

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee

7<sup>th</sup> June 2006

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/0498/06/F – Meldreth**

**Extension To Residential Care Home, Maycroft Residential Care Home, 73 High Street  
For Aerimid Health Care Ltd**

**Recommendation: Refusal**

**Date for Determination: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2006 (Major Application)**

### **Conservation Area**

### **Site and Proposal**

1. Maycroft Residential Care Home is located on the west side of High Street in well-landscaped grounds. The original building is Grade II Listed but has been extended in a utilitarian manner during the 1980's on its northern side. Access is from High Street, with car parking to the front of the building.
2. To the north of the site is a detached house, No 79 High Street, and its rear garden, which is overlooked by a bank of first floor windows in the existing rear extension of Maycroft. A large area of land to the west of the site is also in the ownership of No79 High Street and the area immediately to the west of the proposed building is currently used as a 'secret garden'.
3. To the south and opposite the site are residential properties.
4. This full application, registered on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006 proposes extensions to provide an additional 26 bedrooms in a two storey element added on to the west end of the existing two storey rear extension and two single storey extensions on the south side of the existing extension to provide dayrooms/dining area, with a glazed link and courtyard gardens.
5. The proposed two-storey extension has a hipped roof with a ridge height of 8.6m, compared to 7.6m for the existing extension. It extends the depth of the existing rear extension by a further 21m taking it to within 5m of the west boundary to the site. The proposed extension will bring the building to within 3m of the northern boundary of the site with No 79 High Street, 4m closer than the existing building.
6. There are first floor windows in the north elevation of the proposed extension serving a bedroom, an en-suite and corridor area. There are six first floor bedroom windows in the west elevation of the building.
7. Materials proposed are facing brick with coloured render and natural slate roofs.
8. Existing trees in the north west corner of the site will be removed along with a mature Yew tree, which is within 2m of the north flank of the extension.

9. It is proposed to extend the existing car parking area at the front of the site to provide a total of 16 spaces. This arrangement involves new car parking in close proximity to a mature Horse Chestnut tree.
10. The majority of the site is within the village framework, the Conservation Area and a Protected Village Amenity Area

### **Planning History**

11. Planning consent was granted in July 2002 for extensions to the existing care home to provide an additional 15 bedrooms (**Ref: S/0425/02/F**). That consent has not been implemented.

### **Planning Policy**

12. **Policy HG9** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") states that the development of residential care homes through conversion or extension of existing facilities within or outside villages, or new build within villages will be permitted where:
  - (1) the quality of design is in keeping with surrounding properties and landscape in terms of scale, form, layout and materials;
  - (2) boundary treatment provides privacy and a high standard of visual amenity;
  - (3) the privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties is protected;
  - (4) there is safe and convenient access for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians;
  - (5) parking facilities are in accordance with District Council standards; and
  - (6) there is access to an adequate level of services to meet the need of the development.
13. **Policy SE9** of the Local Plan states that development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact of development on the countryside.
14. **Policy SE10** of The Local Plan states that Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAA) are defined within village framework boundaries in order to identify land, the retention of which is of importance to the character, amenity and/or functioning of the village as a whole. Development of such areas will not be permitted if it would be harmful to the distinctive qualities and functioning lying behind their inclusion in the PVAA.
15. **Policy EN20** of the Local Plan states that the District Council will refuse planning permission for extensions to Listed Buildings which:
  - (1) are not necessary to ensure the continuing use of the building;
  - (2) would dominate or detract from the Listed Building in scale, form, massing or appearance;
  - (3) would imply the loss of building fabric of architectural or historic interest;
  - (4) would damage archaeological remains of importance; or
  - (5) would harm the well-being or setting of adjacent Listed Buildings.
16. **Policy EN28** of the Local Plan states that where it appears that proposals would affect the curtilage or wider setting of a Listed Building, the District Council will refuse applications which:
  - (1) would dominate the Listed Building or its curtilage buildings in scale, form, massing or appearance;

- (2) would damage the setting, well-being or attractiveness of a Listed Building;
  - (3) would harm the visual relationship between the buildings and its formal or natural landscape surroundings;
  - (4) Would damage archaeological remains of importance unless some exceptional, overriding need can be demonstrated, in which case conditions may be applied to protect particular features or aspects of the building and its setting.
17. **Policy EN30** of the Local Plan requires that applications for development in Conservation Areas should preserve or enhance the character of those areas.
  18. **Policy EN5** of the Local Plan requires trees, hedges and woodland and other natural features to be retained wherever possible in proposals for new development.
  19. **Policy P7/6** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 seeks to protect the historic built environment.

