The finalised design brief address these issues and the EA is now content subject to a suitably imposed condition to secure an agreed phasing of any development.
- 5.5 **County Council Archaeologist** – indicates that the site has high archaeological potential and recommends a programme of archaeological investigation occurs.
- 5.6 **County Council Education** – seek a contribution towards nursery provision of 15 spaces; primary school provision of 39 spaces and secondary school provision of 31 spaces; these figures being based upon an approximation of 155 dwellings on the site. This equates to a commuted sum of £841,100:00.
- 5.7 **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** – request the provision of fire hydrants.
- 5.8 **Environmental Health Officer – NO OBJECTION** but points out that this site is heavily contaminated. A remediation scheme to address groundwater contamination has already commenced but this only relates to part of the site. An investigation for contamination and any subsequent remediation is a necessity for the whole site.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 Representations were received from third parties following the initial application and numbered 4, together with a response from Hemingford Grey Preservation Society (HGPS). Two had no objection but were concerned with flooding and traffic whilst the other two and the Society objected because of traffic generation and flooding concerns and no local facilities. The HGPS has further responded on the amended design brief and express views similar to the Parish Council.

7. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- 7.1 The issues surrounding this application are varied and complex. The development of the site for residential purposes at the scale envisaged is clearly in conflict with the Development Plan and if it is to be supported then it must be referred to the Secretary of State. Nevertheless, there are strong arguments for supporting such a scheme as it meets sustainable settlement objectives and would contribute to the Cambridge sub-region's housing target. It would also have distinct benefits in terms of impact to the landscape on one of the main approaches to St Ives, astride a main distributor route through the district by removing a quite unattractive industrial landscape and would contribute much needed affordable housing in this part of the district. The removal of the nightclub would also be of some benefit to residents in the area.
- 7.2 Apart from settlement policy aspects there are issues of flooding and contamination to address as well as the normal criteria of access, design, infrastructure requirements and community benefit.
- 7.3 Policy/Material Considerations.
- 7.4 Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. One such consideration is whether the plan policies are relevant and up to date but if there is a conflict between policies in an RSS or other Development Plan Document then the most recent policy will take precedence. Government statements of planning policy are also material considerations. If local planning authorities decide to grant planning permission for development which significantly departs from the Development Plan then referral to the Secretary of State is necessary.
- 7.5 The scale of development proposed is contrary to the Development Plan given the area's status as an infill settlement. Nevertheless there are other material factors that tend to favour development and that would outweigh the present settlement strategy. The same argument can be made in respect eCS policy E3 in that the redevelopment by a quality residential scheme would significantly enhance the environment and would offer greater benefits to the community.

Making best use of land

- 7.6 National and strategic policies place heavy emphasis upon utilising previously-developed land for housing albeit alongside the need to ensure that it takes place in sustainable locations i.e. affording good access to jobs and services by non-car modes (PPS3, RPG6 Policies 2 & 5, CS policy P1/1). This site is prominent previously developed land that needs to be brought back into beneficial use.

Accessibility to Cambridge

- 7.7 In identifying land for development within towns and villages in the Cambridge sub-region, RPG6 requires particular attention to be paid to access to Cambridge by non-car modes (policy 22). This is taken forward in the Structure Plan (CS policy P1/1) which seeks to

concentrate developments in the main centres and larger towns, aiming to redress the imbalance between jobs and houses concentrating development within built-up areas aiming to minimise the need for the private car through locating development where good public transport services already exist or where they can be provided and with a preference to take place on previously developed land. This site is extremely well served by frequent bus services to Cambridge and is well-located to benefit from the proposed guided bus from St Ives to Cambridge.

Accessibility to jobs and services

- 7.8 The site is within easy walking and cycling distance of St Ives Town Centre (indeed closer than some parts of the town's northern estates) and the employment opportunities off Somersham Road/Needingworth Road/Harrison Way and also to the potential employment cluster at Galley Hill. Immediate local services can be found at the Total garage which performs a top-up shopping function and the St Ives Motel and restaurant in London Road. The proposed development will make a contribution to the St Ives Market Town Strategy and facilitate improvements to the footway/cycleway link to the Town and possibly to Hemingford Grey village centre. Hence the site performs well on accessibility criteria.

