

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

4<sup>th</sup> October 2006

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

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### **S/1539/06/F - THRIFLOW**

**Erection of House and Garage Following Demolition of Existing Bungalow at  
7 Middle Street for Mr & Mrs R Taylor**

**Recommendation: Approval**

**Date for Determination: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

### **S/1668/06/CAC - THRIFLOW**

**Total Demolition of Bungalow and Garages at 7 Middle Street  
For Mr & Mrs R Taylor**

**Recommendation: Approval**

**Date for Determination: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

**Members will visit this site on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006**

## **Conservation Area**

### **Site and Proposal**

1. The 0.02 hectare application site is located on the east side of Middle Street and is occupied by a modest single storey dwelling. To the north-west is No.5 Middle Street, a render and slate cottage sited adjacent to the road. Planning permission has been granted for the significant extension of this dwelling to the rear and these works are presently under construction. Beyond the site to the south is a two storey detached brick dwelling for which there is an extant planning consent for an extension on its south side. To the rear/east of the site are agricultural buildings whilst, to the north, are fields located within the Green Belt which are protected by an Important Countryside Frontage designation along School Lane.
2. The existing dwelling lies inside the village framework but the framework boundary cuts through the rear garden, meaning that around half of the existing rear garden lies in the countryside, albeit not in the Green Belt.
3. The full application, submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2006, seeks to demolish the existing dwelling and to erect a 5-bedroom two storey house in its place. The two storey element of the proposed replacement would be sited approximately 24 metres back from the road frontage of the site, some 7 metres further away from the road than the existing dwelling. It would be 9.3 metres high and incorporate two slightly lower (9 metre high) forward projecting gables. A single storey swimming pool building would project forwards of the main dwelling and adjacent to the northern boundary of the site to a point around 5 metres away from the front of the site. The proposal also seeks to erect a double garage at the front of the dwelling adjacent to the southern boundary of the plot. The materials proposed for the two storey element of the

dwelling are clay plain tiles for the roof and gault brickwork for the walls, whilst the single storey elements would comprise brick walls and clay pantile roofs.

4. The Conservation Area Consent application seeks consent for the demolition of the existing bungalow and garages.

### **Planning History**

5. None

### **Planning Policy**

6. Thriplow is identified within **Policy SE5** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 as an infill only village. In such locations, Policy SE5 states that residential development will be restricted to no more than two dwellings comprising (amongst others) the redevelopment of an existing residential curtilage providing the site does not form an essential part of village character, and development is sympathetic to the historic interests, character, and amenities of the locality.
7. **Policy P7/6** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 requires development to protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
8. **Policy P1/3** of the County Structure Plan requires a high standard of design that responds to the local character of the built environment.
9. **Policy EN30** of the Local Plan requires development in a Conservation Area to either preserve or enhance the character of the area.

### **Consultation**

10. **Thriplow Parish Council** recommends approval of the planning application, stating:

“Two parish councillors object to the demolition of the existing property, commenting that it is a typical design of the late 60’s early 70’s and should probably be listed, that it will result in the loss of a perfectly usable, medium sized dwelling in order to provide space for a grandiose design and that it should be preserved as an example of the architect’s work. Although two councillors suggest that consideration should be given to putting the pool at the rear and one suggests that the roofline should be lowered to the same height as No.9, the majority of parish councillors have no objections to the scheme. They feel that the design fits in well with the street scene, are pleased to see that the part of the proposed building immediately adjacent to Duck Cottage (No.5) is all single storey, therefore respecting the setting of Duck Cottage, any overlooking of Duck Cottage would be minimal, the two storey element is far enough away from the road to not impose and the view from Peck’s Close would not be disadvantaged. It is also felt that the chimneys are an important element of the design and these should not be removed from the scheme at a later date.”

Approval is also recommended for the Conservation Area Consent application:

“Two councillors feel that medium sized dwellings are needed in the village and object to the demolition of a perfectly serviceable home, however, the majority of councillors raise no objections to the proposal. The Parish Council recommendation, therefore, is for the approval of this application.”

