

3/10/0156/FP - Use of land for additional 6 No mobile home pitches at Nine Acres, High Road, High Cross for Mr and Mrs Bolesworth

Date of Receipt: 25.02.2010

Type: Full – Major

Parish: THUNDRIDGE

Ward: THUNDRIDGE AND STANDON

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the reasons:-

The proposed arrangements of plots and units on the site represents a poor standard of layout which fails to provide adequate space for parking and turning of vehicles and fails to provide sufficient amenity space for future residents. The relationship of the plots and close proximity between them will create a situation where the individual units are overbearing, lead to significant overlooking and the inability to create acceptable amenity to the future occupants. The proposed development is therefore contrary to saved policies ENV1 and TR7 of the East Herts Local Plan Second review April 2007 and the guidance set out in the Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development SPD.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract. The site is located off the old A10, now a C classified road, and is accessed off a substantial joint access (serving Oakleys Coachbuilders) and this site. Beyond that is a gated access which is within and leads to the overall site. The existing caravans and associated hardstanding are located in the eastern corner of the application site.
- 1.2 There are large coniferous trees surrounding the eastern edge of the immediate boundary of the caravans. Along the western edge of the application site is a mature hedge and trees which screens views of the development from the road. This landscaped boundary runs along the southern and eastern edge of the site, and varies in its density. There are more open views of the site from the northern boundary – that facing onto Oakley Coachbuilders. To the east of the site is the designated historic garden of Youngsbury and within that, the A10 bypass.
- 1.3 The proposal includes the provision for an additional 6 caravans located to the south of the existing developed part of the site. They would be laid out adjacent to the eastern site boundary. The site layout plan shows the

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caravans to be in a tight group immediately adjacent to the eastern site boundary and with only a couple of metres between each caravan. No additional parking or individual access ways have been identified. Overall access is gained to the additional caravans off the main access around the west of the existing site. No elevations of the caravans have been provided, there are however various photographs which indicate the form and design of the proposal. These comprise typical mobile home type installations.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 3/0368-84: An enforcement matter relating to the unauthorised provision of 2 caravans on the site. Allowed at appeal
- 2.2 3/90/0746/EN: Renewal of permission reference 3/0368-84 to allow the continued temporary provision of two mobile caravans on the site
- 2.3 3/93/1221/FP: Planning permission refused for the siting of 6 mobile homes for reasons relating to inappropriate development within rural area, impact on highway safety, impact of activities on rural area and impact on landscape conservation area.
- 2.4 3/94/0018/FP: Planning permission was originally refused for the continued provision of two mobile caravans on the site for reasons relating to inappropriate development within the rural area, impact of activities on rural character of area and landscape conservation area. The application was however allowed at appeal.

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 Planning Policy comment that In accordance with Circular 01/2006, the Council, in partnership with other Local Authorities have carried out a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in 2006 which identified a need for 45 pitches (35 permanent, 10 transit). That document was submitted to the East of England Regional Assembly to inform the preparation of a Single Issue Review (SIR) Policy intended to meet the outstanding and future needs of Gypsy and Travellers in the region.

Policy H3 of the RSS (Regional Spatial Strategy) clarifies that at least 1237 net additional pitches would need to be provided in the East of England Region by 2011. Policy H3 requires that East Herts provides at least 25 additional permanent pitches for the period 2011 – 2021 and a further 21 pitches in the period beyond that to 2021.

Since the adoption of policy H3, four pitches have been provided in East Herts at The Stables, Bayfordbury, which reduces the number of pitches to be found by 2011 from 25 to 21.

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The LDF is at a relatively early stage of preparation and the matter of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation will be identified in the Core Strategy. However, it will be for the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to address site specific allocations in due course.

In the meantime, any permission granted for sites in the interim period will be deducted from the RSS total required in East Herts.

- 3.2 Hertfordshire County Highways comment that they do not wish to restrict the grant of permission. The Highways Officer comments that, planning permission has previously been refused for gypsy and traveller accommodation on the site, however the road classification of the A10 has been altered to a C road and traffic volumes have significantly decreased. There is consequently no justified reason for refusal based on highway safety.

Access is gained via the existing substantial access leading to Oakley Trailers yard which is adequate to accommodate the vehicle movements associated with the proposal with visibility along High Road for and of vehicles emerging is satisfactory. The gate into nine Acres is set well back from the carriageway edge giving sufficient room for vehicles to stand clear of the highway.