Visual appearance

- 7.9 The present approach to St Ives from the A14 is marred by the semi-derelict nature of the application site. Residential development would provide an opportunity to enhance this important southern gateway to the Town provided that a sufficiently high quality design is secured.

Housing supply in St Ives

- 7.10 Beyond the current allocations now having received planning permission for development either side of Houghton Road to the west of the Town, there are very few opportunities for residential development in St Ives without breaking out into the countryside beyond the present built settlement and equally fewer opportunities to provide much need affordable housing. Hence it is important to seriously consider and take advantage of opportunities such as this site windfall site.

Other factors for consideration

- 7.11 The residential redevelopment of the site would result in the loss of an established employment location and as such is a material consideration. However in view of the other commitments for employment that exist in and around St Ives (Compass Point, St Ives Business Park, Galley Hill) it would be unreasonable to cite this as a reason to refuse permission.
- 7.12 The site is within the flood plain and is known to be contaminated. Flood mitigation has been addressed to the satisfaction of the EA by limiting site coverage, raising thresholds and accesses above known levels of flooding and phasing any development to coincide with the completion of the flood defences around St Ives/Hemingfords. De-

contamination of part of the site to address ground water pollution is already underway but clearly further investigation and remediation will be required before any residential occupancy can take place.

Summary

- 7.13 The application site is located in a sustainable location with good accessibility to Cambridge and St Ives and provides an opportunity to create a high quality development that will enhance the entrance to the Town, create affordable housing and contribute to housing supply in the sub-region whilst using previously developed land. The intended design proposal at a density of 44dph which includes proposals for eco-friendly homes, sustainable drainage systems and opportunity for bio-diversity enhancement satisfies sustainable objectives of national, strategic and local policies and but for its location would be compatible with the Development Plan policies and objectives.

S106 Considerations

- 7.14 There is a need to address the impact upon infrastructure and community needs that would arise through this development. These have been identified as education, transportation, health and recreation and affordable housing and are normally secured through an agreement under S106 of the Act.
- 7.15 In this respect and following advice from the various services involved, the applicants have agreed to the following heads of terms:-
- (i) Affordable Housing:- provision at 40% which on a scheme of 155 dwellings would be 62 dwellings.
 - (ii) Education:- based on a 155 dwelling scheme the provision of 15 Nursery places @ £8,400:00; 39 Primary places @ £8,400:00 and 31 Secondary places @ £12,500:00.
 - (iii) A contribution of £2,000:00 per dwelling towards the St Ives Market Town Strategy.
 - (iv) A contribution of £450:00 per dwelling towards the provision of primary care in the community.
 - (v) The on-site provision of Children's equipped play areas of 2 x LAPS and 1 x NEAP with maintenance contributions of £4,000:00 per LAP and £12,000:00 for the NEAP.
 - (vi) An off-site youth/adult provision – approx. 0.46ha - capital contribution of £6,500:00 together with a maintenance sum of £39,000:00 per hectare.
 - (vii) On site Open space maintenance (excluding formal play) – 1.51ha @ £39000:00 per ha and maintenance for two balancing ponds @ £31,000:00 per pond.
- 7.16 The views of the S106 Advisory Group will be reported to Panel.

Conclusion

7.17 Having regard to applicable national and local policies and having taken into account all relevant material considerations it is considered that a departure from the Development plan can be recommended. A high quality designed development would visually enhance the entrance to the town making best use of land, provide a proportion of affordable housing and achieve in a sustainable location, housing development. Due to the proposal being a departure from the Development Plan reference to Full Council and then the Secretary of State will be required if permission is to be given.

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

That subject to an agreement under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 being reached to secure the community and infrastructure benefits as set out in para. 7.15 above, the application be referred to Full Council with a recommendation that planning permission be granted subject to conditions to include the following and thereafter forwarded to the Secretary of State as a departure from the Development Plan that this Authority wishes to approve.

01014	Details reserved (all reserved)
01002	Plans and particulars in writing
01003	Reserved matters within three years
01006	Dates for commencement
Nonstand	Detail to follow design brief principles
Nonstand	Maximum site coverage and finished level
06003	Implementation - replacements (insert)
Nonstand	Improvements to footpath/cycle links
Nonstand	Demolition of existing building
Nonstand	Archaeology
Nonstand	Contamination
Nonstand	Foul and surface water drainage
Nonstand	Hard landscaping
06012	Hard and soft landscape implementation

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