

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6th September 2006

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

S/1168/06/F - HARSTON

Extension for Storage Purposes – Unit C4, Harston Industrial Estate, Button End for Genesis Engineering

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 9th August 2006

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application site lies within an industrial estate sited on the west side of Button End and within the Green Belt. Unit C4 is used as a light engineering workshop and lies within a block of 5 units sited approximately 60 metres back from the road. Access and parking is to the front/west side of the building whilst there is an open grassed area to the east/rear. Between this grassed area and the road is a residential property, Violet Cottage.
2. The full application, received on 14th June 2006, seeks to erect a single storey lean-to extension, measuring 7.5 metres wide x 3 metres deep, on the rear/west side of the building. A covering letter explains that the extension is required for storage purposes and that no additional jobs would be created nor would any extra deliveries be required.

Planning History

3. There is no planning history that specifically relates to the application site.
4. There have been a number of single storey additions to other units within the industrial estate, namely units A1 (S/1809/86/F), B4 (S/1599/97/F) and D5 (S/0472/86/F)

Planning Policy

5. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 resists development in the countryside unless proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
6. **Policy P9/2a** of the Structure Plan states that development within the Green Belt will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries or other uses appropriate to a rural area.
7. **Policy GB2** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

Consultation

8. **Harston Parish Council** objects to the application stating:

“Inappropriate development within the Green Belt and contrary to Policy P1/2 and Policy P9/2a of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004. The firm, as Precision Engineers, generates a high level of intrusive noise, affecting nearby residents, especially when working with doors open. The application fails to demonstrate that the proposal would not affect the present level of undue noise disturbance when the gap between Unit C4 and houses is shortened.”

In a later response, the Parish Council adds further objections:

“....Our collective view is that no further development of the industrial estate should be approved due to the quite impossible situation of huge international lorries who access the site. Expansion of the site should be discouraged. The original sort of businesses on the site were small scale local ‘cottage industry’ type enterprises. In the increasingly competitive commercial environment, economies are made in every quarter. One of these is that larger and larger lorries are used for transportation, load sharing, etc. The unfortunate unintended consequence of this is erosion and destruction of the peace and tranquillity to which the residents of Harston are entitled, when these huge lorries use the narrow and twisting village lanes and roads, often at inappropriate speeds, overrunning footpaths and even gardens in some cases; overnighing on the Button End industrial estate is a regular occurrence, with these huge transporters revving up their engines in the early morning hours, causing noise pollution, inconvenience and stress to the local residents, eroding their quality of life. This erosion of the quality of life of residents is not right, and should not be further encouraged by approving planning applications to expand on this industrial estate...”

9. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** raises no objections, stating that, from visiting the site and discussing the proposal with the applicants, the application will not result in a significant noise source moving closer to the nearby residential dwelling from which objections have been raised. The extension will be used solely for storage purposes and its size would prevent any future manufacturing use. Also, parts of the existing wall are to remain, with doors added, thereby acting as a barrier from any noise in the existing manufacturing part of the premises. To further mitigate any potential noise, the windows added to the extension should be double glazed.

Representations

10. Letters of objection have been received from the adjacent dwelling to the east, Violet Cottage, and from the occupier of the adjoining unit (Unit C5).
11. The residents at Violet Cottage raise the following concerns:
1. The structure will be closer to their property thereby increasing noise levels and nuisance;
 2. The windows will interfere with their privacy as the boundary wall has gaps in the brickwork;
 3. This development may encourage other units to expand closer to their boundary affecting privacy, noise levels and property value.

12. The occupier of the adjacent industrial unit states that, to the best of his knowledge, the applicants do not own the open land the application relates to, this land being common land to all units within the Button End industrial estate.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

13. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application relate to:
- a. The principle of the development in light of Green Belt and countryside policies;
 - b. Residential amenity including noise disturbance;
 - c. Visual impact;
 - d. Traffic implications;
 - e. Ownership issues.