11. **The Conservation Manager** raises no objections. The existing bungalow is considered to be of little architectural merit, although it is very modest and therefore has a minimal impact on the Thriplow Conservation Area. The proposed replacement dwelling is significantly bigger but the main part of the dwelling is set some distance back into the site (much further than the existing bungalow) such that its greater bulk will not impose excessively on the streetscene. There are no particularly important views across the site that would be blocked as a result of the replacement house, and the scale and massing of the replacement dwelling is broadly similar to that of the adjacent 20<sup>th</sup> Century house immediately to the south. To the north there is a more traditional cottage, albeit much extended, set tight to the street and the proposed dwelling will be significantly higher than this. However, the pool building provides a degree of articulation between these two buildings and, because the main two storey block of the new house is set over 20 metres back from the road, it will not visually overpower or dominate the old cottage. The new dwelling is quasi-Edwardian in style and this is considered to be appropriate for a building of this size. Thriplow contains a variety of built forms and providing appropriate traditional materials are used (eg – clay plain and pan tiles, gault brick and timber windows) the replacement dwelling should fit into the context of Thriplow. It is noted that the chimney stacks will be an important feature when viewing the house from the street and these should be located slightly forward of the valleys between the front roof slope and the gables as suggested on the roof plan. No objections are raised in respect of the solar panels proposed to the south facing roof slope to the main house. It is recommended that any consent be subject to conditions requiring sample materials, large scale details for the eaves, chimneys, external joinery and the patent glazing to the pool roof, details of rooflights, and the use of Flemish bond brickwork for the main house.
12. **The Trees and Landscape Officer** raises no objections.
13. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** raises no objections in principle although does express concern about noise disturbance to nearby residents during the construction period. As such, a condition restricting the hours of use of power operated machinery during the construction period needs to be attached to any planning consent.

### **Representations**

14. Letters of objection have been received from 3 local residents, Nos. 5 and 14 Middle Street, and No.3 Lower Street. The main points raised are:
  - a. No objections are raised in principle to the demolition of the existing bungalow and its replacement with a two storey dwelling;
  - b. The scale of the proposed dwelling is inappropriate and out of keeping with the scale of adjoining dwellings, including No.5 as extended;
  - c. The dwelling would fill the entire width of the plot and obstruct views of trees to the rear;
  - d. The general character of the village is of small houses set in an open pattern enclosing areas of agricultural land. The present trend of replacing small and medium sized dwellings with large residences is destroying this character and reducing the supply of 'affordable' housing;
  - e. It would be very dominant within the street scene and would have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
  - f. The pool building at the front would be very dominant and have a harmful impact upon the street scene. It should be located elsewhere, such as at the side or rear of the dwelling;

- g. The dwelling would be dominant and overbearing in the outlook from No.5's patio, conservatory and upper floor windows;
- h. The value of No.5's garden would be diminished as a result of the presence of a house in a backland location;
- i. The house would be very conspicuous across Green Belt land from the Important Countryside Frontage on School Lane and from the green space opposite the site.

### **Representations from District Councillor Quinlan**

15. Councillor Quinlan has written two letters in response to the application. The first letter states:

"I have studied the submitted drawings of the proposed development, viewed the site and discussed the scheme with the neighbours. I am writing to convey my strong objections to the proposed development on the following grounds:

