

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 7th June 2006
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/0657/06/F – Whittlesford
Dwelling (Amended Design) – Land at Scotts Gardens for A Phillips**

**Recommendation: Refusal
Date for Determination: 26th May 2006**

Conservation Area

Site and Proposal

1. The application site is a grassed area comprising a number of mature trees and predominantly enclosed by 2 metre high close boarded and mesh fencing. It is located on the north side of Scotts Gardens, adjacent to its junction with the High Street. On the north side of the site is a walkway linking Scotts Gardens to the High Street beyond which lies 'Scotts', a Listed Building. To the south are residential properties whilst on the opposite side of the High Street to the east are listed barns at Scutches Farm that have been converted to offices.
2. Planning permission has been granted for the erection of a modest timber and brick dwelling on the site, although development has not commenced to date. The current full application, submitted on 31st March 2006, proposes to amend the design of the previously approved dwelling by introducing two dormer windows to each of the south/front and north/rear elevations of the dwelling and by increasing the width of glazing at ground and first floor levels on the west side of the building. The two dormers on the front elevation would replace previously approved rooflights whilst those to the rear would replace a rooflight and triangular window in the roof.
3. A covering letter submitted with the application argues that the dormers improve the design of the elevations, are more in keeping with the vernacular architecture of the surrounding area and allow the bedrooms to function better.

Planning History

4. **S/1165/01/F** - An application to erect a two storey brick house on the site was refused due to the impact of the development upon the character of the area and the impact upon the trees on the site. The application was subsequently dismissed at appeal.
5. **S/1392/04/F** – An application for a 1^{1/2} storey brick and timber dwelling was refused by this Authority on the basis that the dwelling was considered to harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The application was subsequently allowed at appeal with the Inspector stating that the proposed property was a contemporary version of a traditional timber frame barn that would complement and remain subordinate to the greenery and space on the site. In addition its form and orientation with the end gable facing the High Street was considered to echo the traditional timber clad barn at Scutches Farm on the opposite side of the High Street.

6. The approved application was subsequently amended to slightly increase the size of the dwelling, the design of the fenestration and to add a rooflight to the Scotts Gardens elevation. In addition, a brick wall and railings was approved along the northern/footpath boundary of the site.

Planning Policy

7. **Policy P1/3** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 stresses the need for a high standard of design and a sense of place which corresponds to the local character of the built environment.
8. **Policy P7/6** of the 2003 Structure Plan requires development to protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
9. **Policy EN28** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states that the District Council will refuse applications which dominate a listed building; damage the setting, well being or attractiveness of a listed building; or would harm the visual relationship between a listed building and its formal or natural landscape surroundings.
10. **Policy EN30** of the 2004 Local Plan requires new development in a Conservation Area to either preserve or enhance the character of the area.

Consultations

11. **Whittlesford Parish Council** recommends approval.
12. **The Conservation Manager** objects to the application, stating that the addition of dormers to the building is considered to be unacceptable. The Inspector allowed the scheme due to the building being 'a contemporary version of a traditional timber barn'. The design had no dormer windows and to introduce such features would lose this 'barn' character as agricultural buildings do not have dormer windows. Scutches Barn on the opposite side of the High Street, which has been referred to by the Inspector, has been converted to offices without the insertion of dormers. The provision of dormers will give the building a more domestic appearance, will have more presence in the street scene than rooflights and will add further bulk to the roof, making the roof form appear more cluttered. This would alter the character and appearance of the building to the detriment of the character of the Conservation Area. In addition, the proposed additional first floor glazing on the west elevation would erode the barn like appearance of the end elevation and give a more horizontal form to the fenestration, thereby losing the vertical emphasis of the building.

Representations

13. A letter of objection has been received from No.9-10 Scotts Gardens. The main points raised are:
 - a. Scutches Farm has flush flat windows in its pitched roof. The dormers should be no more intrusive than this;
 - b. The wall alongside the footpath should be sited so as to leave room for ornamental plants between the wall and footpath.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

14. The key issue to consider in the determination of this application relates to the impact of the proposed amendments to the dwelling upon:
 - a. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area; and
 - b. The setting of the adjacent Listed Buildings;
 - c. The amenities of adjoining residents.
15. As set out within the Conservation Manager's response, the erection of a dwelling on this site was only permitted at appeal on the basis that it was a modern interpretation of a traditional timber barn. Although I appreciate that the applicants have attempted to minimise the size of the dormers, they are features that would detract from the original barn concept of the approved scheme. The additional first floor glazing to the west elevation would have the same effect. Both changes to the design of the approved dwelling would therefore be harmful to the character of the Conservation Area and to the setting and appearance of the Listed barns opposite the site.
16. The addition of dormers is not considered to unduly harm the privacy of occupiers of properties to the south, the front elevations of which are in excess of 20 metres away or 'Scotts' to the north which is almost 30 metres away.
17. The erection of a brick wall along part of the northern/footpath boundary of the site has previously been agreed as an amendment to the approved application. The submitted block plan, however, does not correctly show the approved line of the wall in that it is shown extending under the canopies of trees to be retained. The applicant has confirmed that this is an oversight and will be submitting an amended plan showing the wall sited entirely beyond the tree canopies.

Recommendation

18. Refusal:

The original application for a dwelling (S/1392/04/F) was allowed on appeal as the Inspector considered that the design of a contemporary version of a traditional barn was not out of keeping with the locality. The proposed provision of four dormer windows to the roof area and additional glazing to the western gable end are considered to detract from the original barn concept of the approved scheme. Dormer windows are not part of the local agricultural building vernacular form and thus will form alien and intrusive elements to the design and appearance of the building. The first floor glazing to the rear garden gable elevation is equally considered to harm the barn concept of the approved scheme. The revised design is therefore considered to be out of keeping with the special character of the Conservation Area. The amendments will also detract from the setting and appearance of the Listed barns opposite the site, which the approved scheme was held to echo. Consequently, the proposal is contrary to Policy P7/6 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 which requires new development to protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment and to the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: Policy EN28 which states that applications for development that damages the setting of Listed Buildings will be refused and Policy EN30 which resists development that would adversely affect the character and appearance of Conservation Areas.

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

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning application references S/0657/06/F, S/1392/04/F and S/1165/01/F

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