

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

6<sup>th</sup> October 2004

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

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**S/1676/04/F - Castle Camps  
Extensions and Conversion of 2 Barns into a Dwelling and Erection of Garage/Stores  
at Barns at Camps End for Mr & Mrs Haylock**

**Recommendation: Refusal**

### **Departure Application**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. This application relates to a 0.16 hectare (0.4 acre) approximately site which is part of a field and is currently occupied by a pair of timber framed brick plinth, timber boarding and corrugated sheeting barns in a poor state of repair and a number of attached and detached corrugated sheeting buildings. At the time of the case officer's visit, the smaller of the two barns was being used of the storage of hay. Little Biggs Farm to the northwest is comprised of a listed farmhouse and agricultural buildings.
2. This full application, registered on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2004, proposes to create a 4 bedroom dwelling by connecting the two barns by a single storey link, adding a gable roof to part of one of the barns and inserting openings into the barns. A new render over brickwork and clay plain tile roof building is also proposed to be used as a garage, store and shed. A new driveway would link the buildings to the existing field gate onto the road. The application is accompanied by a Structural Survey and a Supporting Statement. The Statement states that it would not be viable to convert the buildings for light industrial or other commercial uses.

#### **Planning History**

3. None.

#### **Planning Policy**

4. The site is within the countryside and the South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands Landscape Character Area as defined in the Local Plan 2004.
5. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/2** states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
6. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that residential development outside village frameworks will not permitted.

7. Paragraph 17 of Planning Policy Statement 7 ‘Sustainable Development in Rural Area’ (2004) states that “The Government’s policy is to support the re-use of appropriate located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. Re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of building. Planning authorities should therefore set out in LDDs their policy criteria for permitting the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic, residential and any other purposes, including mixed uses.

These criteria should take account of:

- The potential impact on the countryside and landscapes and wildlife;
  - Specific local economic and social needs and opportunities;
  - Settlement patterns and accessibility to service centres, markets and housing;
  - The suitability of different types of buildings, and of different scales, of re-use;
  - The need to preserve, or the desirability of preserving, buildings of historic or architectural importance or interest, or which otherwise contribute to local character.
8. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN1** states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the character and local distinctiveness of the Landscape Character Areas.
9. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN28** states that the District Council will refuse applications which dominate a listed building; damage the setting, well-being or attractiveness of a listed building; or would harm the visual relationship between a listed building and its formal or natural landscape surroundings. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P7/6** states that Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.

### **Consultation**

10. **Castle Camps Parish Council** recommends approval.
11. **Conservation Manager** states that:

The barn buildings are not held to be curtilage listed. Although they appear to have been part of the land which formed Little Biggs Farm, they are set away from the main group of buildings and over time have become physically separated as well as being in separate ownership.

Being set away from the main farmhouse by over 40 metres, the structures do not have a significant impact on the setting of the Listed Building. They are also set back from the road by over 25 metres so their contribution to the street scene is limited. The main contribution of the buildings is within the rural setting to the hamlet – as traditional rural buildings they form part of the countryside.

The barns are considered to be of local historical interest but they have been much altered over time. Only about half of the historic timber frames survive and the buildings have also been doubled in size with modern extensions. The roofing is tin.

#### Issues:

- The retention of the buildings : they are currently in a low use storage function and do not have any significant agricultural use at present. The surviving historic fabric is deteriorating and without any major investment in the fabric of the building the structures could become unsound. There is no control over the demolition of the structures.
- The amount of alteration required for the new use. The scheme does propose the removal of the modern additions to the building but the exterior of the new dwelling would be modern fabric – the only surviving element would be the parts of the timber frame capable of being salvaged for reuse. The condition of this is likely to mean this would have a purely cosmetic role within the structure.

The buildings are considered to have limited value in terms of their contribution to the immediate setting of the Listed Building. The amount of surviving historic fabric is limited and it is considered that this would be further compromised by the alterations required for the new works. The main value of the buildings is from their setting in the countryside. The external appearance of the building would all be new fabric. The surrounding curtilage to the barns would change by virtue of the new driveway, erection of a garage block and formation of a domestic garden. This domestication of the rural landscape is considered to have a significant impact on the character of the hamlet. It is considered this would also harm the visual relationship of the listed farmhouse with its wider rural surroundings. The adverse impact on the character and appearance of the locality is considered to outweigh any benefits of preserving the surviving historic fabric of the structures.

The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to the provisions of Policy EN28 of the Local Plan by causing harm to the setting of the Listed farmhouse.

12. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends conditions are attached to any approval relating to the times during the construction period when power operated machinery shall not be operated and requiring a site contamination investigation and details of any necessary remedial works.
13. **Environment Agency** recommends a condition relating to foul water drainage is attached to any approval and makes advisory comments.

#### **Representations**

14. The occupier of Little Biggs Farm objects on the grounds that he would be overlooked and the development would devalue his listed building.

#### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

15. The key issues in relation to this application are:
  - Whether there are any material considerations which outweigh the presumption against residential development in the countryside; and
  - The affect of the proposal on the visual amenities of the countryside and the setting of the adjacent listed farmhouse at Little Biggs Farm.

16. At this Committee, Members will recall approving applications for the conversion of vernacular buildings in the countryside to dwellings where the planning benefits in terms of matters such as finding an appropriate use for a historic and/or vernacular building outweigh the harm of allowing a dwelling away from settlements and local facilities. Applications have also been refused where the benefits do not outweigh the harm.
17. In this instance, whilst the application refers to conversion, the submitted structural survey confirms that the walls of the barns would need to be rebuilt, re-structured foundations would be needed, re-formed slabs may be needed and the roofs replaced. Only some of the original timber frame would remain. The proposal also involves extensions, a new building to be used as garaging/stores, a new driveway and the creation of a garden, all within the countryside. In my view, the proposal would also detract from the visual amenities and rural character of the locality and the setting of the listed farmhouse at Little Biggs Farm. For these reasons, the application is considered to be contrary to National Government Policy and Development Plan Policies and should be refused.
18. Given the poor condition of the buildings, it is difficult to see that they have any potential use other than for low-key storage and, in all likelihood, they will continue to deteriorate until they collapse. However, the harm identified above is considered to outweigh any benefits of preserving the surviving historic fabric of the structures.
19. I do not consider that the proposal would seriously affect the amenity of the occupiers of the farmhouse at Little Biggs Farm.

### **Recommendations**

20. Refusal
  1. The site is in the countryside as defined in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and a considerable distance from any settlement and local services. Rather than only involving the conversion of existing buildings, the proposal involves substantial rebuilding of the barns, extensions, a new building to be used as garaging/stores, a new driveway and the creation of a domestic garden. The proposal is not therefore considered to comply with the Government's policy, as stated in Planning Policy Statement 7, to only support the re-use of appropriate located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. Furthermore, there are no material considerations in this instance to justify setting aside South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy SE8, which states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted, and, as it has not been demonstrated why the development is essential in this particular rural location, the proposal is also contrary to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Policy P1/2.
  2. The change in the appearance of this site as a result of the proposed development is also considered to be harmful to the visual amenity of the countryside, the rural character of the hamlet and the relationship of the adjacent Listed farmhouse with the natural landscape.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the aims of: South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy EN1, which states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the character of the South Suffolk and North Essex Landscape Character Area; South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy EN28, which states that the District Council will refuse applications which damage the setting,

well-being or attractiveness of a listed building or would harm the visual relationship between a listed building and its natural landscape surroundings; and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Policy P7/6 which requires Local Planning Authorities to protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.

**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 Policy Statement 7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Area' 2004

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