The actual site area of the site for the homes appears quite restrictive and the proposed plot size is barely large enough to accommodate the mobile home with very little room for manoeuvring of vehicles. The applicant does own a larger area and so access / parking arrangements may well be accommodated, however the plans should accurately reflect this in order to assess the impact on the countryside.

- 3.3 The Environmental Health Officer advises that any permission granted by the LPA should include conditions. The Environmental Health Officer comments that should planning permission be granted, the physical standards, layout and amenities of the site will be controlled via a site licence issued by the Council under the Caravan Sites & Control of Development Act 1960, in which the DCLG Good Practice Guidelines (May 2008) Designing Gypsy and Traveller site will be referred to. Having regard to those Guidelines the EH Officer makes the following comments with regards to the details of the planning application:-

- No minimum distance of 6 metres between the caravans
- The site licence will include a condition requiring the provision of defined pathways to allow residents to safely navigate there way around the site
- Any site licence will include a condition requiring the provision of defined roadways to allow vehicles to safely navigate around the site
- Each mobile home must have sanitary facilities capable of being connected to public sewer or piped to septic tank

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- Additional foul waste connection points or disposal facilities
- Provision for collection and dispersal of surface storm water
- Any site licence will require the provision of piped water supply
- Each pitch will be required to provide suitable hardstanding

In addition to those comments, the Environmental Health Officer recommends that a condition is attached to any grant of permission relating to hours of construction.

- 3.4 The Environment Agency comment that the development will only be acceptable if a condition is attached requiring the disposal of foul and surface water. The Environment Agency comment that the site is within a Source Protection Zone 3 which makes the site vulnerable to groundwater contamination.
- 3.5 The Landscape Officer has recommended refusal. The officer considers that the proposals do not reflect the historic character of the settlement and the landscape character of the surrounding area. The pitches are to be located on a prominent part of the site and no mitigating planting is shown. Vehicle parking and turning areas, which are not shown in the application, are likely to exacerbate the impact. There will be some screening from existing planting but the development is still likely to be visible.
- 3.6 The Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Conservation team objects to the application. It indicates that Youngsbury is registered as grade II* on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. It is one of the few gardens in Hertfordshire laid out by Capability Brown which remains largely intact, despite the intrusion of the new A10 road. In its view, the setting of the house must include the garden and parkland and therefore the impact, in terms of PPS5, is a material consideration. It is considered that the development would severely compromise the heritage asset of the house and gardens.

4.0 Town/Parish Council Representations

- 4.1 Thundridge Parish Council object to the planning application and comment that the proposal represents overdevelopment of the site and an extension to an already overdeveloped area with no proven need having been satisfactory justified. The Parish Council also comments that the proposals are contrary to policy OSV1 and is not sensitively designed and would not complement the character of the village or surrounding area.

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 15 letters of representation have been received which can be summarised as follows:-

- Visual impact of development
- Contrary to policy OSV1
- Overdevelopment of the site
- Detrimental effect to the character of the village
- Application is null and void
- Impact on highway safety
- Inappropriate development within the rural area
- Unsustainable location
- Policy HSG10 would not be met
- Layout is not appropriate for needs of user
- Any decision would not take into account the LDF processes

6.0 Policy

6.1 The relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies in this application include the following:-

GBC2	Appropriate Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
HSG10	Accommodation for Gypsies
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
TR7	Car Parking Standards

Also relevant are: the policies of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) that deal with provision for Gypsies and Travellers; Policy and guidance set out in PPS5, Planning for the Historic Environment, Circular 01/2006 (Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites) and in the Councils Parking Provision supplementary planning document (SPD)

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main planning considerations in respect of this application relate to the following issues:-

