

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2006  
**AUTHOR/S:** Head of Planning Services

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**S/1193/06/F – Great Abington**  
**Extension and Conversion of Underground Tank and Associated Pumping Station into Dwelling at Former Cambridge Water Company Covered Reservoir and Pumping Station, North Road for Mr and Mrs N Griffiths**

**Recommendation: Refusal**  
**Date of determination: 10<sup>th</sup> August 2006**

Members will visit the site on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> July

Departure Application

### **Site and Proposal**

1. The application relates to a 0.1 hectares/0.25 acre site occupied by a single storey brick and felt roof former pump house and a grass covered, partly underground covered reservoir. The site is enclosed by a 1.2m high chain linked fencing. There are paddocks beyond the track to the southwest, beyond an area of trees to the east and beyond a caravan and trees to the south. Agricultural buildings and No.45 stand beyond the track to the northwest. There is an existing vehicular access to the site off North Road to the north and a hardstanding to the front/north of the pump house building.
2. This full planning application, registered on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2006 and amended by plan date stamped the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006, proposes to convert the existing former covered reservoir and pump house to a dwelling including the erection of a glazed walls and zinc roof single storey link between the two. An entrance hall, kitchen and utility would be provided in the converted pump house, which would be roofed in zinc, a dining room would be provided in the new link between the pump house and covered reservoir and 3 bedrooms with en-suites, a further w.c, a study and a lounge would be provided in the former covered reservoir. A new internal floor would be provided. Rooflights would be installed in the roof and solar collectors would be installed on the south side of the former reservoir. The southwestern corner of the former reservoir would be removed to provide a terrace and light into the living room. The density equates to approximately 10 dwellings to the hectare.
3. A letter submitted as part of the application states that the reservoir became redundant around 2000. It also states that: the proposed 'eco-home' would seek to achieve a low energy solution to today's environmental concerns with the massive concrete structure with its earth and turf covering and high level of internal insulation providing very high levels of thermal insulation to keep the building warm in winter and cool in summer; mechanically assisted ventilation would enable the reclaim of heat normally lost through natural ventilation; around 70% of the dwelling's hot water demand would be provided by solar hot water collecting panels; ground source pump technology would also be investigated with a view to providing full self-sufficiency for heating and hot water; grey water would be recycled for garden watering and rainwater would be harvested for washing clothes and flushing toilets; it is intended

that the dwelling would meet the highest BREAM eco-home standards; and the applicant is agreeable to removing the existing caravan (S/0072/03/LDC – see planning history below) on occupation of the new dwelling.

### Relevant Planning History

4. Planning permission for the change of use of the pumping station to light industrial (Class B1) was refused in April 2002 under reference **S/0472/02/F** for the following reason:

*“The introduction of a commercial development unrelated to agriculture, horticulture, grazing or other uses appropriate to a rural area would be contrary to Policy Abington 2 of the Approved South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 1993 (Policy Abington 1 of the Deposit Draft Local Plan as amended 2001) and, if allowed, would set a precedent for the change of use of other buildings on the Abington Estate which would be difficult to resist. The cumulative effect of such changes would have an adverse impact on the character of the area and result in an unacceptable increase in traffic along the single track estate roads to the detriment of residents and smallholders on the estate.”*

5. A Lawful Development Certificate for “Use for the stationing of one caravan (with associated foul drainage) for the purposes of storage, and daytime rest and shelter associated with the lawful use of the adjoining land. The lawful use does not include any domestic or residential use or habitation” on land in the applicant’s ownership to the south of the former pump house and covered reservoir site was issued in 2003 under reference **S/0072/03/LDC**.

### 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 and within the former Land Settlement Association Estate as defined in the Local Plan 2004.
7. Local Plan 2004 **Policy Abington 1** states that within the former Land Settlement Association Estate planning permission will not be granted for housing or commercial development unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area. The supporting text states that the reason for this policy is that the roads are of poor standard, being single carriageway with passing bays and are privately owned and maintained.
8. 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.
9. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
10. 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).
11. 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:
    - c. The buildings are structurally sound;
    - d. 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;
    - e. The buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside;
    - f. The form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings;
    - g. 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 40m<sup>2</sup> 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.
12. Local Plan **Policies HG22 and EN44** state that, subject to other policies and proposals in the Local Plan, the District Council will look favourably upon residential schemes which include measures to conserve energy and the District Council will support and encourage proposals for the use of renewable energy resources, water efficiency and for developments using energy efficient and energy conservation technologies.

