

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

5th July 2006

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0834/06/F – Longstowe

Double Garage with Storeroom, The Old School House, 14 School Lane, For Mr A. Clay

Recommendation: Refusal
Date for Determination: 22nd June 2006

Members will visit the site on the 3rd July 2006.

Site and Proposal

1. The Old School House is as its name suggests a converted school building in the countryside that dates back to the Victorian era. The building was converted in the latter part of the last century and has been visually domesticated by way of a white framed conservatory, greenhouse and landscaped gardens. The dwelling itself is set back approximately eight metres from the highway that runs past the front of the property. The eastern boundary of the site abuts the access to the Grade II* listed St Mary's Church.
2. The full planning application received on the 27th of April 2006 proposes to erect a detached double bay garage in the southeast corner of the site between the dwelling and the highway. The garage building is 4.39 metres in height with a width and depth of 7.06 metres by 5.9 metres respectively. Approximately 2.3 metres to the north of the garage there is a field maple tree that is to be retained.

Planning History

3. Earlier this year a similar application for a detached double garage at a height of 5.2 metres was withdrawn (**S/0094/06/F**). The application was withdrawn due to officers' concerns about the scale of the development, concerns that resulted in an officer recommendation of refusal.
4. Consent was originally granted for the conversion of the school building under planning reference **SC/65/213**. Conditions on this consent related to the approval of any external changes and the provision of space for the parking of one car.

Planning Policy

5. **Policy P1/2 'Environmental Restrictions on Development'** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 states that developments in the countryside will be restricted unless demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
6. **Policy HG13 'Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside'** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 sets out requirements for development of dwellings outside of village frameworks having regard to impact of the site on the surrounding countryside in addition to the visual impact of developments on neighbour amenity and the street scene.

7. **Policy EN5 of the Local Plan 2004** requires trees, hedges and woodland and other natural features to be retained wherever possible in proposals for new development.

Consultation

8. **Longstowe Parish Council** recommends that the application be refused, as the siting of the garage would have an impact on the view/entrance down to the church. The Parish Council has no objection to the design of the garage and great effort has been made with the choice of materials.
9. **Trees and Landscape Officer** suggests the omission of the of the foundation details as submitted, and a condition requiring the submission of foundation details that will minimise the impact upon the field maple.

Representations

10. None received. Councillor Kindersley has requested that this application to be considered at committee.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

11. Prior to the submission of the first application an informal enquiry was received proposing a garage at the front of the Old School House. The response was that the form of garage was considered to be inappropriate though it was stated that *'planning officers would not necessarily be against the principle of a garage at the above property'*. Similarly prior to the submission of this application pre-application discussions were held with officers about the form of the proposed garage and in particular the addition of the proposed storeroom. At this stage officers stated that they would have concerns about the width of such a building with the inclusion of the proposed storeroom.
12. The main issues for Members to consider in the determination of this application are firstly whether any form of built development is appropriate at the front of the Old School House and secondly whether the proposed garage is appropriate in scale.

Appropriateness of any built development

13. Although not listed the Old School House is a building with a distinct architectural quality and it has a particular historic significance for the local community. The proximity of the Old School House to the access leading to the village church also means that the proposed garage will have an unavoidable visual impact upon visitors to the church. As part of the consultation process of the previous application the Council's Conservation Area and Design Officer was contacted to advise on the design of the building. The distance of the site from the church means that the development is not considered to have a visual impact upon the setting of the listed building, though it will partially obscure views of the Old School House.
14. Given the relatively open nature of the site's frontage the garage will be visible from the approach road from the main part of Longstowe across the open fields. With the addition of the storeroom the garage building will come nearer to the highway than if it were just a double garage. Although the Parish Council commented on the design of the previous application its view that any form of built development at the front of the property would be unacceptable.

Appropriateness of the scale of the proposed building

15. Officers have given advice as to the most appropriate style and height of the proposed garage building, and the application has been submitted in line with officers' comments. The main issue that officers have with the application is the additional width of built development that would result from the inclusion of the proposed storeroom. As mentioned previously this additional width will result in the garage coming nearer to the highway, which would thus make it even more visually prominent in the rural landscape. Moreover the foundation details proposed would be unacceptable due to the proximity of the building to the nearby field maple tree. It is accepted that the foundation details could be amended or omitted from the application and then conditioned. However, with the additional width of built development there will be less space within the site for the building to be kept away from the said tree as well as being kept as far back from the highway as possible.
16. With the inclusion of the storeroom the building will have an unbroken ridgeline of 7.06 metres at a height of 4.39 metres. Given the prominent location of the proposed garage and storeroom at the front of the open curtilage of the dwellinghouse this scale of built development is considered to have an unacceptable visual impact open the rural character of the surrounding countryside.

Recommendation

17. Refuse

Reasons for Refusal

1. The proposed double garage and storeroom is contrary to Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy HG13 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 as it would constitute an inappropriate form of built development in the countryside by virtue of its scale and proximity to the highway and the unacceptable visual impact that such a structure would have on the rural character of this part of Longstowe.
2. The foundation details submitted are unacceptable due to the impact that such a method of foundation construction would have on the longevity of a nearby field maple by virtue of the proximity of the proposed double garage and storeroom to the said tree. Consequently the proposal would be contrary to Policy EN5 of the Local Plan 2004 which requires trees to be retained wherever possible in proposals for new development.

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 Files Ref: S/0834/06/F and S/0094/06/F

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