

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation  
Control Committee

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2004

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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### **S/0592/04/F – Toft**

**Erection of B1 Offices, Bennell Farm, West Street, Comberton (In the Parish of Toft) for  
R W S Arnold**

**Recommendation: - Refusal**

#### **Departure**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. Bennell Farm sits on the western edge of Comberton, opposite the Village College. The farmhouse and former farm buildings, largely converted to office use, are set back from West Street in a rural setting.
2. The full application, received on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004, proposes the erection of a B1 office building measuring 5.4m x 24.4m and adjoins the existing farm store. The building is pitched roofed with a ridge height of 4.8m, and is timber clad to give a “barn-like” appearance.

#### **Planning History**

3. Since 1993 planning permissions have been granted to convert the former farm buildings to B1/B2/B8 (office, light industrial, research, general industrial and storage), although they are predominantly used for B1 office/research use. One building is retained as private stabling. The farm storage building adjoining the proposed building is of recent origins.

#### **Planning Policy**

4. The following policies area relevant:

##### The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

5. **Policy P1/2** - Environmental Restrictions on development. It states development in the countryside will be restricted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in particular rural location.
6. **Policy P1/3** - Sustainable Design in Built Development.
7. **Policy P2/6** - Rural Economy
8. **Policy P9/2a** - Green Belt

##### The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

9. **Policy GB2** – Green Belts states planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

10. Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3 Green Belts repeats the presumption against inappropriate development.

### **Consultations**

11. Toft Parish Council approves, but in view of the increased traffic, signage should be installed warning motorists leaving the site to slow down due to the risk of injury to the users of the cycle path.
12. Comberton Parish Council approves, stating further development of the site must be carefully monitored, and the increase in vehicular movements managed. Also light pollution is now creating some negative comments, and should be carefully examined.
13. Local Highway Authority has no comment.
14. Environment Agency recommends the imposition of a condition regarding the provision and implementation of a surface water drainage scheme.
15. The comments of the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and Chief Environmental Health Officer will be reported verbally.

**Representations** None received

### **Planning Comments**

16. Key issue  
Have very special circumstances been demonstrated to warrant approving inappropriate development in the Green Belt?
17. The proposal involves erecting a new single storey (128 sqm) office building abutting an existing agricultural building situated in the Green Belt.
18. In a covering letter it is explained that the building is required to provide offices for an existing tenant who needs additional space for expansion and who has been unable to find alternative accommodation in the locality.
19. The proposal is "inappropriate development" in the Green Belt as defined in Policy GB2 of the 2004 Local Plan. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt. It is prominently sited in front of the existing complex of buildings. I do not consider that there are any "very special circumstances" to override the presumption against the proposal.

### **Recommendations**

#### **20. Refusal**

1. The site is within the Cambridge Green Belt. The proposal to erect a 128sqm office building is "inappropriate development" and no "very special circumstances" have been advanced to overcome the presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy P9/2a of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 which seek to maintain the setting of Cambridge and to preserve the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.

2. The site is in the countryside, outside the village frameworks of Comberton and Toft defined in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004, and the proposal would be contrary to Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 which restricts development in the countryside to that which is essential to a rural location.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning application file Ref: S/S/0592/04/F

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