

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 5th April 2006
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0345/06/F – Little Abington
Extensions to and Conversion of Agricultural Buildings into 4 Dwellings at
Ley Rectory Farm for Mr G Boswell

Recommendation: Refusal
Date of determination: 19th April 2006

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to a 0.4 hectare (1 acre) site containing a group of agricultural buildings constructed from brick, flint, boarding, corrugated sheeting and slate and a silo located to the north of Ley Rectory Farmhouse, a two-storey gault brick and slate dwelling. Corrugated sheeting agricultural storage buildings are located to the north. No.3 Hildersham Road, accessed from the farm access alongside Ley Rectory Farmhouse which also serves the application buildings, lies to the south east. The A1307 and Hildersham Road are to the southwest and southeast respectively.
2. This full planning application, registered on the 22nd February 2006, proposes to extend and convert an L-shaped range of buildings into 4 dwellings (2no. 3-bedroom units and 2no. 4-bedroom unit) and to demolish the remaining buildings and the silo within the site. An office would be provided within each of the units to facilitate working from home. It is also proposed to erect the new car ports and stores approved under reference S/0070/05/F for the dwellings. The density equates to 10 dwellings to the hectare.

Relevant Planning History

3. Planning permission for the conversion of this L-shaped range of buildings into 4 dwellings (3no. 3-bedroom units and 1no. 4-bedroom unit), the demolition of the remaining buildings and the silo within the site, the erection of new car ports and stores for the dwellings and the creation of a new farm access onto Hildersham Road was granted in October 2005 under reference **S/0070/05/F** following the completion of a S.106 Agreement requiring the payment of an affordable housing contribution of £16,000 (index linked) in lieu of on-site provision.
4. An application submitted in July 2004 to convert the buildings into 4 dwellings and erection of garaging was withdrawn (**S/1522/04/F**).
5. Planning permission for the change of use of farm buildings to Business Use (Class B1) and erection of agricultural building was granted in August 2002 (**S/0842/02/F**). The scheme also involved the creation of a new farm access onto Hildersham Road.

Relevant Planning Policy

6. The site is within the countryside as defined in the Local Plan 2004 and the Local Development Framework Submission Draft 2006.
7. 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.
8. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
9. Local Plan 2004 **Policies HG7** and **HG8** relate to affordable housing and exceptions sites respectively.
10. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EM9** states that the District Council will support proposals for teleworking schemes which bring home and workplace physically together by conversion of rural buildings outside village frameworks provided there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic, character and the environment generally.
11. 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 Landscape Character Areas (the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area in this instance).
12. Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Submission Draft January 2006 **Policy HG/8** relates to the conversion of buildings in the countryside for residential use and states:
 1. Planning permission for conversion of rural buildings for residential use will not generally be permitted. Planning permission will only exceptionally be granted where it can be demonstrated, having regard to market demand or planning considerations:
 - a. Firstly it is inappropriate for any suitable employment use; and
 - b. Secondly it is inappropriate for employment with residential conversion as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.
 2. Any conversion must meet the following criteria:
 - a. The buildings are structurally sound;
 - b. The buildings are not of a makeshift nature and have not been allowed to fall into such a state of dereliction and disrepair that any reconstruction would require planning permission as a new building;
 - c. The buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside;
 - d. The form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings;
 - e. Perform well against sustainability issues highlighted by policy DP/1.

3. Any increase in floor area will not be permitted except where it is necessary for the benefit of the design, or in order to better integrate the development with its surroundings. Future extensions of such buildings will not be permitted. Incidental uses such as car parking and storage should be accommodated within any group of buildings, or on well related land where landscaping can reduce the visual impact of the new site.
4. Development must be in scale with the rural location. Residential uses must be located close to local services and facilities, and in an accessible location with a choice of means of travel, including non-motorised modes. The cumulative impact of the conversion of a number of buildings on adjoining sites or the local area will also be considered.
5. Residential conversion permitted as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use, will be secured by planning condition or agreement to ensure the occupation of the dwelling remains directly related to the operation of the enterprise. The dwelling part of the unit must be interdependently linked with the commercial part. A live-work unit should have a minimum of 40m² of definable functional workspace in addition to the residential element. Internal uses may be horizontally or vertically split. The workspace must be flexible, and capable of accommodating a range of employment uses.

