

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

7th February 2007

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

S/6379/06/F - CAMBOURNE

82 Bedroom Care Home, Coffee Shop, 3 Retail Units and Associated Parking and Access at Corner or Monkfield Lane and High Street, Great Cambourne - for Danescroft (Healthcare) Ltd & McA Developments Ltd
Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 23rd March 2007

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because objections have been received from the Parish Council and local residents.

Site and Proposal

1. This 0.44ha site lies on the corner of the High Street with Monkfield Lane, opposite the pub to the east, and Morrisons across the road. To the west is the veterinary surgery and day nursery beyond. To the rear (south) is established residential development. The site is flat and has no distinguishing features.
2. The application, received on 22nd November 2006 and amended on 22nd December and 8th and 9th January, proposes an 82-bed care home on three floors. 10 of the bedrooms would be for staff and visitors. Part of the ground floor would be commercial: 3 retail units and one coffee shop, in order to maintain an active frontage to the High Street. Vehicular access would be gained from Monkfield Lane, leading to a car park and service provision at the rear of the building.
3. A Design and Access Statement has been submitted explaining the rationale behind the design of the building in the context of the larger buildings known as W1 and W2 in the vicinity, completing the Market Square and providing a prominent visual stop at the end of Broad Street, as required by the Cambourne Design Guide. As with the adjacent vets, the care home is proposed to have entrances at both front and rear, it being acknowledged that visitors and residents will arrive by car/ambulance.

Planning History

4. Outline planning permission granted for Cambourne in 1994, did not include Care Home in the description, hence this full application.

Planning Policy

5. South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:
Cambourne 1 – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan
Cambourne 2 – Development in accordance with Cambourne Design Guide
SE7 – Development in accordance with Cambourne Masterplan and Design Guide
SH4 – Retailing in Cambourne – Development to Include Provision of Shopping centre

Consultation

6. **Cambourne Parish Council:** Original plans: recommends refusal on the grounds of
 1. Contractors / sub-contractors non-compliance with working practices in Cambourne;
 2. Inappropriate location for such a facility, particularly as it is opposite a potentially noisy pub;
 3. Insufficient garden space for residents / visitors;
 4. Lack of adequate landscaping scheme, inadequate screening of adjoining properties;
 5. Insufficient parking;
 6. No bin storage provision;
 7. Non-compliance with biodiversity policy – no bat or bird boxes;
 8. Concern about the access in close proximity to a bend and the public house access;
 9. Concern over the concentration of accommodation for the elderly in one area of Cambourne.

Amended Plans – comments to reported verbally.

7. **Police Architectural Liaison Officer:** Original Plans: While the ability to overlook the car park from the reception office, together with its regular use throughout the day, will reduce the crime threat, there are likely to be much reduced levels of natural surveillance during the evenings and nights. It might be difficult to achieve appropriate access control at the main car park entrance other than during the late night / early morning periods. The car park should be provided with lighting by means of column mounted white downlighters, which should also be compatible with any other proposed security measures such as CCTV. In terms of the safety of ground floor residents, room 10 has doors leading out onto a planted area forming a buffer between the building and the car park, this should be provided with a suitable barrier to make clear that space immediately outside a bedroom window is semi-private realm, and the planting should be extended to include the area outside bedroom 8 as well. Bedrooms 1-7 have windows adjacent to the pavement with no area of defensible space, and this should be provided, preferably with a physical barrier. Over time the building will be in the centre of a town with late night attractions. It might be appropriate to remove recesses associated with the shops from the building frontage which might attract unsavoury behaviour. Internally, the security of the residential accommodation should not be compromised by the internal access to the retail units, there should be adequate internal access control.
8. **Highway Authority:** Original Plans: The footway crossing should be constructed as a heavy duty crossing. The neighbouring fence obstructs a 2.4 x 45m visibility splay to the right.
9. **Amended plans:** It is possible for drivers exiting the proposed site to see 45m to the right from a point 2.4m back from the give way line, although the view is through railings. The angle of sight and the slender rails allow an acceptably safe view, so I will accept the access in its proposed position, as the visibility is reasonable, I therefore withdraw my objection.
10. **Environment Agency:** No comment, standing advice only.

11. **SCDC Conservation Manager:** Original plans this development is in a sensitive site in the centre of Cambourne, where it needs to perform some significant streetscape functions. These include:
- a) Providing a degree of enclosure to the street of a similar scale to the shops opposite, and enclosure to the square outside Morrisons.
 - b) Providing a visual terminus to the vista down 'Broad Street' (where the master plan identified a 'Guild Hall' building).
 - b) Form a positive corner opposite the public house, where the High Street adjoins Monkfield Lane.

The design involves a substantial 3-storey structure which incorporates significant architectural features at key points, to provide articulation of the elevation and fulfill the townscape functions identified above. It is perhaps unfortunate that this results in the building 'looming' over the veterinary surgery, but this maybe a reflection that the veterinary surgery is too small a scale for a town centre site. Certainly the care home should not be reduced in scale, for to do so would weaken its ability to fulfill the streetscape roles outlined above. The only modification I would suggest to the design is relatively modest, but would, I believe, provide two significant benefits. The modification is to the height of the main roof elements. These roofs have roofs at approx 35 degree pitches, with a flat roof element on top (due to the depth of the building). The change I would like to see would be to reduce the height of these roofs down to the level of the ridge on the element at the extreme west end of the site (adjacent to the veterinary surgery - see marked up elevations). This would produce a simpler, and more elegant roofline in the view down Broad Street and would also lower the ridge lines in relation to the 'rotunda' roof - which needs to be a dominant element in order to fulfill its role in forming the corner. More emphasis might be given to the rotunda roof if a lead covered ball and spike was to be added to its apex. Note, I would not wish to see the pitch of the main roofs lowered, since this would have a detrimental impact on the street enclosure.

