

Case No: 0803128FUL (FULL PLANNING APPLICATION)
0803129CAC (CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT)

Proposal: ERECTION OF POST OFFICE WITH FLAT OVER.
ERECTION OF TWO HOUSES.

Location: 1 BELL LANE PE28 4DU

Applicant: MR MISTRY

Grid Ref: 518605 275950

Date of Registration: 03.12.2008

Parish: ALCONBURY

RECOMMENDATION - REFUSAL

- 1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION**
 - 1.1 The site measures 0.07ha and is located within Alconbury village and the Conservation Area.
 - 1.2 The site is a corner plot adjacent to Bell Lane and High Street and opposite a Grade II Listed Building, 8 High Street. The site consists of a two storey 5 bedroom dwelling as well as the shop. Extensions have been added in the past and there are a number of single storey ancillary buildings at the rear. A large forecourt forms part of the frontage to High Street.
 - 1.3 The site is surrounded on all sides by residential development from a variety of periods.
 - 1.4 Two applications have been made, the first application seeks consent for the redevelopment of the site to include 2 new dwellings, 1 flat and a new shop, with associated parking. The second is for Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of all of the existing buildings on site, with the exception of the C19 building located at the junction of Bell Lane and High Street.
- 2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE**
 - 2.1 **Planning Policy Statement 1- Delivering Sustainable Development 2005** sets out the plan led system and encourages sustainable development
 - 2.2 **PPS3-Housing (2006)** provides guidance on the provision of new housing, making more efficient use of land, and other related issues.
 - 2.3 **PPG15 - "Planning and the Historic Environment" (1994)** provides advice on development in Conservation Areas or that involving Listed Buildings.

- 2.4 **PPS25 – “Development and Flood Risk**, provides advice and guidance on development within the flood plains.

For full details visit the government website <http://www.communities.gov.uk> and follow the links to planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Policy.

3. PLANNING POLICIES

Further information on the role of planning policies in deciding planning applications can also be found at the following website: <http://www.communities.gov.uk> then follow links Planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Information and Guidance, Planning Guidance and Advice and then Creating and Better Place to Live

- 3.1 East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (May 2008) Policies viewable at <http://www.go-east.gov.uk> then follow links to Planning, Regional Planning then Related Documents

- **T14:** “Parking” – controls to manage transport demand and influencing travel change alongside measures to improve public transport accessibility, walking and cycling should be encouraged. Maximum parking standards should be applied to new commercial development.
- **T14:** “Parking” – controls to manage transport demand and influencing travel change alongside measures to improve public transport accessibility, walking and cycling should be encouraged. Maximum parking standards should be applied to new residential development.
- **ENV7:** “Quality in the Built Environment” - requires new development to be of high quality which complements the distinctive character and best qualities of the local area and promotes urban renaissance and regeneration
- **WAT4:** “Flood Risk Management” – River flooding is a significant risk in parts. The priorities are to defend existing properties from flooding and locate new development where there is little or no flooding.

- 3.2 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) Saved policies from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk> follow the links to environment, planning, planning policy and Structure Plan 2003.

- None relevant

- 3.3 Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan95

- **En25** - requires new development to respect the scale, form, materials and design of established buildings in the locality.

- **H31** - new dwellings and conversions of existing dwellings or buildings to provide separate units of accommodation will only be permitted where appropriate standards of privacy and amenity can be maintained and adequate parking provision provided.
- **S17**- support will be given for the retention of existing shopping facilities in villages and if necessary will encourage multi use development to secure local shopping provision.
- **En5** - requires development within or directly affecting a conservation area to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.
- **En6** - states that in conservation areas, the District Council will require high standards of design with careful consideration being given to the scale and form of development in the area, and the use of sympathetic materials of appropriate colour and texture.
- **En8**-where demolition is to be followed by redevelopment, conservation area consent may be withheld until acceptable plans for the new development have been approved.
- **En9**- development will not normally be permitted if it would impair views into or out of the Conservation Area.