Consultations

13. **Little Abington Parish Council** recommends approval stating “We note there is no provision within the scheme for affordable housing and would be interested to know if there is any possibility of a financial contribution towards affordable housing to benefit the village.”
14. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** raises no objections but recommends that conditions requiring a site investigation relating to possible ground contamination and appropriate remedial works, the times during the construction period when power operated machinery shall not be used unless in accordance with agreed noise restrictions and driven pile foundations be attached to any approval. He also recommends an informative stating that there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site without his permission be attached to any permission.
15. At the time of application S/0070/05/F, the **Environment Agency** raised no objections to the proposal but recommended that conditions relating to surface and foul water drainage were attached to any approval. It also made advisory comments and recommended that Anglian Water be consulted.
16. At the time of application S/0070/05/F, the **Anglian Water** was consulted but did not make any comments.
17. At the time of application S/1522/04/F, the **Local Highway Authority** raised no objections but commented that the existing access should serve the residential development only and an alternative access should be provided to cater for the agricultural traffic leaving the farm.

Representations

18. None received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

19. The principle of converting these buildings into 4 dwellings was established by the granting of permission under reference S/0070/05/F and I consider that the principle of converting the buildings into residential use is supported by LDF Policy HG/8. Information submitted as part of application S/0070/05/F demonstrated that there was no prospect in the foreseeable future of letting these buildings as business units at a rental that would justify the associated conversion costs.
20. The differences between this scheme and the scheme approved under reference S/0070/05/F are that: it is now proposed to extend the main barn by providing a first floor over the existing single storey lean-to at the western end; a 14.7m x 7.8m x 5.2m high single storey extension is now proposed extending to the north from the western end of the main barn; and revisions are proposed to the approved external alterations to the buildings.
21. The main issues to consider in relation to this application are therefore:
 - a. Whether there is any justification for the proposed extensions to the buildings to justify setting aside the normal presumption that an increase in floor area will not be permitted; and
 - b. Whether the proposed external alterations maintain the rural character and appearance of the buildings.
22. A statement submitted as part of the application states that: the existing scheme is poorly planned and not well thought out, including the offices taking up large chunks of the living and dining rooms; and the removal of the silo and large barn to the north of those to be converted will visually open up the site from the open countryside to the west and A1307 to the southwest allowing views of the access and car ports. A photograph has also been submitted which purports to show the boarding and pantile roof barn/stables that stood where the proposed single storey extension is now proposed prior to the erection of the existing 1960s concrete frame building. I have considered these points but remain to be convinced that many of the points could not be satisfactorily addressed without proposing extensions of the scale proposed. Views of the access and car ports from the A1307 should be obscured by planting rather than a new 14.7m long 5.2m high single storey extension and I do not consider that the proposed increase in floor area is necessary for the benefit of the design, or in order to better integrate the development with its surroundings.
23. The approved scheme (S/0070/05/F) involved an irregular arrangement of openings. The current scheme, which involves a greater number and a more formal arrangement of openings, including more openings in the western elevation of the buildings, is not considered to satisfactorily maintain the rural character and appearance of the buildings with consequent harm to the visual amenities of the countryside.
24. Other matters, including the provision of a new farm access, could be secured by condition and, in relation to the comments of the Parish Council, any approval could be subject to the payment of a affordable housing contribution in lieu of on-site provision. However, whilst I consider that revisions to the approved scheme which maintain the rural character and appearance of the buildings could be supported, the current application is recommended for refusal.

Recommendation

25. Refusal

1. The proposed extensions to the buildings are not considered necessary for the benefit of the design, or in order to better integrate the development with its surroundings. In contrast, they would make the development more conspicuous and thereby detract from the visual amenities of the countryside. The proposal is therefore contrary to South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Submission Draft January 2006 Policy HG/8(3), which relates to the conversion of buildings in the countryside for residential use and states that an increase in floor area will not be permitted except where it is necessary for the benefit of the design, or in order to better integrate the development with its surroundings; Cambridgeshire & Peterborough 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 EN1, which states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the character and local distinctiveness of Landscape Character Areas (the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area in this instance).
2. Furthermore, by virtue of the number of openings proposed, particularly in the west elevation of the buildings which can be readily seen from the A1307, and the formal arrangement of openings, the proposal is not considered to satisfactorily maintain the rural character and appearance of the buildings with consequent harm to the visual amenities of the countryside. The proposal is therefore contrary to South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Submission Draft January 2006 Policy HG/8(2e), which relates to the conversion of buildings in the countryside for residential use and requires schemes to not materially change the existing character of buildings or their impact upon the surrounding countryside; and 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 and local distinctiveness of Landscape Character Areas (the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area in this instance).

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
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Submission Draft January 2006
- Planning file Refs: S/0345/06/F, S/0070/05/F, S/1522/04/F and S/0842/02/F.

Contact Officer: Andrew Moffat – Area Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713169