

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

2nd June 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/2437/03/F - ORWELL CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS TO B2 USE WITH ASSOCIATED OFFICE FACILITIES, MALTON FARM, MALTON ROAD, FOR R HOOLE

Recommendation: Refusal

Site and Proposal

1. The buildings are located midway between the villages of Orwell and Meldreth, to the south of the entrance to Malton Golf Course. To the south east is Malton Farmhouse, a Grade II* Listed Building and beyond that the River Cam. Opposite the site is agricultural land and to the rear land associated with the golf course.
2. This full application, as amended by drawings received on 23rd February 2004, proposes the change of use of modern agricultural buildings at Malton Farm, Malton Road, Orwell to Class B2 Industrial use with ancillary office facilities. The scheme involves some demolition of existing buildings.
3. There are currently three main buildings, which are prominently located in the landscape, close to the road frontage. Building 3 is currently the tallest building within the site and is viewed from distance when approaching from the Meldreth direction. The application, as amended, proposes the demolition of the rear section of Building 3 (231m²), the tallest part of the building at 11m, and a reduction in height of the remainder of the roof so that the new ridge height is 7m. A 207m² curved roof building at the north end of the site (Building 1) is to be removed, and the front 2 bays of Building 2 (178m²) demolished, along with the removal of an existing link between the two buildings.
4. The remaining elements of Buildings 2 and 3, totally 1260m², are to be converted into Class B2 Industrial Use. The site is to be accessed via an upgraded entrance at the northern end of the site with the provision of 33 car parking spaces. Adopted car parking standards require a maximum of 26 spaces. An existing farm entrance at the southern end of the site is to be retained to access land to the rear.
5. The walls and roofs of the retained buildings are to re-clad with box profile colour coated steel sheeting.

Planning History

6. Planning consent was granted in 1990 (**Ref S/1989/00/F**) for the change of use of part of the site for the parking of up to four lorries.

Planning Policy

7. **Policy P2/6** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (“The County Structure Plan”) supports small-scale employment development in rural areas where, amongst other considerations, it would enable the re-use of existing buildings.
8. **Policy P7/6** of the County Structure Plan states that Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
9. **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: the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete renovation; conversion does not lead to dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality; the form, bulk and general design of the buildings both before and after conversion are in keeping with their surroundings; the buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside; 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 its located and; where the scale and frequency of traffic generated by the proposal can be accommodated on the road system without undue adverse effects.
10. **Policy EM28** of the Local Plan states that the District Council will resist and refuse applications which would damage the setting, well-being or attractiveness of a Listed Building and which would harm the visual relationship between the building and its formal or natural landscape surroundings.
11. **Policy TP1** of the Local Plan states that the District Council will restrict car parking to the maximum levels set out in Appendix 7/1.

Consultation

12. **Orwell Parish Council** recommends approval of the amended application.
13. **Meldreth Parish Council** recommends approval of the amended application. “Meldreth Parish Council has no objections to the application and considers that there would be no demonstrable harm to the community. Meldreth Parish Council remains concerned at possible increase of heavy traffic. However, the possibility of employment would be advantageous.”
14. The **Local Highways Authority** comments in respect of the amended drawings that a total floor area of some 1266m² has the potential to generate between 114-278 vehicle trips per day. The existing/past level of trips associated with the site when the buildings were in agricultural use, given by the applicant, is not this high. Previous comments that the proposal should be significantly reduced to a level that would not generate a greater level of vehicular traffic than continuing agricultural use of the buildings on the site. If the applicant is unable or unwilling to appropriately amend the scheme it is suggested that the proposal be refused on the grounds that Malton Lane, by reason of its narrow carriageway, is unsuitable to take the type and amount of traffic likely to be generated by the proposal.

15. The **Conservation Manager** objects on the grounds of the potential impact on the setting of the Listed Building from development, both physical impact of buildings/associated vehicular access points and intensification/change in use of the site which is held to change the rural setting of the area.
16. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** suggests that a condition be imposed on any consent restricting the hours of operation of machinery during the alteration and construction period.
17. The **Environment Agency** recommends conditions requiring the submission of a scheme of pollution control, including foul and surface water drainage and makes safeguarding comments.