1. The scheme involves the demolition of the existing unobtrusive single storey house designed by the distinguished local architect, now deceased, Bill Twist one of the founders of Twist & Whitley, Architects of Cambridge. This unobtrusive single storey dwelling which fits in so well in this location is to be replaced by an overblown house of large size, scale and dominant presence. This is perhaps the only the latest manifestation in this village where the perpetrators desire for conspicuous display exceeds their taste!
2. The scale of the proposed house is grossly excessive in this location where it is flanked by existing houses, that the north Listed, of significantly smaller scale and height to the proposed new house. This is particularly important when viewed from School Lane across the meadows to the south which are now within the Green Belt. The existing low pitched roof, single storey building barely registers in the view whereas the behemoth now proposed will be extremely intrusive and destroy the pleasant rural character of the area and the special character of the location recognised by the Conservation Area Status. You will recall that strenuous efforts were made in the extension to the neighbouring dwelling to the north, now nearing completion, to minimise the scale and impact of the new building on the special character of the area. This involved employing a low eaves line, keeping the ridge line as low as possible and careful attention to ground floor levels to exploit existing topography. In my opinion that has been highly successful.
3. The placing of the swimming pool building forward of the proposed house and extending virtually to the road frontage is inappropriate and it should be placed to the rear of the proposed house. The existing proposed location has the effect of pushing the main building back into the plot thereby increasing its impact upon the open meadows to the north and increasing the impact of the main house on the amenities of the neighbours to the north. The intrusion of the swimming pool building, virtually to the road frontage, make it extremely intrusive in the street scene. Again when compared to the nearly complete extension to the building to the north which does not impact in views south along Middle Street the proposals are crude and ill-mannered.
4. The new dwelling, in view of its scale and bulk and fenestration on its north elevation is grossly detrimental to the amenities of the residents of the dwelling to the north by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking and loss of privacy and loss of daylight and sunlight. The effect upon the neighbours is made even worse by the

new house being set so far back on the plot which also allows direct overlooking of the neighbours gardens and swimming pool from the windows on the front elevation of the new house.

Please can you ensure these comments are included, in full, in the committee report. I intend speaking at the meeting in support of refusal of the application.”

16. The subsequent letter states:

“I refer to my letter dated 27 August 2006 in which I expressed my serious reservations about the proposal and my inclination to support a refusal of the scheme. As you will be aware I am still refining my views on the scheme and have not finally decided on my approach at the planning committee; much will depend upon the debate and views expressed by my fellow councillors.

I have today received from the Parish Council Clerk a document setting out the views of individual members of that Council. It is fair to say that the individual responses are mixed and some Members expressing very similar concerns to those raised in my preliminary letter. Of the “village” members of the Parish Council half the members objected to the proposal.

It is possible that the main concerns raised in my original letter might be amenable to resolution by revisions to the scheme. The location of the main building and its detrimental effect upon the important School Lane Meadows, between Baroness Boothroyd’s house and the Holmes House now in the Green Belt and Conservation Area, can be resolved by transposing the location of the house and the swimming pool building such that the house is placed further forward towards the street frontage and the single storey pool building, which would have far less impact upon the character of the meadows, placed at the rear which would be the “normal” relationship in any case. This will also reduce the overlooking of the adjacent house’s gardens from the windows on the west elevation of the new house which was another of the concerns raised in my first letter.

The second main concern is the scale and height of the house which is significantly higher than the surrounding dwellings. I referred in my first letter to the great care taken with the design of the extensions to the adjoining house to the north and how successful that design has been at keeping the scale down; low eaves line, low pitched roof and exploitation of natural landforms. There is no reason why a skilled architect cannot achieve a similar solution in this case. A reduction in the depth of the building and a reduced roof pitch would significantly reduce the scale. The height of the building should, at the very least, be brought down to the level of the ridge of the house to the south.

I would ask that you raise these points with the architect and seek the submission of a revised scheme. If acceptable revisions are made it is possible that the concerns raised by members of the Parish Council and by me as set out in my first letter could be overcome. Please keep me informed of the progress of such negotiations.

Please can you ensure these comments are included, in full, in the committee report if the case is dealt with at Committee.”

## **Response from Conservation Manager to Councillor Quinlan's comments:**

17. The Conservation Manager expresses concern that the revisions suggested by Councillor Quinlan would not be beneficial to the Conservation Area for the following reasons:

- “1. From my observations looking across the meadows in School Lane, the main bulk of the 2 storey house in the position as indicated on the application drawings would be seen in front of the existing 20<sup>th</sup> Century house that is located immediately to the south of the site, while the single storey pool range will be largely hidden behind the new structures recently constructed as part of the redevelopment of the cottage to the north. Furthermore, the house will be seen against a backdrop of trees and will therefore not break the skyline. Transposing the pool and house would result in the new dwelling being seen alongside the existing 20<sup>th</sup> century dwelling, i.e. one would see two buildings rather than one. To my eye, the most visible structure in this view over the meadow from School Lane is the recently constructed extensions to the rear of the cottage to the north of the site.
  