### **Consultation**

20. **Meldreth Parish Council** recommends approval. "In principle Meldreth Parish Council has no objection to this application but it is concerned with the proposed height of the roofline."
21. The **Conservation Manager** comments that the scheme is larger than that previously approved as it includes additional rooms, sitting/dining rooms and enclosed courtyard gardens. However the design and form is considered to be an improvement on the earlier scheme and includes better detailing. The setting of the listed building has been compromised to a certain extent by the existing buildings and although the proposed extension would be more prominent as it would extend forwards, towards the listed building, the impact on the setting is not considered to be significant. The addition of the single storey pavilions on the south elevation adds interest to the existing building and the courtyard garden to the north of the listed building will provide a degree of separation thereby retaining its integrity as a building of special architectural or historic interest.
22. The extension will not be visible from the street and is considered to preserve the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.  
  
Approval is recommended.
23. The **Trees and Landscapes Officer** comments that the proposed development would lead to the loss of one mature yew tree and compromises a semi-mature maple. The footprint of the building should either be reduced or moved. Consideration should be given to serving a Tree Preservation Order on the compromised trees. The Horse Chestnut at the entrance is subject to a TPO and the proposed car park would compromise the existing rooting zone. As no details of the proposed means of construction in this area have been submitted objections are raised on that ground to any works in that area.
24. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests a condition restricting the hours of operation of power operated machinery during the period of construction.
25. The **Local Highway Authority** trusts that the number of parking spaces to be provided meets the appropriate standard. The existing access in terms of width and vehicle to vehicle visibility is considered acceptable. However, it is strongly

recommended that pedestrian visibility splays of 2.0m x 2.0m be provided each side of the access.

### **Representations**

26. A letter has been received from the occupiers of 79 High Street, to the north of the site, pointing out that whilst they are not against an extension in principle, there are strong objections to the current proposal
27. The size and orientation of the extension compared to the existing building are a major issue as it is immediately adjacent to the common fenced boundary with No 79. The property is currently overlooked by the existing home, which is something that is outside any control, but to further extend the property, bringing it to within 3 metres of the boundary, with additional window openings, and to remove the only remaining tree planting is not acceptable and is detrimental to amenities that are currently enjoyed.
28. The proposed extension will effectively mean that the entire 1.4ha of land associated with No 79 will now be overlooked, to the north, west and east and in particular the small enclosure just beyond the rear boundary fence which is frequently used in the summer. All privacy will be lost as several windows will face that area. This area also contains specialist trees, which are likely to suffer loss of sunlight due to the infill of open space to the south and increase of some 2 metres in height of the extension over the existing building.
29. Given that the existing building sits within a very large plot it is not understood why the proposed building is so close to the boundary of No 79, especially given the height of it and that in adding the extension a distance in excess of a hundred yards next to it will be spanned by the home.
30. Why is the proposed building 2 metres higher than the existing wing, making it more prominent and dominant in a position where there is a planning policy to protect the countryside boundary and views of the countryside? Surely the further away from the linear street frontage the lower the building should be, not taller.
31. Is the proposed car parking adequate for the additional vehicles that will be generated by an additional 26 bedrooms?
32. There appears to be significant tree loss as a result of the proposed work without suggested replacement. This will result in the loss of a natural screen and both properties are in a 'tree conservation area'.
33. A planning application is about to be submitted for a new dwelling at the rear of No 79 and the current scheme for the nursing home will seriously impact on these proposals.
34. It is suggested that if the proposed extension were to follow the line of the existing building with a lower ridge height and within the scheme there was a landscaping belt proposed to the boundaries between the properties, then it may be more acceptable.

### **Applicant's Representations**

35. In a letter accompanying the application it is stated that May Croft is registered for 25 residents and the applicant wishes to expand the home to help address the significant shortfall in available care home accommodation for the frail elderly.

36. Functionally the design of the new extension and day rooms has to meet National Minimum Standards, which are administered by the commission for Social Care Inspection and which is the regulatory body with whom the home is registered and who inspect care homes to ensure that the various standards are maintained. With regard to the physical standards, they include minimum usable floor areas for new bedrooms, a requirement that all bedrooms are for single occupancy, that they have en-suite lavatories, that a certain ratio of assisted bathroom to bedrooms is achieved. All of these requirements are reflected in the design for the extension and the extended day room provision.
37. In altering the existing care home wing, which it is understood was built before the original house was listed, the applicant has sought to minimise the loss of existing bedrooms and the main entrance has been improved so that it will be DDA compliant, as well as ending the present unsatisfactory arrangement of the entrance being directly into the main day room. This is undignified for the residents as they have no privacy from visitors. The total number of residents in the enlarged care home will be 50, 26 in the new extension and 24 in the original wing.
38. There is already a current planning consent to extend and alter the care home, but that would have been uneconomic to implement, involving significant and disruptive building work for a small gain in the number of bedrooms. However, as with that consent, the new proposals have been designed to minimise the impact upon the existing mature and extensive gardens, to retain significant trees and to take account of the relationship between the new extension and the original listed house. All aspects of the design have been developed in consultation with both planning and conservation officers.
39. An application for Listed Building consent has also been submitted because the existing care home wing and thus the proposed extensions are attached to the original house. However no work is proposed to the house itself. It is understood that the house is presently used for administration of the care home and to provide accommodation for occasional overnight stays by staff or visiting relatives and that use will continue.
40. With regard to car parking the drawings show that the required number of spaces can be provided within the site curtilage without impacting upon the significant tree at the site entrance. From experience of the design of such facilities it is felt that the number of vehicle movements that can be expected will differ very slightly between the present and proposed care homes. It is self evident that the residents cannot use cars.
41. An additional statement from the applicant setting out the general need for the extension is attached as Appendix 1.

