

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

S/1898/05/F – West Wratting
Dwelling on Land at The Causeway for Henry D’Abo on behalf of the
H Settlement Trust

Recommendation: Refusal
Date for determination: 1st December 2005

Departure Application and Conservation Area

Site and Proposal

1. The site, which extends to approximately 0.2 hectares/0.5 acres, is grassed/covered in vegetation and rises towards the southwest and, to a lesser extent, towards The Causeway to the southeast. Surrounding development to the northeast, southeast and southwest is a mix of dwelling types, designs and materials with boundaries between these properties and the site marked by chain link fencing, close boarded fences, conifers or post and rail fencing. A 1m high hedge marks the boundary with the field to the northwest with Bull Lane and the Recreation Ground beyond. St Andrews Church, a Grade II* listed building, lies beyond The Causeway to the east. No.84 High Street to the southwest, a render and thatched roof cottage, is a Grade II listed building.
2. This full application, registered on the 6th October 2005, proposes the erection of a U-shaped dwelling, predominantly single storey but with a two-storey central element standing 6.4m high. The dwelling would have 4-bedrooms plus a guest suite and would be accessed from The Causeway. Materials and boundary treatments are to be agreed. The density equates to approximately 5 dwellings to the hectare.

Planning History

3. An application for a dwelling of the same design and in the same position as now proposed on the site was refused in 2001 under reference **S/0035/01/F** for the following reasons:
 - “1. The proposed development of a dwelling outside of the village framework, in the absence of any agricultural or other justification, is contrary to Policy SP12/1 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan and Policy H5 of the approved South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, which seek to protect the countryside for its own sake and restrict new dwellings to locations within the village framework.
 2. The proposed development would have an adverse impact on the open and rural character of this part of the West Wratting Conservation Area, contrary to Policies C32 and C33 of the Approved South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 1993 and Policy EN45 of the 1999 Deposit Local Plan.”

Planning Policy

4. A small part of the site adjacent to The Causeway is within the village framework. The majority of the site, including the part on which the dwelling would be sited, is outside the framework and within the countryside.

Development in the Countryside

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 be permitted.
7. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN3** states that, in those cases where new development is permitted in the countryside, the Council will require that (a) the scale, design and layout of the scheme (b) the materials used within it, and (c) the landscaping works are all appropriate to the particular 'Landscape Character Area' (the boundary between the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area and the South Suffolk & North Essex Clayland Landscape Character Area in this instance), and reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.

Development within Village Frameworks

8. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE5** states that residential developments within the village frameworks of Infill Villages, which includes West Wrating, will be restricted to not more than two dwellings comprising:
 1. a gap in an otherwise built-up frontage to an existing road, provided that it is not sufficiently large to accommodate more than two dwellings on similar curtilages to those adjoining; or
 2. the redevelopment or sub-division of an existing residential curtilage; or
 3. the sub-division of an existing dwelling; or
 4. subject to the provisions of Policy EM8, the conversion or redevelopment of a non-residential building where this would not result in a loss of local employment;

Provided the site in its present form does not form an essential part of village character, and development is sympathetic to the historic interests, character, and amenities of the locality.

9. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE9** states that development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact of development on the countryside

Development in Conservation Areas and Affecting the Setting of Listed Buildings

10. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P7/6** states that Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.

11. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN28** states that the District Council will resist and refuse applications which would: dominate a Listed Building or its curtilage buildings in scale, form, massing or appearance; damage the setting, well-being or attractiveness of a Listed Building; harm the visual relationship between the building and its formal or natural landscape surroundings; or damage archaeological remains of importance unless some exceptional, overriding need can be demonstrated.
12. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN30** states that proposals within conservation areas will be expected to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the conservation area in terms of their scale, massing, roof materials and wall materials. It also states that the District Council will refuse permission for schemes within conservation areas which do not specify traditional local materials and details and which do not fit comfortably into their context.

Consultations

13. **West Wratting Parish Council** states that "The parish council are split on this with 5 for, 2 against and would like the following points to be noted:-

The site is largely outside the village framework and this is of concern. We would therefore wish the conditions given below to be attached if permission is granted.

1. A s.106 is entered into to protect the field behind the property (to the north west and viewed from the proposed living areas) from any form of development. *[Reason: to retain a degree of openness and rural environment at this edge of the village].*
2. A condition be imposed to ensure that no further development is accessed via the road entrance to this single residential property. *[Reason: to control the spread of unplanned development].*
3. A condition is imposed to permanently prohibit any extension which would increase the area or extent of the first floor of the property *[Reason: to ensure the property does not become a more significant visual intrusion amongst the older properties to the south of this site, which includes listed buildings within a conservation area].*

We believe that the 3 points made above are of vital importance to the village. Infill between properties allows the village to grow within its existing boundaries. We must be able to ensure that the surrounding fields are protected against development. Experience suggests that any relaxation of a Planning Regulation such as the boundary of a Village Envelope would result in other similar applications."

