SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Planning Committee	1st November 2006
AUTHOR/S:	Executive Director/Head of Planning Services	

S/0450/06/F - MELDRETH
4 New Garages, Rear of Communal Room (Retrospective), Adj 23 Elin Way
for South Cambridgeshire District Council

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 1st May 2006

Members will visit this site on Monday 30th October 2006

Site and Proposal

1. This full application, as amended by drawings received on 29th September 2006, seeks retrospective consent for the erection of a block of four garages as part of the development of an area of land off Elin Way, Meldreth for a communal facilities building.

2. The garage building measures 10.5m x 5.2m with a ridge height of 3.9m. It is constructed of yellow/buff facing bricks with brown roofing tiles both of which are to match the communal room.

3. To the north west the building faces the rear of a pair of bungalows in Elin Way and to the north east and south east it adjoins the boundary of a semi-detached house in The Grange. The ground level of the site is slightly above that of the adjacent garden.

4. This application originally appeared on the May 2006 agenda but was withdrawn from the meeting pending the receipt of the amended drawings.

Planning History

5. Planning consent for the erection of a new communal facilities building was approved in December 2003 (**Ref: S/2289/03/F**). Whilst the submitted drawing showed the position of the block of concrete panelled and asbestos sloping roofed garages that existed on the site at the time no work to those buildings was indicated.

Planning Policy

6. **Policy P1/3** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The County Structure Plan") requires a high standard of design and sustainability for all new development which, amongst other criteria, responds to the local character of the built environment.

Consultation

7. **Meldreth Parish Council** "recommends refusal of this application. It also recommends a site meeting with Council Planning Officers to explore the feasibility of reducing the height of the roof to the original height." It raised no objection to the original submission.

Representations

8. The occupier of 7 The Grange, to the south east of the site, questions how a planning application can be made after the event. It is considered that the four garages are an unnecessarily huge eyesore and a waste of resources. They cause a loss of a private view and look like a 'prison block' by the side of the fence of No 7 and are likely to result in a loss of value. These structures were not shown on the original drawings and it was thought that the area was going to be used as a car park therefore no objection was made. An objection is made to the current building and it is felt that a screen or evergreen plants should be provided as camouflage at the very least.

9. Following the submission of the amended drawings a further letter has been received from the occupier of 7 The Grange rehearsing the concern about the loss of view caused by the garages. The fact that the buildings were constructed without planning permission is "disgusting and the Council should not be allowed to get away with it." Screening has been mentioned in the past but nothing has come of it. A street light which was on the original plans has not materialised either. Consideration should be given to lowering the height of the garages as the height structure is a total waste of resources.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

10. Although the application is retrospective, Members should consider it on planning merits alone based on the key issue, which is the visual impact of the garage block on the character of the area and the amenity of adjacent residents.

11. The garage building is set behind the pair of existing bungalows to the north and is screened to the west by the new communal facilities building. As a result the building has limited visual impact on the wider character of the area. The building replaces a line of garages (16 in total) and introduces a shallow pitch roof.

12. The garage building is to the south east of the rear gardens of the pair of bungalows in Elin Way. These bungalows have shallow gardens that are 5m deep and the building is located 7.5m from the boundary with these properties. Given that the ridge height of the building is only 3.9m I do not consider that it results in a material loss of amenity to the occupiers of the bungalows.

13. The garage building is located 1m of the north east and 0.2m of the south east boundaries of the rear garden of No 7 The Grange. The boundary is formed by a 1.8m high close-boarded fence. Some planting has been removed from this boundary during the development of the site to allow for access to the rear of the new communal facilities building. The new ground level within the site is raised above that of the adjacent garden and as a result more of the wall of the building is visible above the fence than might normally be expected to be the case. The garage building is located within 10m of the north west corner of the house itself, however I am of the view, that given its orientation to the north west and low ridge height, it does not have such an unreasonable adverse effect on the amenity of the occupiers of No 7 The Grange to justify a recommendation of refusal.

14. I note the request of Meldreth Parish Council that the feasibility of reducing the height of the roof to the original height be explored, but in my view Members first need to consider whether the proposal in acceptable in its current form or not. If not then alternative options will need to be explored.

15. There is limited opportunity, if any, to provide any planting between the garage block and boundary as requested by the occupiers of No 7 The Grange but a condition could be attached to any consent requiring the treatment of the boundary to be explored further and agreed between the parties.

Recommendations

That retrospective consent is granted subject to the following conditions.

1. Standard Condition - 60 – Boundary Treatment – north east and south east – (Reason – To help screen the development from the adjoining property at 7 The Grange).

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:

   - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: P1/3** (Sustainable design in built development).

2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:

   - Residential amenity
   - Visual impact on the locality

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 File Ref: S/0450/06/F & S/2289/03/F

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