

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 7th December 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/1785/05/F – Stapleford
Office Extension at 65 London Road for NST Travel Group PLC

Recommendation: Refusal
Date for determination: 14th November 2005

Members will visit the site on Monday 5th December 2005.

Site and Proposal

1. This application relates to a distinctive two-storey buff and white painted brick office building with brise soleil and a first floor balcony facing Church Street and London Road and flat roof and single storey tile roof elements on the west side. The area around the building is hardstanding and used for parking. The access is on to Church Street adjacent to the access to the Travis Perkins site to the north. Parking in Church Street is restricted to 30 minutes along the site frontage/opposite the Post Office and signs and markings indicated that no waiting is permitted along the Travis Perkins site frontage between the hours of 9am and 6pm Monday to Saturday, although there were rows of cars parked here at the time of the case officer's visits.
2. This full application, received on the 19th September 2005 and amended by plans and form date stamped 18th November 2005, proposes the erection of a two-storey extension to the building resulting in an increase in the building's floor area from 846 square metres to 964 square metres, an increase of 118 square metres. Existing and proposed car parking plans indicate that the number of parking spaces would be increased from 30 (at a ratio of one space per 28.2 square metres of floor area) to 32 (at a ratio of one space per 30.1 square metres of floor area), albeit the existing plan does not wholly show the existing arrangement.

Planning History

3. Planning permission was granted in 2001 for a first floor extension and external alterations to the building under reference **S/0376/01/F**. The approved plans involved a 17 square metre extension (resulting in a 848 square metre building) and showed 3 additional parking spaces (29 in total) equating to one space per 29 square metres of floorspace. At that time, the forms indicated that the number of employees would remain unchanged as a result of the development at 45, including 8 part-time employees.
4. Permission has been granted for a fire escape staircase (**S/0936/90/F**), alterations and extensions to building for office use (**S/2547/87/F**), change of use of majority of existing accommodation to offices (**S/2139/86/F**), extension to showroom and stores (**S/2055/78/F**) and two storage sheds (**S/1108/76/F**).
5. Planning permission was refused for use of the site for auction sale of chattels under reference **S/0127/87/F** on the grounds that the use was likely to generate a significant

volume of traffic and a demand for car parking which the Local Planning Authority was not convinced could be totally accommodated on the site.

Planning Policy

6. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/3** relates to sustainable design in built development and requires a high standard of design for all new development which responds to the local character of the built environment.
7. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EM7** states that, within village frameworks, development for the expansion of existing firms will be permitted provided: there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic conditions, village character and other environmental factors; the development would contribute to a greater range of local employment opportunities, especially for the semi-skilled and unskilled, or where initial development is dependent on the use of locally-based skills and expertise; and the proposal complies with the limitations on the occupancy of new premises in the District set out in Policy EM3.
8. Local Plan 2004 **Policy TP1** states that the Council will seek, through its decisions on planning applications, to promote more sustainable transport choices and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, by amongst other things restricting car parking to a maximum of 1 space per 25 square metres of gross floor area.

Consultations

9. **Stapleford Parish Council** recommends approval.

Representations – Local Residents

10. The occupiers of 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 27 and 29 Priam's Way and 14 Church Street object to the proposal on the grounds that there is already insufficient parking provision on-site for the existing building resulting in parking by NST employees in Priam's Way, Dolphin Way and Church Street and sometimes Hawthorne Road. They state that this leads to:
 - a. Difficulties for delivery vehicles, visitors and service workers to park near the house they are visiting and, if ever necessary, also emergency vehicles;
 - b. Difficulties for residents in Priam's Way to enter and exit their driveways safely;
 - c. Hazard to children on foot and cyclists;
 - d. Difficult for pedestrians to get by cars parked on the pavements, particularly if they have wheelchairs, pushchairs or perambulators;
 - e. Dolphin Way effectively becoming single width as a result of parked cars which could mean a driver having to back out onto the London Road if they find the road ahead blocked by an oncoming car; and
 - f. Parked vehicles in Priam's Way affects the outlook from properties.
11. It is stated that, whilst there are yellow lines on Church Street, illegal parking is not enforced against. They also state that the situation is not helped by deliveries to, customer collections from and insufficient parking at the adjacent Travis Perkins Building Supplies.