- 1) Principle of and need for the development
- 2) Impact on rural character

3) Highway safety

3) Within site amenity considerations

Principle of development

- 7.2 The site is located within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, not within the category 1 village of High Cross. There is some confusion because the site adjoins part of the village boundary to the north. It is also adjacent to the Green Belt to the south, but not within it. Accordingly, the starting point for planning considerations of the proposal is policy GBC3 of the Local Plan. Criteria 1) of GBC3 allows for the provision of gypsy and traveller accommodation in accordance with policy HSG10. The proposal does not, by definition, therefore represent inappropriate development within the rural area.
- 7.3 The information supplied by the Planning Policy team and referred to above, outlines clearly the process by which the Council and East of England Regional Assembly have been engaged in assessing the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the District and Region. From policy H3 of the RSS, it is clear that there is a requirement to provide accommodation for Gypsy and Travellers in the District. The formulation of any argument against the proposals on the basis of lack of need is most likely to be unsuccessful. The current 'need' (up to 2011) is for 21 pitches, (total 25, but reduced by 4 as a result of the recent appeal decision relating to The Stables, Bayfordbury).
- 7.4 The provision of 6 pitches at this site would reduce the need to supply further pitches as part of the LDF process. This does not influence the planning considerations outlined within this report however. The objective planning merits of the proposal shall be focused upon. The fact that there is an identified need within the RSS to provide a number of pitches by 2011 is a factor which must weigh heavily in the balance of considerations.
- 7.5 The issue of 'prematurity' has been raised, namely of making a decision in this case without completion of the full processes of the LDF relating to site allocation. That exercise will ultimately ensure that, when site allocation is being considered, potential sites are considered comparatively. However, consideration of this application in the normal way now, does not prevent consideration of its acceptability. Given that, and because there is an identified need for gypsy and traveller sites, your officers do not consider that harm of any significance can be caused by proceeding to a decision now and therefore a prematurity argument could not be sustained. In addition, the decision in relation to the Bayfordbury proposals clearly indicates that any prematurity argument would carry very little weight.

- 7.6 It is considered then that, in line with the requirements of policy GBC3 (I) the form of development proposed is acceptable in principle, subject to the more detailed requirements set out in policy HSG10. These are considered below and cover the issue of the impact of the proposals on the local area.

Policy HSG10 – Accommodation for Gypsies

- 7.7 The first part of policy HSG10 requires that, if permission is forthcoming, a condition be applied to ensure that the use of the land is as gypsy and traveler accommodation only. Officers do not consider that the required condition is disputed by any consultation responses and, having regard to the comments from Planning Policy and the advice provided in Circular 11/95, it is considered that such a condition could be applied were permission to be forthcoming.
- 7.8 The site is not located within the Green Belt accordingly the relevant criteria of policy HSG10 are part (II) a – g.

a) Sustainability

- 7.9 Letters of representation consider that the site is not located in a sustainable location owing to its distance to the main centres in the District and the lack of services available within the village of High Cross. Whilst mindful of those comments, the advice of Circular 1/2006 is of some assistance in assessing this, particularly paragraphs 64 -66.
- 7.10 Paragraph 64 of Circular 1/2006 states that issues of sustainability are important and should not only be considered in terms of transport mode and distances from services. Such consideration should include; a) the promotion of peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community; b) the wider benefits of easier access to GP and other health services; c) children attending school on a regular basis; d) the provision of a settled base that reduces the need for long-distance travelling and possible environmental damage caused by unauthorised encampment; and, e) not locating sites in areas at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans.
- 7.11 In terms of access to public transport, services are available in High Cross linking to Ware and Hertford. There are buses available throughout the day (with reduced service on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank Holidays), approximately every 2 hours Monday – Friday. In this respect, there is an alternative to the private car for access to facilities and local amenities and services within the larger settlements. This level of accessibility can be argued to be the same as for other residents in the village with regard to all facilities including those relating to education, health and welfare. There are primary school facilities in the village and

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higher education would be accessible on the same basis as other older children in the village. This covers criteria b) and c) of the circular advice.

- 7.12 However, as outlined above, the advice in Circular 01/2006, is that an assessment on the wider sustainability benefits are required. The proposal involves the enlargement of the existing gypsy and traveller site. In this respect there would be the opportunity to expand upon the existing community by providing additional spaces which would be in accordance with the wider thrust of policy H3 of the RSS and the sustainability agenda. This would enable the potential for greater support and cohesion within the gypsy and traveller community. Additionally, it must be taken into account that the existing community overall (settled and traveling) appears to function well based on the current location and operation of the site.
- 7.13 The letters of representation do not raise any concerns *per se* with regards to the current relationship between the existing site and the village (although it is recognised that some concerns are raised with an increased occupation on the site). In Officers view, having regard to the existing nature of the site and relationship with the village, it is consider that the opportunity to expand the existing site is to benefit of the existing community as a whole, in sustainability terms.
- 7.14 With regards to criteria d), as is highlighted above, this is an existing base for gypsy and travellers which will be expanded upon. Meeting the identified need must go some way to ensuring that traveling and unauthorized sites are minimized.
- 7.15 Having regard to the above considerations and the advice in Circular 1/2006, the proposed development is considered to perform favourably in relation to the sustainability indicators set out in it.

