

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6th December 2006

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

S/1839/06/F – GREAT SHELFORD
Erection of a Single Storey Building to Accommodate the
Cambridge Cancer Help Centre at Scotsdale Garden Centre, 120 Cambridge Road
for D Rayner

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 20th November 2006

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination at Councillor Nightingale's request, he considers there to be a disagreement over the siting in the green belt and location of green belt.

Members will visit this site on Monday 4th December 2006.

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to 52m x 28m area of land comprising part of the grassed/landscaped area at the front of the garden centre, part of the rear garden of the dwelling at No.132 Cambridge Road and the overgrown area to the rear of the cycle shop at No.134. There are currently a number of storage sheds in the garden of No.132. There are a number of trees within and adjoining the site including an area of trees alongside the car park. The site is bounded by the garden centre car park to the northeast, the remainder of the grassed/landscaped area at the front of the garden centre including 'The Trustline Garden' to the southeast and southwest and the rear garden of No.136 Cambridge Road to the northwest.
2. This full application, registered on the 25th September 2006 and amended by letter dated 8th November 2006, proposes the erection of a 2.6m high to eaves, 6.5m high building to provide 3no. therapy rooms, a relaxation area, a social/meeting place and office to be used by the Cambridge Cancer Help Centre. The building design is based on two linked pyramid roof elements, one measuring 14.4m x 14.4m and the other measuring 15m x 15m. The building would be faced with rendered blockwork or pre-formed insulated panels with colour features and would have a copper sheathed roof with glazing panels and solar panels. It is proposed that the garden centre car park would be used by those visiting the centre. Part of the area of trees alongside the car park would be removed. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and an Automatic Traffic count for the Garden Centre, June 2004.

Planning History

3. There have been a number of applications for development at the Garden Centre. Of particular note is the 5 year temporary planning permission for the ornamental display garden and erection of log cabin on the part of the grassed/landscaped area at the front of the garden centre to the southeast of the application site which was granted in October 2005 under planning reference **S/1529/05/F**.

Planning Policy

4. Approximately half of the proposed building would be within the village framework and half in the countryside and Green Belt.
5. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/2** states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
6. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P9/2a** states that within the Green Belt, new development, including change of use, will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.
7. Local Plan 2004 **Policy GB2** states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.
8. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN3** states that, in those cases where new development is permitted in the countryside, the Council will require that (a) the scale, design and layout of the scheme (b) the materials used within it, and (c) the landscaping works are all appropriate to the particular 'Landscape Character Area', and reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.
9. The **Great Shelford Village Design Statement 2004**, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, refers to the importance of preserving glimpses of the countryside from inside the village. Paragraph 4.1 of the Landscape section states: "The sense of enclosure makes the glimpses of countryside from inside the village of great importance. Much of the rural and agricultural landscape is hidden by buildings. So the gaps between them and those places where fields abut the road, are very important. They keep the link between village and surrounding countryside." Additionally, paragraph 8.2 of the Character Areas section states, in describing the character of Cambridge Road, that the generous verges and trees give a valued green aspect to the road, as do the views between development into the rural setting beyond to east and west. The open space at the front of Scotsdales is identified in the map accompanying the design statement as an important viewpoint.

Consultations

10. **Great Shelford Parish Council** makes no recommendation stating:

"We have no objection to the siting of a building to be used as a meeting and therapy centre for cancer sufferers and their relatives on the Scotsdales site in general. We are appreciative of the contribution made by Mr Rayner to ensure the continued existence of such a centre which is obviously greatly valued by its users as evidenced by the many supporting letters the Parish Council has received

We can understand why the applicant has chosen the proposed site in that it partly lies within the village envelope and partly in the green belt and may not face the same planning hurdles as a site located entirely within the green belt (such as the southern corner of the site).

We do have some concerns about the location. It has been identified as an important viewpoint in the Village Design Statement where visual links with the landscape should be preserved. The Parish Council opposed the siting of the cabin for those reasons but was happy with a time limited permission as the cabin was for charitable purposes. The proposed building will be permanent and we have to be satisfied the siting and design will not have an adverse impact on the green belt.

Design

We are not satisfied the design is of sufficient quality for this important location in terms of size, detail, materials and sustainability. Maggie's Cancer Centres have been designed by renowned architects to create a feeling of wellbeing in the patients. One is due to be built in Cambridge. Whilst not wishing to delay the centre at Scotsdales it would seem to be a worthwhile scheme in which local architects may wish to be involved to create a landmark building which has all the attributes of the Maggie Centres.

Siting

The building although partly obscured by trees would be somewhat intrusive. Could it be moved further NE so it would impact less on the open frontage to Scotsdales?

Parking

No additional provision has been made for parking. This is probably acceptable for the 15 extra cars a day but if the centre was used for conferences at the weekend this could create parking problems".

11. **Trees & Landscape Officer** Has no objections.
12. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends that any permission is subject to a condition relating to the times when power operated machinery shall not be operated during the construction period except in accordance with agreed noise restrictions.

