

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4th October 2006

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

S/1406/06/F – STEEPLE MORDEN
Change of Use of Agricultural Building to General Industry (Class B2),
Unit 3, Morden Grange Farm, Baldock Road

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 8th September 2006

Site and Proposal

1. Morden Grange Farm is located 1.3km north of the A505 in Steeple Morden parish. It is served by a long roadway that accesses direct to the dual carriageway section of the A505. It comprises a farmhouse and range of traditional and modern farm buildings to the north.
2. This full application, registered on 14th July 2006, proposes the change of use a section (105m²) of an existing brick and slate roofed building to B2 General Industrial use. Parking for 6 vehicles is provided, to be shared with another section of the building that already has consent for B2 use.
3. To the south of Morden Grange Farm itself are a pair of cottages owned by the applicant.

Planning History

4. Planning consent was granted in December 2005 for the conversion of 210m² of floorspace, in two buildings, to Class B2 use (**Ref: S/1942/05/F**). Conditions attached to that consent include restricting the occupation of the buildings to B2 uses only in order to restrict the number of vehicle movements from the site, and link the use of the buildings to Morden Grange Farm due to their proximity.

Planning Policy

5. **Policy EM10** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") states that outside village frameworks planning permission will be granted for the change of use and conversion of rural buildings to employment use provided that, amongst other criteria:
 - (a) The buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;
 - (b) The form, bulk and general design of the buildings both before and after conversion are in keeping with their surroundings;
 - (c) The buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside;

- (d) Safe and satisfactory vehicular access can be provided together with adequate space within the curtilage to accommodate ancillary requirements such as car parking and lorry manoeuvring without significant detriment to the setting of the building and the landscape within which it is located;
 - (e) The scale and frequency of traffic generated by the proposal can be accommodated on the road system without undue adverse effects.
6. This policy reflects objectives of Policy P2/6 of the approved Structure Plan 2003, which encourages sensitive small scale employment development in rural areas through, amongst others, the re-use of existing buildings and Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 7: “Sustainable Development in Rural Areas”.

Consultation

7. **Steeple Morden Parish Council** recommends refusal. It states that in view of the response of Hertfordshire County Council to the earlier application for Units 1 and 2 “we feel obliged to recommend refusal, as we are not aware of any necessary upgrading of the access road in the intervening time.”
8. The **Local Highway Authority** (in this case Hertfordshire County Council) notes from the application that there is no increase in heavy goods vehicles using the existing access and there will be three additional light vehicles that would use the access road. This increase in the number of light vehicles is acceptable in highway terms. The visibility at the junction of the access road with the A505 is acceptable and the width of the access is capable of accommodating two-way traffic at the junction. It states that the final section of road to the junction of the A505 and the section leading to the new proposal because of its horizontal alignment, width and forward visibility would not be suitable to accommodate a significant higher level of traffic than that proposed. Parking provision is considered acceptable. It is of the view that the proposed increase in level of traffic has no significant implications for the safe and efficient operation of the adjoining highway network and therefore it does not wish to restrict the granting of planning permission on highway grounds.
9. The **Environment Agency** requests the imposition of conditions requiring schemes for foul and surface water drainage, and pollution control. In addition there are a number of informatives to be attached to any approval notice.
10. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** states that the implications of the proposal in terms of noise and pollution control have been considered and it is concluded that there are no significant impacts from an Environmental Health standpoint.
11. The comments of the **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** are awaited.

Representations

12. None received

Planning Comments – Key Issues

13. The key issue to be considered with this application is whether the proposal complies with the various criteria set out under Policy EM10 of the Local Plan, and in particular the issue of highway safety.

14. The building is of traditional form. There are no external alterations proposed and adequate car parking can be provided on existing hardsurfaced areas within the site. The application shows the provision of 6 car parking spaces for the proposed unit and an existing unit, which have a total floor area of 285m². This provision meets the Councils' standards.
15. The roadway leading to Morden Grange Farm exits onto the dual carriageway section of the A505 and traffic can only turn east and enter from the west. Whilst visibility at the junction is good traffic is fast moving along the main road. In commenting on the previous application Hertfordshire County Council, as Local Highway Authority, stated that "any further development that generates additional levels of traffic that has an impact on the existing road would have to cater for the two-way traffic that ensues. This would involve widening and lengthening the stretch of road that can accommodate two-way traffic at the junction of the A505 in order to provide storage of queuing vehicles. The final section of road to the junction of the A505 and the section leading to the proposal because of its horizontal alignment, width and forward visibility would not be suitable to accommodate higher levels of traffic than that proposed. Any cumulative increase in traffic off the existing access road is likely to have an adverse impact on the operation and safety within the site and adjoining properties. A properly designed access road with the capacity to accept two way traffic that is anticipated to use the access road would have to be submitted to the Highway Authority demonstrating a suitable link between the A505 and the new development is achievable."
16. No improvement works to the access roadway and junction are proposed as part of this application and I have written to Hertfordshire County Council requesting clarification as to why it supports the proposal given its previous comments. I will report the response at the meeting.
17. If Hertfordshire County Council confirms its position of not wishing to object to this application I will recommend to Members that it is approved. If, after further consideration, it supports the wish of Steeple Morden Parish Council to see upgrading of the access I will contact the applicant to require the submission of a suitable scheme.

Recommendation

18. Subject to confirmation from Hertfordshire County Council as Local Highway Authority that it supports the application as submitted, consent be granted subject to the following conditions.
 1. SCA - 3 Years (RCA);
 2. SC9 - Linked Occupation – Morden Grange (RC9);
 3. SC39 - Restrict Use to Class – Class B2 (Reason - To ensure that the Local Planning Authority retains control over any future change of use of the buildings that might result in an increase in the number of vehicles using the existing access to the A505.);
 4. SC36 - No Outside Storage (RC36);
 5. The use hereby permitted shall not commence until car parking for the unit has been provided in accordance with the details shown on the submitted drawing D1 – Layout Plan. That area shall thereafter be reserved for the parking of cars in association with the approved use. (Reason – To ensure adequate space is provided and thereafter maintained on site for parking of vehicles in association with the approved use);

6. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of foul water drainage shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans/specification at such time(s) as may be specified in the approved scheme. (Reason – To prevent the increased risk of pollution to the water environment);
7. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of surface water drainage shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans/specification at such time(s) as may be specified in the approved scheme. (Reason – To ensure a satisfactory method of surface water drainage);
8. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of pollution control to the water environment shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans/specification at such time(s) as may be specified in the approved scheme. (Reason – To prevent the increased risk of pollution to the water environment).

Informatives

Environment Agency informatives to be attached.

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
P2/6 (Rural Economy)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
EM10 (Employment in the Countryside)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Highway safety

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

- County Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning File Refs: S/1406/06/F & S/1942/05/F
- Documents referred to in the report including appendices on the website only and reports to previous meetings

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