b) Suitability of the site in terms of access, parking, etc

- 7.16 Returning to policy HSG10, the comments from the Highways Officer specifically raise concerns with regards to the layout of the site in terms of access and parking. The plans indicate a somewhat 'tight' and 'cramped' relationship between the proposed caravans and the highways access/parking and turning area. Focusing solely on the requirements of criteria b), Officers consider that the areas shown for parking and turning space are inadequate, having regard to the requirements and guidance in the Councils Parking SPD. It seems that there is practically no identified space for parking and turning within the site as shown on the plans.
- 7.17 It is appreciated that the land owned by the applicant is larger than that on which the caravans are shown to be located and would allow for a more significant parking/turning area. However, any such additional space for

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parking and access is not reflected on the proposed plans. Based on the information submitted, Officers consider that the level of parking and turning space is inadequate. The possible increase in size of such a space cannot be assessed on the basis of the information provided. Matters relating to this issue are linked to considerations relating to the plot sizes and visual impact of the development which are discussed below.

- 7.18 The second part of criteria b) of HSG10 relates to the need for access to water supply, sewerage, drainage and waste disposal. To a degree, this would seem to overlap with some of the requirements from Environmental Health, as outlined in their consultation response. Other than the information provided in the application form, there is limited information with regards to the provision of water, and there is no information showing the location of the 'septic tank' as referred to in question 12 of the application form. Additionally, limited information is available with regards to the access to waste disposal and drainage in order to make an assessment under the policy requirements. Officers recognise that such matters could be dealt with through a planning condition, subject to the relevant tests in circular 11/95, and they are not therefore raise them as an issue within this application.

c) Environmental Hazards

- 7.19 The Environmental Health Officer does not raise any issues with regards to any potential or existing environmental hazards and Officers do not therefore raise any objections. It is noted that the comments from the Environment Agency raise issues in relation to groundwater contamination. Whilst from the consultation response it would appear that the EA have sufficient controls themselves to control these matters, Officers are of the opinion that suitably worded planning conditions could be attached with any grant of permission and no objections are raised with regards to this issue.

d) Impact on neighbour amenity

- 7.20 Whilst it is noted that letters of representation raise some concern with the degree of impact on neighbour amenity, the location of the site is separate from other residential properties in the village and beyond. Given the distances involved, Officers do not consider that there will be any material impact on neighbour amenity in terms of noise, disturbance or loss of privacy.

e) Impact on landscape

- 7.21 Those who have written letters of representation have noted the comments from the Environmental Health Officers and their requirements for a license under the Caravan Sites & Control of Development Act 1960. Concern has

been raised that the requirements of that legislation may result in a greater degree of impact of the proposals on the openness and character of the site, because of the need for paths, driveways and lighting etc. This issue has also been raised by the Councils landscape Officer. Officers appreciate those concerns, and share the view that it is potentially difficult and undesirable to implement the proposals in the format they have currently been submitted in (tightly grouped pitches on the eastern side of the site).

7.22 At this stage however, consideration is being given to the proposals on the basis of the submission and with regard to the relevant policies of the Development Plan and any other material considerations. Some thought has been given to the possibility that, if all other issues were acceptable, and because of the overall site ownership, could conditions be applied to any permission to ensure that an acceptable layout and level of within site amenity could be achieved. However, given that there are a number of unknowns around the degree to which plot layouts, pathways, accessways and parking provision may vary, it has not been considered reasonable to do this. Following that approach would probably remove the potential for interested parties to comment on the impact of the provision at the site if and when the impact of these additional elements were known. It is not appropriate then to speculate on the impact of the proposals with an amended layout. Consideration here has been restricted to the layout in its current form.

7.23 In considering matters relating to the impact on the surroundings, the Inspector, dealing with matters relating to the 1994 application commented that:

“I believe that views of your client’s proposed mobile homes and associated vehicles stationed on the hardsurfaced area would be screened to some extent by the strong hedge on the main road boundary, together with the tree screen on the southwest and northwest sides of the hard-surfaced area, which could be reinforced with further planting. However, I consider that the site would be more prominent in views from adjacent agricultural land and from the edge of the village as screening on the northeast and southeast sides of the appeal site is less effective, but I believe no public footpaths cross this land and the separation distance from the village, together with the existence of a small building on the site would negate the visual impact of the proposed use. Hence, it is my opinion that, providing the use was confined to the hardsurfaced area with additional planting, it would not be unduly intrusive in local views from public vantage points, but its presence in an area of acknowledged attractiveness would cause limited harm to the open appearance of the countryside.”

