

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

6<sup>th</sup> September 2006

**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

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### **S/1489/06/F- HARSTON**

#### **Conversion of Existing Workshop to Form Dwelling at Land Adjacent Holly-wood, Button End for Mr and Mrs Gatwood**

#### **Recommendation: Refusal**

**Date for Determination: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. The site is located on the western side of Button End, outside the Harston village framework and in the Green Belt/ countryside. It currently comprises a 1½ storey weatherboard and slate building that is set back approximately 10 metres from the road behind a wide grass verge, mature hedge and trees with open land to the rear.
2. A caravan site and industrial units owned by the applicants are located to the west of the site. Open fields lie to the south. A post and rail fence defines the boundary. Hollywood is a bungalow that is situated to the north. A chain link fence and trees define the boundary.
3. The application, received on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2006, proposes conversion of the existing workshop to a dwelling. No external alterations are proposed. Two parking spaces and a garden are to be provided to the rear of the dwelling with access off the existing driveway that serves the industrial units and caravan site.

#### **Planning History**

4. Planning permission was refused in June 2006 (reference **S/0789/06/F**) for conversion of the existing workshop to a dwelling. The reason for refusal related to the principle of residential development outside the village framework and in the Green Belt and the loss of the site for local employment.
5. Planning permission was granted at appeal in September 1955 (reference **C/0050/55**) for use of the building for making concrete tiles.

#### **Planning Policy**

6. Policy **P9/2a** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 seeks to limit development in the Green Belt, including change of use, to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, and other uses appropriate to a rural area.
7. Policy **P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 restricts development in the countryside to that which is essential to a particular rural location.

8. 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. Any development that is considered appropriate must be located and designed so that it would not adversely affect the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.
9. Policy **SE8** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 outlines the presumption against residential development outside village frameworks.
10. Policy **HG/8** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (Draft January 2006) states that planning permission for conversion of rural buildings for residential use will not generally be permitted. Planning permission will only be exceptionally granted where it can be demonstrated, having regard to market demand or planning considerations that it is inappropriate for any employment use and it is inappropriate for employment with residential conversion as a subordinate part of business re-use.

### **Consultation**

11. **Harston Parish Council** – No comments received to date.

### **Representations**

12. The applicants make the following points in support of their application: -
  - i) *“The change of use to residential would be a benefit to us because it would enable us to control and run the Caravan Club site more easily. The entrance to the site is situated right beside the building and arriving and departing caravans would be seen instantly and dealt with immediately;*
  - ii) *The Caravan Club site was approved as a suitable location within this rural setting and change of use of the building would enhance the operation and security of the site and therefore have an important bearing on the service we provide to the community;*
  - iii) *Our present dwelling at Spingdean has Holly-wood between us and the caravan site and barn entrance and we are prevented from seeing visitors arrive and depart unless we physically go round and wait at the entrance. The site has become popular with many people from all over the UK and overseas because of its high standard, the secluded and peaceful location with the added bonus of being sufficiently near the M11 motorway and the many local attractions. We put a lot of effort into running the caravan site to a high standard with the least possible inconvenience to neighbours and traffic coming to the end of the lane where they leave their cars to go walking. If the change of use were granted, it would remedy the existing situation;*
  - iv) *The alternative would be to use the building for industrial purpose. This, however, could not operate hand in hand with the existing caravan site and would result in its closure and loss of a very popular facility which brings visitor and revenue to the area;*
  - v) *Several neighbours have written letters in support of our application and they have told us that they would much prefer to have a dwelling rather than the building being used for industrial purposes. We also have the support of Harston Parish Council and the District Councillor.”*

13. Mrs Lockwood, the local member for Harston comments: -  
*“ I realise that it was refused on a previous application as there was no supporting opinion to consider it further. I feel strongly that it is in the interest of the small local community as well as the applicants, and that it does not alter the street scene at all although it is outside the village framework and should therefore be approved.”*
14. Five letters of support from residents of Button End were submitted with the application.

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

15. The main issues to be considered during the determination of this application relate to:-  
i) The principle of residential development in this location;  
ii) The impact upon the character and appearance of the Green Belt/ countryside;  
iii) The impact upon the amenities of neighbours;  
iv) Highway safety.
16. Whilst the proposed conversion of the workshop to a residential property need not necessarily represent inappropriate development that is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt in policy terms or have a materially greater visual impact upon the surrounding area than the existing use, it is considered unacceptable in principle, as the site is located outside the village framework of Harston and in the countryside.
17. The property has not been marketed to demonstrate that it could not be used for a low-key employment use, or another appropriate use such as a small office for the caravan site.
18. The applicants state that the use of the building as a dwelling would provide safety and security for visitors and enable the caravan site to be run more efficiently to a higher standard. The development of a residential unit for this purpose is not considered to be essential in this particular rural location, principally as the applicants currently reside at a dwelling just 20 metres to the north of the site at ‘Springdean’.
19. I do not consider that the proposed conversion would harm the amenities of neighbours or be detrimental to highway safety.
20. Whilst the current building is considered structurally sound and capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction that would require planning permission, recent alterations appear to have been made to the building from its original state in 1955. From the inspectors appeal decision for the use of the building for making roof tiles, he notes that “the appeal site consists of an old agricultural building some 40 feet long by 16 feet wide, with a lean-to corrugated asbestos addition about 24 feet by 9 feet”. This is not the case today and from a representation submitted with the earlier 2006 application, the occupier of the opposite property ‘Whitegates’ states that “the building has already undergone substantial rebuilding from derelict barn to a building intended for, and ready for residential use. The roof has been raised several feet and connection made to the gas supply”. These alterations would have required planning permission and from checking the planning history of the site, no such application has been made. If the building were in a state of disrepair today, the conversion would represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt. This matter will be investigated and enforcement action taken if necessary.

## **Recommendation**

### **21. Refusal.**

The proposed conversion of the existing workshop building to a dwelling would result in residential development outside the Harston village framework and in the countryside. The applicant has not demonstrated that the proposed development is essential in this particular rural location and that the existing workshop building could not be used for any purpose other than a residential use. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy SE8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 that outline the presumption against residential development outside village frameworks in order to preserve the openness and rural character of the countryside, and Policy HG/8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (Draft January 2006) that states planning permission will only be granted for residential conversions in exceptional circumstances having regard to market demand or planning considerations.

**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 File References S/1489/06/F, S/0789/06/F and C/0055/55

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

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