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

42. The key issues to be considered with this application are whether the proposal complies with Policy HG9 of the Local Plan (in particular in respect of the impact on the privacy and amenity of adjacent residents, car parking, and the quality of design), the impact on the existing Listed Building and character of the Conservation Area, the impact on the PVAA, the impact on existing trees within the site and, the impact on the adjoining countryside. In addition the applicant has stated that there is a general need for the extension of such facilities. In considering these issues it is relevant to have regard to the extant planning consent for an extension.

43. The only residential property to be directly affected by the proposed extension is No79 High Street, to the north of the site. The rear garden of that property is already severely overlooked by a bank of windows in the existing rear extension of Maycroft at both ground and first floor levels. The proposed extension will project for a further 21m and, as a result, the enlarged building will extend for almost the entire length of the garden of the adjacent house. The building does not however extend for a total length of 100m as referred to in the objector's letter
44. The north elevation of the proposed extension, which faces the rear garden of No 79 High Street contains significantly less windows than the previously approved scheme. It does however come closer to the boundary than the approved scheme and has a greater mass. The height increase of 1m from the existing rear extension (not 2m as stated in the objector's letter) is approximately the same as the previous consent. The current proposal however projects close to the rear boundary of the site and extends further to the south. In the west elevation there are seven first floor windows, 5 metres from the boundary, facing the additional 'secret garden' area of No 79 High street. In my view the proposed extension, by reason of its scale and proximity to the north and west boundaries of the site, will have an overbearing impact on the garden of No 79 High Street, and result in the loss of privacy to the 'secret garden' to the west of the site. I have however queried with the objector how long the area to the west of the site has been used as garden land. If the use of this land has been changed to garden land within the last 10 years, without the benefit of planning consent, I am of the view that less weight can be given to the impact of the building on this area of land.
45. The Conservation Manager supports the design approach adopted and is of the view that it offers improvements from the previously approved scheme in respect to the effect of the setting of the existing Listed Building. He is also of the view that the scheme preserves or enhances the character of the Conservation Area.
46. The footprint of the proposed extension will mostly be within the area designated as a PVAA in the Local Plan, however as there is already an extant consent for a substantial extension at the rear of the existing building, I do not consider that it would be reasonable to object to the current proposal in principle on these grounds. However it is relevant to consider any additional impact that the current proposal may have on the PVAA, with particular reference to the loss of trees, referred to below.
47. The proposed extension will result in the loss of existing planting in the north west corner of the site. Whilst the quality of the individual trees is not sufficient for the Trees and Landscapes Officer to object to their loss it is regrettable in that it further increases the visual impact of the proposed extension on the occupiers of No79 High Street. These trees were shown as being retained in the earlier approval.
48. The rear extension will result in the loss of a mature Yew tree and the Trees and Landscapes Officer has objected to its removal. A Tree Preservation Order is being prepared to protect this and other trees within the site. He is also concerned about the impact of this part of the scheme on a semi-mature Maple tree.
49. The revised car parking area at the front of the site includes additional hard surfacing for parking around the mature Horse Chestnut tree, which is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order. The Trees and Landscapes Officer objects to the potential impact of this additional parking area, particularly as no detail of the method of construction of the new parking area is provided.

50. I note the case put forward by the applicant in respect of the general need to provide additional facilities of this kind and the improvements to the layout of the existing building that will be made. It is my view however that the proposal as submitted is unacceptable in terms of the impact of the proposed building on the amenities of the occupiers of No 79 High Street, the loss of the Yew tree and potential impact of the additional car parking on the Horse Chestnut tree.
51. There is significant planting to the west of the site, on land outside the control of the applicant, which limits the visual impact of the proposed extension on the wider countryside.
52. To overcome these concerns the scale of the proposed extension is likely to have to be reduced significantly, affecting the number of additional rooms that can be provided.

### **Recommendation**

53. That the application be refused on the grounds that the proposal as submitted is unacceptable in terms of the impact of the proposed building on the amenities of the occupiers of No 79 High Street, the loss of the Yew tree and potential impact of the additional car parking on the Horse Chestnut tree, contrary to Policies HG9 and EN5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

**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/0498/04/F & S/0425/02/F

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