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- 7.24 Members must bear in mind that, since that time, considerations have changed to some extent and the policy context has also changed. At the time, the Inspector considered that, should the development be limited to the hardstanding area (which, as I understand is currently in place on the site), the siting of the caravans on the site would not be significantly harmful to the open appearance of the countryside. The inspector will have taken into account the designation of the area at the time as a Landscape Conservation Area, that is no longer the case.
- 7.25 Whilst, in Officers opinion, this does not diminish the value of the landscape in the area, since that decision the new A10 road has been introduced into the landscape. In addition, the existing development at the site has, in Officers opinion, assimilated into the landscape. It is necessary, in this context, to reach a view on whether the provision of a further 6 caravans would result in any greater or more harmful degree of impact than that which is currently caused by the site.
- 7.26 On this issue, Officers consider that the proposed layout of the caravans, albeit with the shortcomings identified above, appears to be well consolidated and grouped closely with the existing development on the site. The linear layout and form of the proposal does, to a degree, intrude further into the open rural area more than the existing development on the site, as noted by the Landscape Officer. This does impact on the openness and rural character of the area, to some degree.
- 7.27 In terms of the views into the site, this has been undertaken during the spring months when the boundary treatment is less 'green'. Notwithstanding that, the existing boundary treatment is dense with only fleeting views of the internal area of the application site possible from public vantage points and external views from the countryside. Officers would concur with the previous Inspectors comments and acknowledge that views from the village and the development to the north, Oakleys Coachbuilders, are more open. However, having regard to the Inspectors comments and the separation distance between the boundary of the site and village, and the size, siting and relationship of the site with the existing development, it is considered that the provision of six caravans as indicated on the proposed plans will not result in a significantly harmful impact from that vantage point.
- 7.28 Whilst the physical provision of the caravans will have some impact, Members should also consider the impact of the activities associated with the proposed development. The aforementioned Inspectors comments in relation to LPA reference 3/94/0018/FP outlined in respect of this issue a concern that the activities arising from the day to day use of the site would be noticeably different from the 'largely undisturbed nature of the present predominant use of the appeal site as grazing land to an extent that would be likely to adversely affect the quite rural character of the locality...' which

the Inspector considered would be harmful to the rural character of the area.

7.29 Officers acknowledge that the provision of six additional mobile homes on the site will inevitably increase the existing activities on the site, in terms of the coming and goings of vehicles and general activity within the site. The issue of how the uses on the site will actually be accommodated is addressed above – namely, what actual parking, roadway and pathway provision is required. Here, the issue of activity is being considered and, with the additional number of units proposed, it must be the case that there will be additional and detrimental impact on the character of the site and area. What actual weight should be given to this is addressed in the summary and conclusions below.

f) Designated areas

7.30 The site is not located within a designated area however, it abuts the boundary of the Youngsbury registered garden. The appropriate Local Plan policy, BH16, indicates that proposals that will significantly harm the historic character, appearance or setting, will not be permitted.

7.31 Members will note the comments of the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust above. The trust takes the view that the wider setting of the house and parkland should be taken into account and concludes that the proposals will severely compromise the heritage asset. Whilst Officers do not disagree with the assessment to be undertaken, the conclusion reached is a more cautious one. The parkland is severed by the introduction of the new A10 road. This is not a reason to believe that the now separated part of the parkland has less value, but the relationship between land beyond the park (the application site) and the bulk of the parkland has lessened.

7.32 Given that, given the existing boundary treatment and further mitigation that could be applied (additional planting following internal re-arrangement of the proposed location of the caravans), Officers do not agree that the degree of potential harm is so significant. It is not suggested that the proposals should be resisted on this basis.

7.33 The southern boundary of the site abuts the Green Belt. Members are familiar with the policies that apply to development within the Green Belt and the need to maintain openness. Given that this site is beyond the boundary, those particularly strict restrictive policies do not apply. It is not considered that, by reason of proximity to the Green Belt, that these proposals result in any significant harmful impact and that, indeed, locations within the Green Belt are seen as acceptable for this type of development, given the outcome of the Bayfordbury proposals.

g) Respects the scale of the nearest settled community

- 7.34 The increase in the scale of the gypsy and traveller site is not considered to be to such an extent that it would be out of scale with the nearest settlement of High Cross, or of Wadesmill. It would still remain a modest site in relation to the scale of those settlements.