3.4 Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002) Saved policies from the Huntingdon Local Plan Alterations 2002 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan - Then click on "Local Plan Alteration (2002)

- **STR1** - Huntingdonshire settlement hierarchy
- **STR2** – defines a housing group as up to 8 dwellings forming a planned entity using either an existing frontage or grouped around a short cul-de-sac. Exceptionally where the site is within the environmental limits, in order to make the best use of land and estate scale benefits are strong, up to 15 dwellings may be permitted.
- **STR5** - defines Alconbury as a group village
- **HL5** - states that good design and layout will be required for new housing development which makes efficient use of land, respects the townscape, provides an appropriate mix, incorporates landscaping, creates safe places and promotes energy efficiency
- **HL6** - requires high density housing development on sites close to town centres
- **HL7**- support will normally be given to the re-use of previously developed land, the re-use of empty properties, and the conversion of underused dwellings or other buildings, for housing.
- **HL8** - In group villages, groups or infilling development will be permitted on appropriate sites where it is sensitive to the scale and character of the village.

- **HL10-** housing should reflect the full range of the local community's needs.

3.5 Policies from the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning, then Planning then Planning+Policy then Informal policy statements where there is a link to Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007

- **B1** Design Quality- a development proposal should demonstrate a high quality of design in terms of layout, form and contribution to the character of the area.
- **B2** Street Scene-requires development should make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of streets and public spaces.
- **B4** Amenity- a development proposal should not have an unacceptable impact on amenity.
- **B7** – Listed Buildings - lists the criteria against which development proposal affecting the fabric or setting of a listed building should be assessed.
- **B8** Conservation Areas- a development proposal within or affecting a Conservation Area should seek to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- **H2** – Housing Density -requires development to make the efficient use of land. Within smaller settlements, 30-40 dwellings per hectare.
- **H3** – Housing Mix- explains that development proposals should include an appropriate mix of sizes and types of dwellings
- **H6** – Affordable Housing -defines affordable housing requirements for development.
- **T1** Transport Impacts-explains transport requirements of new development proposals.
- **T2** – Car and Cycle Parking- explains these should comply with the Council's Standards.

3.6 Policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy 2008 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning then click on Planning and then click on Planning Policy where there is a link to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

- **CS1:** “Sustainable development in Huntingdonshire” – all developments will contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development, having regard to social, environmental and economic issues. All aspects will be considered including design, implementation and function of development.

- **CS3:** “The Settlement Hierarchy” – identifies Alconbury as a smaller settlement in which residential infilling will be appropriate within the built up area.

3.7 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Retention of Shops, Post Offices and Public Houses in Villages
- Market Housing Mix
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2006

4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 Three previous applications are related, 0600784CAC is for the demolition of a group of adjoining unlisted buildings including the village shop and Post Office, and 0600783FUL is for the redevelopment of the site to include 5 new dwellings and a new shop. These applications were refused on a number of grounds including, siting, layout, design, lack of justification for the loss of a shop and post office and impact on the Conservation Area.

4.2 The most recent application, 0701632FUL, relates to partial demolition of buildings on the site, erection of 2 dwellings with a flat over a new shop. This application was refused on a number of grounds, siting, layout, design lack of justification for the loss of a post office and impact on the Conservation Area.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Alconbury Parish Council – NO OBJECTION** due to the retention of a shop and post office in the village. Subject to appropriate working hours for the developer due to noise and traffic generation. (copy attached)

5.2 **CCC Archaeology** – Require an archaeological investigation to be carried out post demolition and prior to the commencement of the development.

5.3 **IDB** – no comment.

5.4 **Environment Agency – OBJECTION** The sequential test has not been adequately applied across the site and the proposed layout may increase flooding elsewhere.

5.5 **HDC Transportation – NO OBJECTION** subject to no obstructions above 760mm within a 2x2m visibility splay on either side of the access.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

6.1 16 Chapel Street – Fully supports the proposal which will ensure that a viable shop and post office is retained in the area.

