

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

5th April 2006

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0282/06/F – Meldreth

Erection of Dwelling to Replace Existing Dwelling and Outbuildings to be Demolished on Completion, 'Corner View' 1 Stone Lane for Mr and Mrs R Searles

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 13th April 2006

Members will visit the site on 3rd April 2006.

Site and Proposal

1. Stone Lane consists of a group of large detached properties all of which fall outside of the Meldreth village framework. The existing dwellinghouse is a relatively tall redbrick building of no particular merit, which sits in a very prominent location within the lane. Aside from the main two-storey part of the dwellinghouse there are several single storey lean-to elements and a detached washroom building. The rest of the property's curtilage was until recently heavily overgrown with a collection of trees, bushes and weeds. As well as the property and its curtilage the applicants also own the land to the north and east of the site, which is populated by numerous mature trees. To the northeast of the site the highway of North End runs adjacent to the aforementioned land.
2. This full application, received on the 16th February 2006, proposes to demolish the existing dwelling and replace it with a larger chalet style dwelling with dormer windows and a balcony in an area of the curtilage to the north of the footprint of the existing property. In addition to the new dwelling there will also be a new vehicular access to the site and turning area to the front of the proposed replacement dwelling.

Planning History

3. None

Planning Policy

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

4. **Policy HG15 'Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside'** states that replacement dwellings in the countryside will be permitted where they are in scale and character with the dwelling they are intended to replace and would not materially alter the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.

Consultation

5. **Meldreth Parish Council** recommends that the application be approved as the councillors believe that the development would enhance the location and make a significant improvement to visibility at the sharp corner within Stone Lane.

6. **Comments of the Local Member – Councillor van de Ven**

7. Councillor van de Ven believes that the proposed dwelling would be proportionately balanced to neighbouring houses and in a much better position than the existing one, it would also offer numerous advantages from a sustainability viewpoint. The Local Member notes that the existing house is a poor basis for an extension and feels strongly that the application should be supported.
8. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** has no objection to the application but has requested that conditions be attached to any consent granted limiting the hours of operation of power operated machinery.

Representations

9. One letter of support from the owner/occupier of 'Brookside', 4 Stone Lane, who believes that the demolition of the existing dwelling will improve visibility in the lane. Support is also given to the new entrance, which will provide a passing point, and the fact that the new dwelling is of an environmentally friendly design and will not overlook any of the existing properties is also mentioned. It is pointed out that all the other properties in Stone Lane have received planning permission to extend.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

10. Before the submission of this application planning officers entered into pre-application discussions with the applicants and it should be acknowledged that the proposed dwelling has been reduced in size from the scheme first seen by officers. The existing dwellinghouse is of no architectural or historic merit and enjoys a proximity to the highway of Stone Lane that is not in keeping with the physical relationships of the surrounding properties. Planning officers have never been adverse to the relocation of any replacement dwelling within the site. Notwithstanding the size of the surrounding properties the main issues for members to consider are whether the replacement dwelling is in scale and character with the dwelling it is intended to replace and whether the replacement dwelling would materially alter the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.

Scale and Character

11. Although the existing dwelling is two-storey with limited room in the roofspace, more than half of its modest footprint is made up of single storey elements. Overall the footprint of the existing property (including the detached outhouse) is approximately 78 square metres, compared to a footprint of approximately 124 square metres for the replacement dwelling. This disparity distorts even further when the floor area is taken into consideration with the existing dwelling having a floor area of approximately 119 square metres (not including the space within the roof) compared to a figure of approximately 288 square metres for the replacement dwelling, well in excess of double the floor area of the existing property.
12. In the supporting text of policy HG15 a maximum enlargement figure of 15% of the volume of the original dwelling is stated for replacement dwellings in the countryside. As no elevations of the existing dwelling have been provided it has not been possible for officers to accurately calculate the dwelling's volume. However based on the figures for the footprint and floor area increase it is evident that the figure of 15% of the volume of the original dwelling will be greatly exceeded.

13. Although number 1 Stone Lane is surrounded by larger properties it should be noted that these properties have been extended and were not subject to the Council's replacement dwellings in the countryside policy. The current policy for the extension of dwellings in the countryside (HG13) is more generous in permitted volume increase than HG15 (Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside). Moreover the extensions of the other properties in Stone Lane were permitted under the policies of previous development plans, which were even more generous than policy HG13.
14. Officers are not of the opinion that the existing dwellinghouse's style should be replicated and there is no objection to the replacement dwelling on design grounds. Moreover the impact of the development upon the amenities of the occupiers of the surrounding properties is considered to be acceptable. Notwithstanding the increase in the size of the replacement dwelling its greater depth, width and proximity to North End means that it will significantly alter the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.

Impact of the site on the surrounding countryside

15. Although lower than the existing property (approximately 0.3 metres) the proposed dwelling will still represent a two storey bulk of built development with a width of 14.1 metres. Any beneficial visual impact of the low eaves will be lost as a result of the six dormer windows that will extend out from the front and rear roofslopes.
16. The new position of the replacement dwelling will be nearer to North End than the existing property and sit further back from Stone Lane. At present the existing dwelling is well screened from the North End by virtue of its position within the site and its distance from the highway. By locating the replacement dwelling nearer to North End it will become a visual feature in the rural landscape, where at present there is no built development. The applicants have stated that they are willing to landscape the site and such a scheme would be possible given that they also own the surrounding land. However any landscaping scheme would take several years to mature and would take even longer to screen the 7.8 metre high dwelling. Even though the replacement dwelling would have its gable end facing North End its angle within the site and width would make it visually prominent. Again although the dwelling will be taken back from the frontage with Stone Lane it will still result in a two storey building with a first floor width of 14.1 metres replacing a two storey dwelling with a first floor width of only 5.8 metres. Notwithstanding the relocation of the dwelling this increase in width of first floor development will have a significant visual impact upon the rural landscape.
17. The new access to the site is recognised as being beneficial to the environment of Stone Lane and the environmental qualities of the proposed replacement dwelling are recognised as being beneficial to the global environment through reduced emissions of CO₂. However planning officers do not consider these aspects of the application sufficiently beneficial to override local planning policy. The applicants' agent and the letter of support both refer to the size of the other properties in Stone Lane. However when considering such replacement dwellings in the countryside policy HG15 refers to the existing dwelling and based on this fact the application fails to comply with the policy on all grounds.

Recommendation

18. Refusal, for the following reason

The proposed replacement dwelling would be contrary to policy HG15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 as it would materially alter the impact of the site on the surrounding rural landscape by virtue of the width and bulk of first floor accommodation that together with its height and proximity to North End would make it a more visually dominant feature within the landscape when viewed from both Stone Lane and North End. Moreover the scale of the replacement dwelling bears little semblance to the modest property that it is intended to replace. Although lower than the existing dwelling the greater width and floor area of the replacement dwelling means that it would have a greater visual impact upon the countryside, an impact that would be further exacerbated by its proximity to North End.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire local Plan 2004
- Planning File Ref: S/0282/06/F

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