Highway Safety

- 7.35 Having regard to the comments from the Highways Officer, Officers consider that, taking into account the existing access arrangement and the reclassification of the road to a C road, that the proposal will not result in a significant impact on highway safety that would warrant the refusal of the planning application.

Within site amenity – Policy ENV1

- 7.36 It is appropriate to consider the layout and design of the development in accordance with policy ENV1. Members will note that the Environmental Health Officer has set out the site license requirements that would need to be met, if the development were to proceed, and that these would probably have implications in relation to the ultimate layout on the site. Whilst that is likely to be the case, given the significant change that it could result in and the requirement for those affected to be able to comment on this, as noted above, consideration here has been restricted to the impact of the proposed layout as it currently appears. In this respect, Officers are concerned with the layout of the site, associated amenity space, and relationship between the caravans.
- 7.37 The proposed layout consists of six plots immediately adjacent to each other. There is minimal distance between the units located on each plot. No amenity space is identified and, if the typical mobile home type installations are provided (as illustrated in the planning statement) there is likely to be a significant degree of overlooking between each plot. This poor standard of layout would not provide acceptable living conditions for occupiers.
- 7.38 As highlighted above, there is no particular space allocated for parking and turning which not be in accordance with the requirements of LP policy TR7 and the associated Parking SPD. The comments from the Highways Officer are noted in this respect and it is considered that, should planning permission be granted any area for parking and turning may well increase further. As indicated, the implications of this should be considered fully alongside the proposals.

8.0 Summary and Conclusion

- 8.1 There is a clear and identified need for development of this nature as set out in the current regional policy and as shown by work undertaken collaboratively by this Council. It is also clear, from the Local Plan policy context, that development of this nature, on this site, is not considered as inappropriate in principle.
- 8.2 It is necessary then to weigh in the balance the detailed impacts of the proposals. As they currently stand, the proposals appear to incorporate an element of impracticality. The plots shown to be provided are cramped, closely spaced, with no identified amenity or parking space. The need for this additional infrastructure to support the proposed use on the site appears to have been somewhat neglected in the proposals that have come forward.
- 8.3 One can speculate on what may be required and, given the amount of land available in the ownership or control of the applicant, the potential for it to be provided within the site and thereby overcome these evident shortcomings. However, this would be likely to change the detailed impact of the proposals and is not therefore considered appropriate to undertake in this case without the potential for other interested parties to comment again. The proposals then are being considered wholly on the basis that they have been submitted.
- 8.4 In that respect the site is considered to perform well in sustainability terms, does not have a harmful amenity impact external to the site, is not considered to suffer from any environmental hazards, would be acceptable in terms of highway safety, could reasonably provide for its own internal water infrastructure (supply and drainage) and would not overwhelm the scale of the existing local communities.
- 8.5 On the issue of visual and landscape impact the situation is less clear. There will be greater visual impact from the physical buildings and the on-site activity. This is probably exacerbated by the currently submitted scheme which shows the plots to be particularly tightly spaced. However, as confirmed by the policy GBC2, the development is not inappropriate in this location. In addition, it is noted in Circular 01/2006 that rural settings for sites such as this are acceptable and that well planned or soft landscaped sites can positively enhance the environment.
- 8.6 So, the comments of the Councils Landscape Officer are acknowledged, along with the understanding that, however any units are arranged on the site, is likely to introduce a greater visual impact into the area that the

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current use, due to more built form and site activity. Given the policy position and government advice however, it is concluded that this impact (which could be mitigated by further landscaping) is not so harmful that it is considered to be unacceptable. The impact in relation to the adjacent historic parkland is also acknowledged but again, due to separation distances and intervening features, the impact is not considered to be unduly harmful in this respect.

- 8.7 Lastly then, on site amenity has been considered. On the basis of the current submission, it has been noted above, that the proposed layout is poor and indeed impractical. Regardless of the weight given to need, it would be inappropriate to secure a use and layout that provides unacceptable amenity for residents. In that respect it is recommended that the proposals are resisted. It should be noted that, if Members agree with this view, there would be acknowledgement that the location is acceptable in principle for this use. The acceptability of any alternative layout arrangement is not being speculated upon here, but it may be the case that a revised submission can overcome these matters of detail.