## Consultations

13. **Great Abington Parish Council** recommends approval stating “The Parish Council is minded to approve this application, which is on a brown field site, subject to NOT setting a precedent for housing development on other brown field sites on the LSA and, if SCDC approves, planning conditions MUST ensure that the basic structure of the old reservoir is retained in its entirety.”
14. The **Environment Agency** recommends that conditions relating to foul and surface water drainage are attached to any approval.

## Representations

15. Occupiers of 44 North Road support the application stating that, not only does the present design make excellent use of a redundant site, but it also adds a much needed house in the area.

## Planning Comments – Key Issues

16. The key issues in relation to this application are whether the principle of converting and extending the buildings to form a dwelling is acceptable in principle in this countryside and former Land Settlement Association Estate location, including the suitability or otherwise of the road network to serve a new dwelling; and the visual impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the former Land Settlement Association Estate. With regard to other issues, it is considered that the proposal would not have any serious harm on the amenity of neighbours.
17. With good reason, Policy Abington 1 seeks to resist residential and commercial development on the former Land Settlement Association Estate as the Estate is not only in the countryside but also as the existing highway network (being single carriageway with passing bays, privately owned and maintained and public footpaths) is not suitable to serve additional development. In addition to the limitations of the internal highway network itself, there is restricted visibility from the main access onto Pampisford Road. At a recent appeal hearing for the change of use of the former Cambridge Salad Producers building on the Estate to B1 and/or B8 uses, the visibility at this junction was agreed to be only 2.4m by 15m in both directions (planning reference S/1111/04/F). The agent for this application contends that as adjacent land is already used for recreational purposes and with the removal of the caravan, the development will not lead to significantly increased traffic generation. Whilst an interesting and imaginative scheme which I may have been able to support in another location, even another countryside location, I consider that the dwelling would result in additional vehicular movements to and from the Estate and the proposal is therefore contrary to Policy Abington 1.
18. Whilst the application indicates that the dwelling would be an eco-home (see paragraph 3 above) and Local Plan Policies seek to encourage such development, these policies also make it clear that such development should not necessarily be supported where they are contrary to other policies of the Plan. With this in mind, I do not consider that any material considerations indicate that Policy Abington 1 or Policy SE8 should be set-aside in this instance.
19. The proposal is also considered to be contrary to Policy P1/2 as it has not been demonstrated that the development is essential in this particular rural location. Like the Parish Council, I would be particularly concerned if any approval was used by

others as a precedent for the conversion of any of the many other buildings on the Estate.

20. The character of the Estate is somewhat different to many other rural areas in terms of its linear character and density. However, it retains a rural character and, in particular, is distinctive in that few residential curtilages are clearly defined. Boundaries between residential curtilages and areas of smallholding/agriculture are often blurred and informal. The existing unkempt appearance of the site and low chain linked fence do little to detract from this character. In contrast, due to the relative small size of the site and the likely requirement by future occupiers for boundary treatments to provide a degree of privacy, the use of the site for residential purposes is likely to result in a more formal and manicured appearance than other development in the area. The proposed glazed link, rooflights and glazed living room, particularly when lights are on at night, would also result in the site detracting from the rural character and appearance of the Estate.

### **Recommendation**

21. Refusal (as amended by plan date stamped the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006).
1. The proposed development involves the creation of a new dwelling in the countryside and on the former Land Settlement Association Estate and no information has been submitted to demonstrate that it is required for the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area. It is therefore contrary to: South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy Abington 1 which states that, within the former Land Settlement Association Estate, planning permission will not be granted for housing development unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area; South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy SE8 which states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted; and 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.
  2. As a result of the relative small size of the site compared to others on the Estate and the likely requirement by future occupiers for boundary treatments to provide a degree of privacy, the use of the site for residential purposes is likely to result in a more formal and manicured appearance than other sites in the area to the detriment of the rural character and appearance of the Estate. Furthermore, the proposed glazed link, rooflights and glazed living room, particularly when lights are on at night, would result in the site detracting from the rural character and appearance of the Estate. The proposal is therefore contrary to 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/1193/06/F, S/1111/04/F, S/0072/03/LDC and  
S/0472/02/F

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