14. **Conservation Manager** recommends refusal stating:

1. The site lies outside of the village framework. It currently forms an important and attractive open space within the Conservation Area. It also is part of the foreground setting for the church when viewed across from the recreation ground. The character of this part of the village is defined by its frontage development on to the roads and the enclosure of the open space behind.
2. The proposed backland development, to the rear of the Causeway, would detract from the established built character of the village and intrude upon the important open spaces, conflicting with the setting of the existing building group.
3. The architectural form of the building proposed is rather sprawling and incoherent, being an unhappy mix of pseudo-agricultural courtyard buildings

with an attached vaguely Palladian, glass portico. In my opinion, the architectural design takes nothing from its context and is entirely ill conceived.

4. The proposed building will also visually dominate and detract from the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area, by reason of its inappropriate scale, architectural form and mass.
5. In addition, the insertion of such a scale of development into this part of the Conservation Area will intrude into the setting of the enclosing listed buildings, by removing their visual context and connection with the open paddocks beyond. This is also true for the setting of the church, the tower of which is currently viewed across the fields from the recreation ground and which, if this scheme was approved, would be pushed into the background and dominated by views of what might appear to be a small retail park.
15. In conclusion, he states that he is consequently of the opinion that this poorly conceived development conflicts with both key policy areas, by intruding into the countryside setting of West Wratting, and eroding the visual character and quality of both the Conservation Area and the adjoining listed buildings. Therefore, it is his view that the proposal should not be supported and this application should be refused.
16. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends that conditions relating to the times when power operated machinery shall not be operated during the construction period except in accordance with agreed noise restrictions and driven pile foundations are attached to any approval. He also recommends that an informative is attached to any approval stating that there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site during construction except with his Department's prior permission.
17. **English Heritage** has been consulted. Any comments received will be reported verbally.

Representations – In Support of the Application

18. Letters supporting the proposal from the occupiers of The Old School, The Causeway and Nos. 2, 4 and 6 The Causeway were submitted as part of the application. The grounds for supporting the application are: it has been thoughtfully designed; would not be in the line vision or spoiling views of the village from the High Street or The Causeway; the land is derelict and could be illegally occupied; the proposal does not cause any highway issues in The Causeway; there is a requirement for housing of all sizes in the area; and, for all practical purposes, the proposal is for an in-fill development.

Representations – Against the Application

19. The occupiers of 54 High Street and The Old Vicarage, The Causeway object on the following grounds: most of the proposed development is outside the village framework and would create a dangerous precedent; and the land is not derelict but has purely been neglected and could be reinstated as a field with trees with the greatest of ease.

20. The Ely Diocesan Board of Finance states that the Parsonage is situated to the northeast of the site and, whilst beginning by stating that the opportunity could be taken to increase the density in accordance with the guidelines of PPG3, continues by stating that if the site is outside the village envelope it is concerned that, if permission was granted, the decision would set a somewhat dangerous precedent.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

21. The main issues in relation to this application are: the principle of erecting a dwelling on this countryside site; and the impact of the development on the visual amenities of the countryside, Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.
22. The part of the site on which the proposed dwelling would be sited is outside the village framework and within the countryside. As no essential need for the dwelling has been demonstrated, the application is contrary to development plan policies which state that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location and residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
23. Furthermore, the site currently forms an important and attractive open space and is part of the foreground setting for St Andrews Church when viewed across from the recreation ground. The proposed dwelling, by reason of its inappropriate scale, architectural form, mass, siting to the rear of properties and intrusion into an important open space would detract from the established built character of the village, the visual amenities of the countryside, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of St Andrews Church, a Grade II* listed building, and No.84 High Street, a Grade II listed building.
24. In relation to other issues, there would be no serious harm to the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and, whilst visibility from the access to the southwest is restricted by The Old School's entrance piers, the proposed access is not considered to be an additional reason for refusal.
25. There has been no material change in circumstances since the refusal of planning permission in 2001, when Committee Members visited the site, to warrant supporting the application.

Recommendation

26. Refusal
1. The part of the site on which the proposed dwelling would be sited is outside the village framework as defined in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and within the countryside. In the absence of any agricultural or other justification, the proposed development is contrary to Structure Plan 2003 Policy P1/2 which states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy SE8 which states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
 2. Notwithstanding reason 1, the site currently forms an important and attractive open space and is part of the foreground setting for St Andrews Church when viewed across from the recreation ground. The proposed dwelling, by reason of its inappropriate scale, architectural form, mass, siting to the rear of properties and intrusion into an important open space would detract from the established

built character of the village, the visual amenities of the countryside, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of St Andrews Church, a Grade II* listed building, and No.84 High Street, a Grade II listed building. The proposal is therefore contrary to: Structure Plan 2003 Policy P7/6 which states that Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment; 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 harm the visual relationship between the building and its formal or natural landscape surroundings; South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy EN30 which states that proposals within conservation areas will be expected to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the conservation areas and the District Council will refuse permission for schemes within conservation areas which do not fit comfortably into their context; and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy EN3 which states that, in those cases where new development is permitted in the countryside, the Council will require that the scale, design and layout of the scheme are all appropriate to the particular 'Landscape Character Area' (the boundary between the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area and the South Suffolk & North Essex Clayland Landscape Character Area in this instance) and reinforce local distinctiveness.

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/1898/05/F and S/0035/01/F

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