
Development Control Panel

Report of the meetings held on 15th October, 19th and 26th November 2007

Matter for Decision

11. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION – ERECTION OF FOOD STORE, PETROL FILLING STATION, RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND ASSOCIATED HIGHWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS, LAND AT THE CORNER OF STOCKING FEN ROAD AND ST MARY'S ROAD, RAMSEY

Reproduced at agenda item no. 3 for the Council meeting is a report by the Head of Planning Services containing details of an outline application considered by the Panel for the erection of a foodstore, petrol filling station, residential development, community facilities and associated highways and infrastructure on land at the corner of Stocking Fen Road and St Mary's Road, Ramsey. Means of access, including a new roundabout, forms part of the application and a proposed footbridge will link the two parts of the site over the High Lode, Ramsey. All other matters are reserved. The application, submitted by Tesco Stores Ltd and Abbey Properties, Cambridge Ltd, indicates a store of 3,610 square metres (gross) and 2,316 square metres (net) of retail space with 270 car parking spaces. Negotiations have secured contributions via a Section 106 Agreement for a package of items which are detailed in paragraph 7.8 of the report of the Head of Planning Services but which include a community centre and the extension of an existing bus service from the town centre to the new store. The Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group has indicated its support for the proposed terms of the Agreement.

When considering the application, the Panel received representations from Councillor I Walker of Ramsey Town Council and Mr C Akrill, agent for the applicants. In addition to those representations referred to in paragraph 6.1 of the report of the Head of Planning Services, the Panel was advised that five further letters from a local organisation and residents had been received in support of the development. The original concerns of the Middle Level Commissioners had been overcome by an additional condition relating to surface water drainage.

During a lengthy debate, the Panel was made aware that the part of the site to the north-west of High Lode forms part of a B1/B2/B8 employment allocation in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995. That part of the site to the south-east abutting Stocking Fen Road forms

part of a "Recent Employment Completions/Outstanding Major Employment Commitments" in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995. Not being B1/B2/B8 uses, the development proposed will represent a departure from the Local Plan.

The Panel, therefore, has considered whether there are any material planning considerations which justify supporting the scheme as a departure. The Panel has noted that the proposal and associated obligations will fulfil a large part of the vision for the Ramsey Gateway Urban Development Framework which was adopted as Interim Planning Guidance by the Council in November 2004. The area also has been identified as an opportunity site in the Ramsey Action Plan. The Framework supports the enhancement of this area as the gateway to the town and envisages the provision of a food store and residential development. In addition, by providing a fundamental part of the road infrastructure in the form of a new roundabout to serve the site, the proposal could help to prompt the development of the remainder of the employment allocation and overcome the infrastructure costs which have been prohibitive to other employment uses until now.

In terms of its impact on the Conservation Area, the scheme is considered to enhance its character and appearance and to accord with the advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 and policies En5 and En9 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan.

As background to their deliberations and in response to the representations made, the Panel was advised that, whilst unable to do little to alter the poor road network, the Council was being proactive in dealing with infrastructure and skills training with the Urban Design Framework having been produced as a response to those issues. The highway measures and sewerage infrastructure required as part of the development not only would provide access to the proposed superstore and housing but would open up and service approximately 2 hectares of employment land to the north west. The new store also would be accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, with it being pointed out that the proposal was aimed at traffic containment rather than introducing extra traffic flow.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the fact that the Council is promoting economic regeneration in Ramsey through an application to the East of England Development Agency for funding to build a business and enterprise centre that will include small serviced micro units and training facilities. Its purpose is to unlock the potential for growth through new jobs and business and provide an encouragement for the private sector to build small to medium units allowing businesses starting in the enterprise centre to expand.

With regard to the 'triggers' for the delivery of the community centre and the road infrastructure to serve the remainder of the employment allocation, the Panel has been informed that the applicant has indicated agreement to these facilities being provided prior to the opening of the food store or the occupation of any of the market dwellings, which ever is the sooner.

Having considered the balance of the arguments put forward and taken into account the relevant material considerations, the Panel

RECOMMEND

- (i) that, subject to conditions to be determined by the Head of Planning Services to include surface water drainage, no new adverse material considerations being raised to the scheme in respect of the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the completion of an Agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the application for the erection of a foodstore, petrol filling station, residential development, community facilities and associated highways and infrastructure works on land at the corner of Stocking Fen Road and St Mary's Road, Ramsey be supported;**
- (ii) that, if the application is supported by the Council, the Government Office for the Eastern Region be requested to consider whether they wish to call in the proposal; and**
- (iii) that, in the event that the proposal is not called in by the Government Office, the application be approved and the Director of Operational Services authorised to advertise the application as a departure from the Development Plan.**

Matters for Information

12. HUNTINGDON CONSERVATION AREA: BOUNDARY REVIEW AND CHARACTER STATEMENT – CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

The boundary of the Huntingdon Conservation Area was first designated in 1972. Following a methodology for boundary review adopted in 2003, it has been proposed that the boundaries now be redrawn and extended to encompass the historic setting of the town and to reflect both significant views such as Castle Hill and Mill Common and the historic landscape, for example Hinchingbrooke House.

Having welcomed the benefit that the boundary review will have in ensuring that proposed future development in the Conservation Area will be sympathetic to existing properties and preserve as far as possible the open green areas in the town, the Panel has endorsed the content of both the Huntingdon Conservation Area Character

Assessment and Boundary Review and recommended the Cabinet to adopt both documents as Council policy.

**13. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
THE CORE STRATEGY – PREFERRED OPTIONS**

The Preferred Options report for the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework has been approved for pre-submission public participation by the Cabinet under Regulation 26 for the period 30th November to 11th January 2008.

In recognising the importance of this process for Huntingdonshire and the complexity of the exercise, the Panel has deferred detailed consideration of their response to the Preferred Options until their December Panel meeting. This will allow Panel Members to attend various stakeholder meetings and seminars which have been arranged in the interim and present an opportunity for Members to attend and encourage their respective town and parish councils to formulate their own local responses.

14. PERFORMANCE MONITORING: DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

In receiving a statistical report on the performance of the Development Control Section over the period 1st July – 30th September 2007, the Panel has been reminded that it is essential for the Section to continue to meet the national performance targets set for the determination of major applications given the formal designation of the Council as a "standards authority" for such applications in 2007/08.

15. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

In addition to the application discussed at Item No. 11 ante, the Panel has determined, over three meetings, a total of 24 development applications of which 14 were approved, 9 refused and 1 deferred.

Of interest to the Council will be the decisions taken by the Panel in respect of applications for gypsy/travellers sites at Brington Road, Catworth and Chatteris Road, Somersham. Both applications were refused for various reasons including sustainability, justifiable need, access and adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside. An application for one residential caravan to be located on land at the corner of St Ives Road and Pidley Sheep Lane, Pidley was approved for a period of three years subject to conditions.

P G Mitchell
Chairman