2. As noted in item 1 of my comments on the application (dated 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2006), the main part of the dwelling as currently proposed is set some distance back into the site (much further than the existing bungalow), such that its greater bulk will not impose excessively on the streetscene, and while the ridge is some 0.5 metre higher than the adjacent house to the south, because it is set further back into the site the scale and massing of the replacement dwelling will be broadly similar to that of the adjacent 20<sup>th</sup> Century house immediately to the south. In respect of the cottage to the north, the single storey pool structure provides a degree of articulation between the two structures and, because the main two storey block of the new house is set over 20 metres back from the road, it will not visually overpower or dominate the cottage. I note also that the Parish Council appreciated the role performed by the single storey pool structure in the streetscene and the relationship between the new house and the existing cottage to the north. Transposing the house and pool structure would lose this ‘articulation’, and even if the house were reduced in height by 0.5 metres (ie down to the ridge line of the dwelling to the south) if moved forward I am concerned that it would then dominate the lower cottage.

In conclusion, I believe the house is proportionate to its site and the present arrangement of the elements within the site will minimise its impact on both the adjacent dwellings, the streetscene from Middle Street and the view over the meadows from School Lane. The Thriplow Conservation Area contains a wide variety of built forms, with both smaller cottages set close to the street, cottages set at right angles to the street and larger dwellings and agricultural buildings set further back from the street. For this, and the reasons outlined above, I do not share Councillor Quinlan's concerns over the impact of this dwelling, but am concerned that to revise the scheme as suggested might actually result in greater visual harm.”

## **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

18. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- Impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
  - Impact upon the countryside and Green Belt;
  - Residential amenity;

- Impact on trees.

### **Visual impact including Conservation Area and Green Belt issues**

19. The Conservation manager has raised no objections in principle to the demolition of the existing dwelling which is considered to be of little architectural merit. The proposed replacement dwelling would have a ridge height of 9.3 metres and it is acknowledged that it would be significantly higher than No.5 Middle Street to the north (which has a ridge height of 7 metres) and the 8.7 metre high dwelling to the south. However, No.5 is sited at the frontage of its plot alongside the road and No.9 to the south is sited in line with the existing dwelling on the plot. By being set much further back from the road than the existing and adjacent dwellings, it is considered that a dwelling of this height and scale can be accommodated on the site without resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The success of the scheme would be very much dependent upon the use of quality materials and detailing and these would need to be secured through conditions of any planning consent. The Conservation Manager has commented on a discrepancy between the roof plan and elevations regarding the position of the chimneys. I have discussed this matter with the applicant's agent and the elevation drawings will be amended to ensure that the chimneys are located as shown on the roof plan – ie – forward of the valleys between the front roof slope and gables.
20. Concerns have been raised by Councillor Quinlan and by local residents regarding the forward projecting swimming pool element which it is argued should be sited to the rear of the dwelling. However, the existing dwelling has a forward projecting element that extends closer to the road than the proposed pool building and there are dwellings sited along the road frontage to the immediate north (No.5) and to the south (No.23). Forward projecting outbuildings are not untypical of the character of the area. For instance, further to the south, at No.22 Middle Street, permission was granted earlier this year for a dwelling with a detached double garage at the front sited gable end to the road. The Conservation Manager considers this element provides a degree of articulation between the extended cottage to the north and the proposed dwelling. In addition, it is essential to ensure that any development is confined to the part of the curtilage that lies inside the framework and, if the dwelling was transposed without moving it forwards, the building would encroach beyond the framework boundary.
21. The Conservation Manager has separately assessed the alterations suggested by Councillor Quinlan. He considers the arrangement as proposed in the application would minimise the impact on both the adjacent dwellings, the streetscene from Middle Street and the views over the meadows from School Lane. The alterations suggested by Councillor Quinlan are considered to result in greater visual harm the scheme proposed in the application.
22. Concerns have also been expressed about the visual impact of the development when viewed from the Important Countryside Frontage along School Lane, across the Green Belt land and open fields to the north of the site. I have considered the impact of the development from this viewpoint and accept that the new dwelling would be visible from here, albeit at a distance of in excess of 100 metres away from the site. At present, when looking south from School Lane across the fields towards the village, the existing view is represented by a backdrop of built development and I consider that this view would not be significantly altered or harmed as a result of setting the dwelling well back into the site.