Representations

13. A letter from the Cambridge Cancer Help Centre states that: the Centre has the policy of providing a venue for other local groups who give help and support to those in the community affected by serious illness including a self help group for people who have suffered strokes at a young age, the multiple myeloma group and a local ME group; a new facility at Scotsdale would enable them to extend their opening hours and provide a meeting place for other community groups; the existing church hall is no longer adequate in its size and layout to accommodate the number of complementary therapy sessions it now seeks to provide; and the tranquillity of the Scotsdale site, the ample parking and location not far out of Cambridge with easy access to major route ways to the county and the nearby Trumpington Park & Ride are of particular importance.
14. In addition, 42 letters of support have been received. Most compliment the support and assistance provided to patients and their carers, family and friends at the Centre rather than necessarily suggesting that this site is appropriate although the following points have been made with respect to the suitability of the Scotsdale site:

- (a) The tranquil setting, atmosphere and surroundings;
- (b) Ample parking;
- (c) Its convenient location being not far out of Cambridge and close to the Trumpington Park & Ride Site;
- (d) The opportunity to have a permanent, purpose-built building;
- (e) The Centre has been searching, without success to date, for alternative accommodation for three years;
- (f) The building would be built on what is a rather 'brown' fragment of the Green Belt and would not infringe the integrity of the Green Belt, and the true purpose of the Green Belt is to promote and enhance the well-being of the local community which is precisely what the new building would achieve; and
- (g) The design of the building is pleasing.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

15. The key issues in relation to this application are: whether the applicant has advanced any very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the countryside and Green Belt; the impact of the development on the openness and rural character of the Green Belt and countryside; and parking provision.
16. The Cambridge Cancer Help Centre currently operates out of a church hall at 1A Stockwell Street, Cambridge but needs to find alternative accommodation as the landlord, the Mill Road Baptist Church, proposes to redevelop the site, but also because the existing church hall is no longer adequate in its size and layout to accommodate the number of complementary therapy sessions it now seeks to provide. Information submitted as part of the application shows that since October 2003 they have been looking, without success to date, for alternative accommodation. It states that numerous properties have been considered including the 21 properties described in the list submitted as part of the application.
17. Officers recognise the invaluable support and assistance provided to those with cancer and their carers, family and friends provided at the Cambridge Cancer Help Centre. However, as approximately half of the proposed building is outside the village framework and within the countryside and Green Belt, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The circumstances advanced to justify such development is that since October 2003 the centre have been looking, without success to date, for alternative accommodation. Given the importance of protecting the Green Belt and as the proposed use does not require a countryside location, I do not consider that this amounts to the very special circumstances required to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As well as therefore being, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt by virtue of constituting inappropriate development, by virtue of its siting, size and height, the proposed building and the loss of trees alongside the car park would also detract from the openness and rural character of the Green Belt. The development would also encroach into the open space at the front of Scotsdale which the Village Design Statement identifies as an important viewpoint into the rural setting beyond which gives a valued green aspect to the road.
18. The use of Scotsdale's car park by visitors to the centre, and thereby not requiring any additional parking with the consequent impact on the character of the area, is considered to be acceptable.
19. The houses most directly affected by the development, Nos. 132 and 136 Cambridge Road, are owned by the applicant. At its closest, the proposed building would be

some 18.5 metres from the rear of the dwelling at no. 132. The development is not considered to seriously harm the amenity of any neighbours.

20. With regard to the Parish Council's comments about parking for conferences, the applicant has confirmed by letter that the 'conference area' shown on the plans would be a social/meeting place and not a conference area.
21. If a scheme wholly within the framework and which therefore would not encroach into the open space at the front of Scotsdale and which could be shown not to seriously harm any neighbours was proposed, I would happily support it. This is likely to involve a resited, smaller and particularly lower building than proposed. However, as the proposal involves new build and the loss of trees within the Green Belt and encroachment into the open space at the front of Scotsdale, this application is recommended for refusal.

Recommendation

22. Refusal (as amended by letter dated 8th November 2006 which clarifies that the 'conference area' shown on the plans would be a social/meeting place and not a conference area)
 1. The Local Planning Authority recognises the invaluable support and assistance provided to those with cancer and their carers, family and friends provided at the Cambridge Cancer Help Centre. However, as approximately half of the proposed building is outside the village framework and within the countryside and Green Belt, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposed use does not require a countryside location and no very special circumstances have been demonstrated to justify such development in the Green Belt. As well as therefore being, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt by virtue of constituting inappropriate development, by virtue of its siting, size and height, the proposed building and the loss of trees alongside the car park would also detract from the openness and rural character of the Green Belt and countryside.
 2. The proposal is therefore contrary to: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Policy P9/2a which states that within the Green Belt, new development, including change of use, will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, or other uses appropriate to a rural area; South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy GB2 which states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Policy P1/2 which states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location; and the Great Shelford Village Design Statement 2004 which identifies the open space at the front of Scotsdale as an important viewpoint into the rural setting beyond which gives a valued green aspect to the road.

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
- Great Shelford Village Design Statement 2004
- Planning file refs: S/1839/06/F and S/1529/05/F

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