6.2 One additional letter was received in support of the application but no address was provided.

7. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- 7.1 The main issues to consider with this application are the principle of the development including the impact on shopping/ Post Office facilities in Alconbury, impact on the highway and amenity, design issues, the impact on the Conservation Area and adjacent Listed Building and flood risk.
- 7.2 The site lies within the Environmental Limits and built form of Alconbury and the designated Conservation Area. The Huntingdonshire settlement hierarchy defines Alconbury as a group village and Policies STR1, STR2 and STR5 of the Local Plan Alteration 2002 are applicable. Within group villages development of up to eight dwellings formed in a planned entity using either an existing frontage or grouped around a short cul-de-sac could be considered. Exceptionally, where the site is within the Environmental Limits of the village, up to 15 dwellings may be permitted, if the overall benefits of estate scale development are strong and it would make better use of the land.
- 7.3 Within the emerging Core Strategy policy CS3 identifies Alconbury as a Smaller Settlement, where only residential infilling is considered to be acceptable, this equates to a development of up to 3 dwellings.
- 7.4 Policies HL7 and HL6 are also relevant and the District Council may support the reuse or conversion of underused dwellings into housing use at densities of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. Additionally, the District Council has produced a Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Retention of Shops, Post Offices and Public Houses in Villages' in response to the national trend of declining community facilities in villages. This SPG sets down the criteria by which applications for changes of use in respect of such community facilities will be judged.
- 7.5 It is noted that, unlike previous applications, the applicant clearly intends to retain the post office function and a shop of similar proportions to that as existing is proposed.
- 7.6 It is therefore concluded that the general principle of residential development in this location is acceptable, alongside the retention of the post office/shop facility.

Housing Mix

- 7.7 A second SPG on Market Housing Mix should also be considered. The District Council has conducted extensive research into local community needs and has identified a shortage of one and two bedroom properties. New development should include a choice of properties to provide for these needs. The types of dwelling proposed would not comply with the Council's SPG on Housing Mix. The proposal should include 2 dwellings with no more than 2 bedrooms. That said, whilst it is accepted that the applicant has not proposed a mix that meets the requirements of the SPG, subject to an appropriate design being achieved, the interrelationship with the Conservation Area is considered more important than obtaining an appropriate mix of housing in this instance.

Access and Parking

- 7.8 The proposed access and parking arrangements are considered to be acceptable, subject to a condition pertaining to maintenance of visibility splays.

Design Impact on Historic Setting and Amenity

- 7.9 The general principle of the development of this site is considered to be acceptable. Unlike the original refused scheme, the applicant proposes the retention of the existing 19th Century dwelling located at the junction of Bell Lane and High Street. The general principle of the retention of this building is acceptable. However there are concerns regarding the retention of the original concrete tiles and window details on the previous addition to the building.
- 7.10 Turning to the two new dwellings fronting High Street. Again the proposed development of this location is considered acceptable in principle, however, the relationship between the proposed new dwellings and the C19 retained property is considered to be unbalanced, poor and unacceptable within the Conservation Area. The conversion of the retained building appears to raise issues with ground/floor levels, necessitating the need for a ramp to the front of the proposed dwellings, which in turn have been raised and results in a higher roof form than the C19 building, which then becomes significantly less dominant within the streetscene, to its detriment.
- 7.11 Added to this, the junction of the roof form with the retained building will be visible above the corner buildings roof line, further emphasising the poor quality design feature that this is and the inappropriate relationship between the properties.
- 7.12 Overall the new dwelling overwhelms the retained C19 building which has a successful relationship with the listed building opposite as the relative scale of both existing buildings strikes a good balance. The prominence of unit 2 particularly would compete with both the retained building and the listed building, unbalancing its relationship and harming the setting.
- 7.13 Turning to the impact on Bell Lane, at present Bell Lane is a tightly enclosed streetscape. The proposed development will result in the loss of the existing built form towards the rear of the site which adds to the character of the streetscene. Whilst accepting that there is no merit in the retention of these buildings, it is important to retain the sense of enclosure to the rear, ensuring the character of the conservation area is retained. The applicant proposes the erection of a wall to bound the car park area to the rear, however, it is not considered that this wall provision would be of adequate proportions to achieve the sense of enclosure necessary, especially when read in association with the width of access proposed deemed necessary. The applicant has been continually advised that a built form should be reinstated adjacent to this boundary and it is considered that this could be easily achieved within the scheme proposed, via the inclusion of an open car port type arrangement with a solid roof form.