Principle of the development

14. The proposal contravenes Policy P9/2a of the Structure Plan which restricts development in the Green Belt to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries or other uses appropriate to a rural area. It also constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt under the terms of Policy GB2 of the Local Plan *unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated*. It is therefore necessary to consider whether there are the very special circumstances required to support inappropriate development in the Green Belt in this instance.
15. The proposed extension is a small single-storey lean-to occupying a total floor area of approximately 22.5m². Although it encroaches onto the open grassed area on the east side of the building, it is sited some 60 metres back from the main road and is seen against the backdrop of the existing buildings. I am satisfied that it would not unduly harm the openness and rural character of the Green Belt and countryside. In addition, although this would be the first extension onto the open grassed area bounded by blocks C and D, this would not be the only extension on the industrial estate. There have been single storey additions to the south side of Unit A1, the east side of Unit B4 and the west side of Unit D5.
16. Whilst the development is contrary to policy P9/2a, it is small scale, there have been other similar extensions within the industrial estate and there would be no material harm to the openness and rural character of the Green Belt. I am satisfied that these constitute the very special circumstances required to support inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the proposal therefore complies with Policy GB2 of the Local Plan.

Residential amenity issues

17. Concerns have been expressed by the occupiers of the adjacent dwelling to the east regarding noise disturbance from the industrial unit given that the extension would bring the building 3 metres closer to their property than at present. The Environmental Health Officer considers the impact on the neighbours would be acceptable on the basis that the extension is to be used for storage purposes and providing the windows in the rear wall of the extension would be double glazed. Should Members be minded to grant permission for the development, I would recommend that conditions be added to the consent restricting the use of the extension to storage purposes only and requiring the rear windows to be double glazed.

18. The extension would be sited some 18 metres away from Violet Cottage's rear boundary and 38 metres away from the cottage itself. Given this distance together with the fact that the extension is single storey, I am satisfied that the proposal would not result in undue overlooking of the neighbouring property.

Traffic Issues

19. The Parish Council has raised strong objections to the application, referring to traffic problems associated with the existing industrial estate and stressing that any further expansion of units should be discouraged. I fully understand the Parish Council's concerns as Button End is a narrow rural road that is arguably not suited to serve an industrial estate of this size/nature. However, it is necessary to focus on the additional harm caused by the extension itself. The application form states that the proposed extension is required for storage purposes only (which, as referred to above, can be controlled by condition) and that there would be no associated increase in staff or traffic numbers. Given the use and small scale of the extension, I consider that a refusal on traffic/highway safety grounds could not be substantiated.

Ownership Issues

20. With regards to the issues raised by the occupier of the adjacent unit, should it be the case that the site is not owned by the applicant, the application would be invalid, as the ownership certificates submitted with the application are incorrect. I have discussed this matter with the applicant's agent who has advised me that the grassed land is not owned by anybody but that the owners of Unit C4 have control over the section of land to the rear of their unit. The occupier of the adjacent unit believes, however, that the ownership of the land is shared between the 19 units on the industrial estate. This situation needs to be resolved and correct certificates submitted (thereby validating the application) before any decision can be issued.

Recommendation

21. Subject to the submission of correct ownership certificates, approval:
1. Standard Condition A (Reason - A);
 2. Sc19 – Matching materials (Rc19);
 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of Regulation 3 and Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning General (Permitted) Development Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order), the premises shall be used for storage purposes only and for no other purpose (including any other purposes in Classes B8 and B1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended 2005) or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that order) (Reason – To protect the amenities of adjoining residents)
 4. The windows in the rear/east elevation of the extension, hereby permitted, shall be fitted and permanently maintained with double glazing. (Reason – To protect the amenities of adjoining residents)

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the proposal is not in accordance with Policy P9/2a of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, it is considered that the small scale nature of the development, the presence of similar extensions to other units within the industrial estate and the lack of harm to the openness and rural character of the Green Belt, constitute the very special circumstances required to support inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
2. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan in all other respects and particularly the following policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
P1/2 (Environmental Restrictions on Development);
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
GB2 (Green Belts)
3. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Residential amenity including noise disturbance and privacy issues;
 - The principle of the development in this countryside/Green Belt location;
 - Traffic impact.

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 refs: S/1168/06/F, S/1599/97/F, S/1809/86/F and S/0472/86/F

Documents referred to in the report including appendices on the website only and reports to previous meetings.

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