12. They state that this problem will only be exacerbated by the proposed extension.
13. The following were suggested as possible solutions: on-site parking for all employees or the provision of a minibus pickup for all staff from one of the two nearby park and ride sites (Trumpington or Babraham Road); the introduction of permit only parking in surrounding roads; and underground parking.

Representations – Applicant

14. In a letter responding to the comments of local residents, the agents state that:
 - a. In addition to secure cycle stands, shower and changing facilities would be provided for staff (although the plans don't indicate where these facilities would be provided);
 - b. Car sharing is already actively encouraged but, to ensure greater publicity, a Green Travel Plan co-ordinator would be nominated to publicise car sharing and ensure that details of the local bus and train services are displayed in a prominent position;
 - c. As the site is in a very sustainable location, it will be easy to promote alternative means of transport – there being frequent bus services, Gt Shelford railway station being within easy walking or cycling distance and the close proximity to residential areas which may facilitate walking to work;
 - d. A Green Travel Plan could be secured by condition;
 - e. The suggestion of providing a minibus pickup for staff from one of the two nearby park and ride sites (Trumpington or Babraham Road) would be difficult in practice as a large number of the staff tend to work irregular hours; and
 - f. It is the client's opinion that the staff park within the site on the majority of occasions and, whilst there may be some occasional parking on Priam's Way, NST is not the only concern in the vicinity and the majority of the on-street parking is not created solely by NST.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

15. The main issue in relation to this application is parking provision. The visual impact of the proposed extension is acceptable and the proposal is considered to be acceptable in all other respects.
16. In terms of the standards set out in the Local Plan, the existing building requires a maximum of 34 car parking spaces. 29 spaces are currently marked out, although, at the time of the case officer's visit to the site on 17th November, by double parking and parking other than in marked spaces, 37 cars were parked on site. With the proposed extension, the building would require a maximum of 39 spaces. The proposed parking layout plan indicates that 32 spaces could be provided and also shows space for parking up to 36 cycles.
17. I would normally want to support an expanding local firm and might normally accept that the proposed parking provision was acceptable (being 82% of the maximum provision set out in the Local Plan), particularly if a Green Travel Plan was also secured. However, by the agents' own admission, there are already occasions when

staff park off-site, although they dispute whether it is as regular as objectors indicate. There is already double parking on site and the application indicates that a further 15 people would be employed, making a total of 80. At the time of application S/0376/01/F in 2001, the application forms stated that 45 were employed. Although the provision of secure cycle parking and shower facilities may encourage some employees to cycle to work, the agent states that the applicant already encourages car sharing and it therefore has to be doubted how effective a Green Travel Plan would be in reducing the demand for parking.

18. As a result, it is likely that approval of this application would result in further parking off-site and, consequently, result in an unacceptable level of disturbance and inconvenience to local residents and an adverse effect on the free flow of traffic in the locality.

Recommendation

19. Refusal (as amended by drawing nos. 1132/L04 Rev.P1 and 1132/L05 Rev.P1 and amended Part 2 form date stamped 18.11.05)

The provision of only 32 car parking spaces, some of which would be difficult to manoeuvre in and out of, for the proposed resulting building is likely to result in more staff parking off-site and, consequently, result in an unacceptable level of disturbance and inconvenience to local residents and an adverse effect on the free flow of traffic in the locality. The proposal is thereby contrary to South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy EM7 which states that, within village frameworks, development for the expansion of existing firms will only be permitted where there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity or traffic conditions.

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 Refs: S/1785/05/F, S/0376/01/F, S/0936/90/F, S/2547/87/F, S/0127/87/F, S/2139/86/F, S/2055/78/F and S/1108/76/F

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