- 7.14 At this time, the proposed wall feature is not considered adequate to retain the general form of this part of the conservation area, to its detriment.
- 7.15 The proposal is therefore considered to be flawed in its design approach. Whilst the retention of the existing dwelling is welcomed, the scale of the proposed additional dwellings, and the failure to adequately address the Bell Lane streetscene appropriately following the demolition of the existing out buildings are considered to be detrimental to the visual amenities of the street scene and more importantly the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed building opposite.

Flood Risk

- 7.16 The application site lies within a flood zone and the applicant has submitted a flood risk assessment(FRA), which has been assessed by the Environment Agency. Upon assessment, the EA consider the assessment submitted unacceptable. It is noted that the FRA has identified the fluvial flood risks appropriately, but it has not properly associated those risks within the delineated site itself. Furthermore, the EA also consider that the Sequential Test has not been applied across the site and the proposed layout may increase flooding elsewhere.

Conservation Area Consent

- 7.17 Whilst the existing built form, with the exception of the C19 building located on the corner of the site, are not considered to be individually worthy of retention within the Conservation Area, they do cumulatively add to the general character and form of the area, thereby offering a positive impact on the area.
- 7.18 PPG15 states that there is a general presumption in favour of retaining buildings, which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Consent for demolition should not be given unless there are acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment.
- 7.19 The buildings therefore cumulatively contribute to the character and appearance of the area and it is considered that the loss of these buildings would open up unattractive views through the site and fundamentally change the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area to its detriment.

Conclusion

- 7.20 In the light of national guidance, Development Plan policies and other material considerations it is recommended that planning permission should be refused for the development as proposed. Whilst a scheme which provides a post office and shop facility is to be welcomed, it is considered that the applicant at this time has failed to properly associate the identified fluvial flood risks with the application site, and demonstrate that the proposed development would not increase flood risk elsewhere. Furthermore, the design relationship between the proposed dwellings and the retained C19 building, and the rear boundary wall with the Bell Lane street scene, are considered to

result in a development that neither preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area or the setting of the listed building opposite.

- 7.21 As the proposed re-development scheme is considered to be unacceptable, the grant of Conservation Area Consent would be premature and contrary to the aforementioned Development Plan policies and PPG15. Accordingly, it is also recommended that the Conservation Area Consent application be refused.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

8. RECOMMENDATION – REFUSE 0803128FUL, for the following reasons:

- 8.1 The applicant has failed to provide an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment that would appropriately associate the fluvial flood risks with the application site and demonstrate that the proposed development would not cause or exacerbate flooding or flood risk elsewhere contrary to the guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 25 and Policy WAT4 of the East of England Plan 2008.
- 8.2 The proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Whilst the retention of the existing 19th Century building is supported, the new development adjacent would by virtue of its height, form and massing fail to enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would have a detrimental impact on the setting of the listed building opposite. Furthermore, the proposed wall detail fronting the Bell Lane frontage would fail to preserve the tightly formed streetscape that characterises this part of the Conservation Area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan 2008, Policies En2, En5, En6, En25, HL5 and HL8 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995, Policies B1, B2, B7 and B8 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2007 and PPG15.

RECOMMENDATION – REFUSE 0803129CAC, for the following reason:

- 8.3 The existing buildings are considered to cumulatively preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. PPG15 states that there is a general presumption in favour of retaining buildings, which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Consent for demolition should not be given unless there are acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment. Whilst a re-development scheme has been proposed, this in itself is not considered to be acceptable and as such the loss of such buildings is premature and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The application is therefore contrary to PPG15, policy En8 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 and policy B8 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007 and policy CS1 of the Submission Core Strategy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (May 2008)
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003
Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995
Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002)
Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007
Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy
2008

CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquiries about this report to **Ms Elizabeth Fitzgerald Development Control
Team Leader 01480 388490**