Representations

18. One letter was received in respect of the original submission from the occupiers of Malton Farm expressing concerns. The current agricultural use of the site is accepted despite the fact that neither Malton Farm, nor Malton Lane can be said to be entirely suitable for such large vehicles, being so narrow. However a B2 designation would allow much noisier and potentially smelly activities immediately adjacent to a residential property and could well result in significant increases in vehicle movements. Malton Lane in particular is very narrow in parts, barely wide enough for two cars to pass, and is extremely hazardous for larger vehicles, especially at the bridge across the Cam next to Malton Farm, where the road is particularly narrow and has several tight bends in succession. In principle it is considered that a B1 designation would be more appropriate. B2 General Industrial is a very wide use class and would not normally be considered an appropriate use in close proximity to residential properties, particularly Malton Farm a Grade II* Listed Building. If consent is granted it should be for a specific use only and change to other uses without a further application prevented. Any consent should be personal to the applicant with controls of hours of working and traffic movements commensurate with the rural locality. Any alterations to the building should be in keeping with the rural surroundings.
19. In respect of the amended scheme the occupiers of Malton Cottage expressing similar concerns to those outlined above in respect of a B2 use.

Applicants Representations

20. Two letters submitted by the applicant's agent in support of the application are attached as Appendix 1

Planning Comments – Key Issues

21. The key issues to be considered with this application are whether the proposal complies with the criteria of Policy EM10 of the Local Plan, and in particular the impact of the conversion of the buildings on the surrounding countryside, the impact of the provision of car parking within the site (given the proximity to a Grade II* Listed Building) and the impact of the proposal upon the highway network. In addition the impact of the change of use on the amenity of neighbouring properties needs to be considered.

22. The existing modern agricultural buildings are prominently located. Building 3, which in part is currently 11m high, is visible for some distance when approaching from Meldreth. In my view the reduction in height of this building, the removal of Building 1 and the front 2 bays of Building 2 offer an opportunity to reduce the visual impact of the remaining buildings in the countryside. The additional space achieved at the front of the site will allow for additional planting to be carried out helping soften the impact of the site.
23. Although the proposal currently involves the provision of 33 car parking spaces at the rear of the site that area already contains a significant amount of hardsurfacing. The car parking proposed is in excess of that required to meet the maximum standards set out in the Local Plan (26 spaces) and therefore can be reduced. I am of the view that adequate space exists within the site for adequate additional landscaping to be carried out so that the visual impact of any parking on Malton Farmhouse and the wider landscape is acceptable.
24. I note the concerns expressed by the Conservation Manager but am of the view that overall the proposal represents an opportunity to enhance the visual appearance of the site.
25. The Local Highway Authority has expressed concern about the potential traffic implications of this proposal from the outside. During the course of the application the scheme has been amended to incorporate the removal of Building 1 and a reduction in the floor area of Building 2. The applicant was hoping that this reduction in floor area, and resultant decrease in potential traffic movements, would enable the highway objection to be overcome.
26. The roadway in either direction is narrow and particularly so towards Meldreth where traffic has to negotiate sharp bends when crossing the River Cam. Although the existing buildings have the potential to generate a certain level of traffic in respect of their continued use for agricultural purposes a significant element of this would be seasonal in nature. The Local Highway Authority is of the view that the proposed B2 use of the buildings has the potential to result in a significant intensification in the amount of traffic using the site, which it feels to be inappropriate. I concur with that opinion.
27. I note the concerns of nearby residents about the possible affect on amenity of a B2 use however the Chief Environmental Health Officer has not raised an objection. Malton Farm Cottages are 130m from the site to the north and Malton Farmhouse itself some 80m to the south east.
28. Given the concerns of the Local Highway Authority and local residents on potential highway implications of the development I am recommending refusal.

Recommendation

29. That the application be refused for the following reason:
 1. Malton Lane, by reason of its narrow carriageway is unsuitable to take the type and amount of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed scale of development. The proposal is therefore contrary to the requirements of Policy EM10 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

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 Ref. S/2437/03/F

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