

AGENDA ITEM 8

DEFERRED APPLICATIONS

Item 8 (a): Caston (pages 23-34)

Location: Land adjacent to Caston Primary School, The Street, Caston

Proposal: Erection of five dwellings and car park for Caston Primary School

REFERENCE: 3PL/2017/1267/O

Applicant: Mr Philip Hall

Author: Debi Sherman

CONSULTATIONS

CASTON PARISH COUNCIL

There is only one bus route that runs through the village (travelled by two bus numbers depending on the time of day). The only stop is at the far end of the village and the total number of services through the day is 4no., the last one leaving Watton at 15:43 hours and last one leaving Thetford at 16:39 hours.

REPRESENTATIONS

One further letter of representation has been received raising the following points:

- Narrow road with speeding vehicles, would add to noise and congestion
- Views of this pretty site will be spoiled
- Site should be kept as open space such a childrens' play park

The agent has submitted an additional statement which sets out the following:

This is the one which details the pond area which we are hoping will provide for benefits for the wider community in heavy rainfall events. To be clear we do not need the pond to make our scheme acceptable in planning/flood risk terms.

The attached plan also details the car park, which has been the subject of much discussion. The car park was incorporated into the proposal to address a need identified in the Caston Village Appraisal undertaken by the Parish Council. The Village Appraisal sets out the communities' views and is not a statutory document in the same way as the Local Plan, however we used it as a tool to try and understand the community infrastructure shortfalls. The Village Appraisal identified traffic/parking issues in the village around the school, particularly at drop-off and collection times, as a problem.

In response we have offered the car park area, this could be used as overflow parking during pick up/drop off or in whatever manner the school wished to manage it. Again, as with the pond we don't believe that this provision is necessary to make our scheme acceptable, but the applicant was seeking to add some community benefits through the scheme, taking into account that a

development of this scale is not going to provide affordable housing, 106 contributions and the Council does not have CIL.

As we know the Diocese Property Services Team have accepted the principle of the car park offer and we have, at my clients expense, drafted a Unilateral Undertaking Legal Agreement to secure the provision. However, the Board of Governors of the school have expressed concerns that the car park will be a cost burden and the PC have advised that they do not think it will be of any benefit to the community. I have asked for the Diocese and the Board of Governors to provide me with a coordinated response, as yet this has not been forthcoming. I don't believe that the car park will be a cost burden as we will construct and maintain it for an agreed period of time. The PC seemed concerned that it would add confusion to the highway network, to the determinant of highway safety, and ultimately would not resolve any drop off/pick up issues. The Highway Authority have not objected to the scheme as it stands and the existing issue of school vehicle traffic not complying with traffic controls is a road management issue which we should not be expected to resolve through our application.

We are happy to continue to incorporate the car park and we would through the Reserved Matters applications consider the access being through our site, although that would need to be considered by the Highway Authority.

If the general consensus between the PC, Diocese, Board of Governors and Committee Members is that the car park is not wanted then we are happy through Reserved Matters to remove the car park from the site and landscape that area to the Councils desired outcome. As the application is in outline with layout, landscaping and appearance all reserved matters there is scope to address the car parking issue at a later stage of the process; or if it is clear at committee that the scheme is acceptable, apart from the car park, we would be happy to have the recommendation changed to approval subject to the provision of a plan removing the car park, and delegated to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning.

I hope that the above provides you with sufficient information to advise members that by virtue of the type of application made i.e. outline, there is scope to approve the scheme as proposed and confirm the car park issue at later stage of the process; and as stated if it is clear that the car park is to be removed to secure approval delegated to the Head of Planning then we can facilitate that as well.

With regards to safeguarding and loss of amenity we acknowledge this issue and believe that through the Reserved Matters submission this can be addressed by considerate design of dwellings ie scale, orientation, landscaping and separation distances (layout). I believe that officers have a robust policy position when considering design and there are recent examples in the village which have been less successful, these factors should ensure that there is extra scrutiny of the Reserved Matters application(s). To state now that the site should be five bungalows would be to pre-judge that a successful design outcome cannot be achieved which incorporates a range of dwelling sizes. The ultimate answer might be that five bungalows get built but until we go through the process of examining the design outcomes, and the market demands, it would be illogical to try and secure this matter now by condition, I would also be doubtful that a condition of that nature could be considered as reasonable.

ASSESSMENT

The majority of the issues raised are addressed elsewhere in the report. Issues relating to the potential alternative use are not considered to be a matter to be determined under this application; it is a matter for the applicant's consideration.

The matters raised by the agent are designed to inform debate and do not alter the Officer recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation remains unaltered.