

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 5th January 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/2241/04/F - Great Abington
Change of Use of Barn from Storage to Seed Laboratory and Administrative Area and
Siting of Portable Building for Mess/Meeting Room, Storage and Locker Room at 49
North Road for S W Seed Ltd

Recommendation: Refusal
Date of determination: 29th December 2004

Site and Proposal

1. The application site lies on the southern side of North Road and is occupied by a brick and tile office building, a painted brick, blockwork and corrugated sheeting roof building and a gravelled parking area. There are public rights of way adjacent to the site to the north (North Road) and west. A dwelling owned by the applicants lies to the east.
2. This full application, registered on the 3rd November 2004 proposes the use of a 28m x 9.5m building as a seed laboratory and administrative area and the siting of a 9.7m x 4m x 3m high portacabin to be used as a mess/meeting room, locker room and for storage. No new openings in the barn are proposed.

Planning History

3. Planning permission was granted in 1985 for the office building (**S/1016/85/F**). Condition 1 of the permission stated that the building shall be used for office and storage purposes in association with the use of adjacent buildings and land, for the purposes of agriculture, edged blue on the approved plan.

Planning Policy

4. The site is within the countryside as defined in the Local Plan 2004 and within the Abington former Land Settlement Estate.
5. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/2** states that development in the countryside will be restricted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
6. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EM10** normally supports the principle of a change of use of rural buildings to employment use. However, on the former Land Settlement Association Estate, "as much of the area is residential and the roads are of poor standard (within the estate they are single carriageway with passing bays and are privately owned and maintained)", **Policy Abington 1** states that planning permission will not be granted for commercial development unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

Consultation

7. **Great Abington Parish Council** recommends approval.
8. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends conditions requiring details of any power driven plant and equipment to be agreed and times when power operated machinery shall not be operated to be attached to any approval.
9. **Environment Agency** recommends that a condition requiring a scheme of pollution control to be approved and implemented is attached to any approval. It also makes advisory comments.
10. **Ramblers Association** is concerned that building operations should not impede the use of the footpaths by the storing of materials, parking of vehicles or the dumping of debris and that footpath signage should not be affected either during building or on completion.
11. **County Council's Countryside Services Team** was consulted but had not commented at the time this report was compiled.

Representations

12. None received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

13. The key issues in relation to this application are whether the proposal complies with Policy Abington 1 of the Local Plan and, if not, whether there are any considerations that indicate that it should be approved as a departure from the Development Plan; and the visual impact of the proposed portable building.
14. Although a seed laboratory is related to agriculture, the proposed use is not considered to be directly related to local agriculture. The proposal is a result of the closure of the applicant's Abbots Ripton breeding and fields trial centre near Huntingdon. It is a Research & Development Use (Use Class B1(b)) and, rather than being directly related to land on the former Land Settlement Association Estate, would provide support to the breeding programme and trialling activity to be located at Fulbourn. The proposed change of use and portacabin are therefore considered to be contrary to the aims of Local Plan Policy Abington 1. Whilst the application forms indicate that only 3 additional people would be employed at the site, approval of this application would make it more difficult to resist other applications for commercial development on the former Land Settlement Association Estates to the progressive detriment of the agricultural character of the area and the amenity of residents, which the Policy seeks to protect. The applicant has stated that there are no such facilities at Fulbourn. I do not consider that this or any other matters constitute an overriding consideration to indicate that the proposal should be approved as a departure from the Development Plan.
15. Even if the principle of the change of use of the building were considered acceptable on this site, the proposed portable building, which would be visible from North Road, would detract from the agricultural character of the former Land Settlement Association Estate and the visual amenities of the area.

Recommendation

16. Refusal for the following reason:

The proposal is primarily a Research and Development use which would support the breeding programme and trialling activity to be located at Fulbourn. It is not directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area and it has not been demonstrated that the use and portable building are essential in this particular rural location. The proposed portable building would also detract from the agricultural character of the former Land Settlement Association Estate and the visual amenities of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to the aims of South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy Abington 1 which states that planning permission will not be granted for commercial development on the former Land Settlement Association Estate unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area; and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Policy P1/2 which states that development in the countryside will be restricted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular 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 file Ref: S/2241/04/F and S/1016/85/F

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