## **Residential amenity**

23. The dwelling has been designed with its principal openings facing west towards the road and east towards its rear garden. The north and south elevations, which face towards Nos. 5 and 9 respectively, only have obscure glazed bathroom windows at first floor level, therefore ensuring that the development would not overlook either adjoining property. The occupiers of No.5 have raised concern about the first floor windows in the front elevation of the dwelling. However, these are in excess of 24 metres away from windows in the south side elevation of No.5. In addition, as can be seen from the front/street scene elevation drawings, the height and position of the forward projecting swimming pool building would make it impossible to look down from these windows into No.5's windows or garden area.
24. The proposed dwelling would be sited around 30 metres away from No.5's patio, conservatory and private sitting out areas. Whilst the development would be visible from these parts of the neighbouring house, at this distance I do not consider it to be unduly overbearing in the outlook from No.5 nor to result in a significant loss of light to the dwelling.

## **Impact on trees**

25. The application proposes the removal of a tree within the rear garden to which the Trees and Landscape Officer has raised no objections.

## **Recommendation**

26. Subject to the receipt of amended elevations to ensure the chimney positions accord with that shown on the roof plan, approval of the planning application subject to the following conditions:
1. Standard A (Reason A);
  2. No development shall commence until details of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details:
    - a) Samples of the materials to be used for the external walls and roofs of the dwelling and garage;
    - b) Sample of the materials to be used for the new section of wall between the existing front boundary wall and proposed swimming pool building;
    - c) Large scale details (1:10 minimum) for the eaves, chimneys, external joinery (including head, cill and jamb details) and the patent glazing to the pool roof;
    - d) The manufacturer and size of the rooflights.  
(Reason – To ensure that the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area).
  3. The walls of the main dwelling shall be constructed in Flemish Bond brickwork  
(Reason – To ensure that the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area).
  4. The first floor windows in the north and south side elevations of the dwelling, hereby permitted, shall be non-opening and fitted and permanently maintained with obscured glass (Reason – To safeguard the privacy of occupiers of the adjoining properties to the north and south, Nos. 5 and 9 Middle Street respectively).

5. Save for the windows shown within the approved plans, no further windows, doors or openings of any kind shall be inserted at first floor level in the north and south side elevations of the development, hereby permitted, unless expressly authorised by planning permission granted by the Local Planning Authority in that behalf (Reason – To safeguard the privacy of occupiers of the adjoining properties to the north and south, Nos. 5 and 9 Middle Street respectively).
  6. During the period of construction no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays) unless otherwise previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions (Rc26).
  7. Sc60 - Boundary treatment details (Rc 60).
  8. Sc51 - Landscaping (Rc51).
  9. Sc52 - Implementation of landscaping (Rc52).
27. Approval of the application for Conservation Area Consent subject to the following condition:
1. The demolition, hereby permitted, shall not be undertaken before a contract for the carrying out of the works of redevelopment of the site has been made and planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment for which the contract provides.  
(Reason - To ensure that redevelopment closely follows the demolition hereby permitted.)

## **Informatives**

### **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:**  
**P1/3** (Sustainable design in built development) and  
**P7/6** (Historic Built Environment)
  - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**  
**SE5** (Development in Infill-Only Villages) and  
**EN30** (Development in/adjacent to Conservation Areas)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
  - Impact upon the Conservation Area;
  - Impact upon the Green Belt;
  - Residential amenity.

## **General**

1. Should driven pile foundations be proposed, then before works commence, a statement of the method for construction of these foundations shall be submitted to and agreed by the District Environmental Health Officer so that noise and vibration can be controlled.
2. During construction there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site except with the prior permission of the Environmental Health Officer in accordance with best practice and existing waste management legislation.
3. Before the existing property is demolished, a Demolition Notice will be required from the Environmental Health Department establishing the way in which the property will be dismantled, including any asbestos present, the removal of waste, minimisation of dust, capping of drains and establishing hours of working operation.

**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/1539/06/F and S/1668/06/CAC

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