Amended plans: revised elevations have incorporated the changes I requested and greatly improve the overall composition. I am happy to support this revised proposal.

12. **SCDC Trees and Landscapes Officer:** Original Plans - More detail of planting and surface treatments needed. Access through planting to (fire?) doors in bedroom 10 needed. Planting needed along the wall separating the residents' garden from the car park.
13. **SCDC Chief Environmental Health Officer:** Requires condition limiting hours of construction working to prevent noise nuisance to nearby occupiers.
14. **SCDC Environment Operations Manager:** Original plans: bin storage details requested.

Representations

15. a. We are worried that the care home will be taller than our house and therefore be very intrusive, especially when out in our garden or in our back bedroom. It seems a strange place to put a care home right on the main road as in the summer we cannot have a our back window open during the night because of the amount of noise created by cars and people staying out late. Surely it should be situated in a quieter residential area. Cambourne is getting increasingly

crammed and the thought of having a large building at the bottom of our garden is not very appealing.

- b. I am greatly saddened to see that yet again the developers are changing their minds from what was originally proposed for the site. May I therefore voice my objections to yet another care home / sheltered accommodation being placed on the High Street. The location next to the Monkfield Arms is not ideal as both noise and high spirits will no doubt in the future cause problems. May I also ask why, when we have been promised a High Street full of shops, that we are now seemingly getting a High Street of housing for the elderly – we have 2 large building next to the Hub and the library. While I appreciate that being situated in the heart of the village and next to all the facilities would be very convenient for the residents, surely the land should be used to build shops and amenities that we can all use, as we were promised. There are plenty of areas in and around Great Cambourne that would be better suited to such a building.

16. **Applicants' response to consultations:** Security is obviously of concern so the final design will include both passive and active security measures. We are happy to consider the PALO's recommendations about entry control and lighting, but would ask that these be dealt with by condition. In terms of the rear bedrooms 8-12, we will ensure that the external works design creates a semi-private realm as recommended. Regarding the front bedrooms 1-7 a 1m wide margin across the building frontage will remain in the developers' ownership and will be used to create a defensible space through a combination of surface materials, planting and/or railings. The recessed retail frontages will not be removed as they are an integral part of the design theme carried across from the existing commercial buildings nearby to maintain the established urban design pattern, and in any case the combination of isolated columns, shopfront lighting and overhead lighting within the arcaded frontage would minimise risk. The internal security will be addressed as part of the detailed design and specification process in due course and the coffee shop will remain in the ownership and control of the care home operator. We note the highway authority comments and will comply with the requirements.
17. The busiest time will be between 10am and 4.30pm when up to 39 staff would be expected to be on duty, of which 10 would be senior management and nursing staff, with the remainder consisting of carers, kitchen, domestic and other support staff. We have amended our drawings to show bin storage proposals for the care home and retail units in more detail, together with refuse vehicle turning. I am happy to incorporate the elevational changes and the drawings are revised accordingly.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

18. **Principle** - The principle of a care home in this location is acceptable. The site is described in the Cambourne Design Guide as an "Exchange Building" and the "Library", providing a strong visual focus at the end of Broad Street. The Design Guide relates only to design issues and does not dictate the use of such buildings. The use is acceptable and appropriate for this location. Comments about the oversupply of sheltered and nursing accommodation for the elderly are noted, but the supply is driven by demand. It is just unfortunate that these uses are arriving in the settlement centre ahead of the majority of shops. In time, the centre will perform its intended function, as a street of shops, facilities and services and this proposal will not conflict with that. Indeed it will bring forward 3 shops and a coffee shop that will contribute to the active frontage of this end of the High Street.

19. **Design** - The design follows the requirements of the design guide which requires “*an architectural composition of street front mixed retail and small commercial, back of pavement edge, 2 to 2½ storey facades, incorporating the Exchange, a formal classical 3 storey façade. The library is a single storey building with a 2 storey façade marking the road turning on the corner of the High Street. It is one of a sequence of public buildings.*” The building successfully provides a stronger element on the actual Exchange site, so that this is the most prominent “building” within the parts that make up the overall building. The entrance is also made prominent but less so. These two articulated parts of the building help to visually break up the length of the façade. The corner of the High Street and Monkfield Lane is marked by a rotunda, which forms a hinge to the two wings of the building. The design has been amended to provide more articulation between elements. The heights are greater than anticipated in the design guide but are required to match the existing W1 (Caxton House), W2 building, and Morrisons in order to provide as strong enclosure to the market square as possible.
20. **Amenity** - The site lies to the north of neighbouring residential properties, so will not cause overshadowing. The building would be 25m from the rear boundary of the site, and the back-to-back distance with the nearest dwellings’ windows would be 35m. This is sufficient to avoid undue overlooking. The issue of noise impact on occupiers has been raised, but the care home operator apparently prefers a relatively lively location where residents can watch activity in the street. Obviously, Building Regulations would ensure sufficient insulation against sound at night. The size of the garden has also been raised as a concern by the Parish Council, but as this is a care home, rather than sheltered flats as elsewhere in Cambourne, the residents are very frail, many with long-term medical conditions, and would merely sit in the garden for short periods of time.
21. **Access and Parking** - The access is the most appropriate in terms of location, and early concerns of the highway authority have been allayed. Nevertheless the highway authority will carry out appropriate speed surveys when the road is put forward for adoption by the developers Consortium, and if found necessary, the railings in front of the adjacent building, which is owned by a member of the Consortium because it is affordable housing, can be re-aligned. 24 parking spaces are provided on site, along with cycle parking for staff. The Council’s standard for care homes is one space per residential (sleepover) staff and one per 3 bedspaces. 72 of the rooms are for residents, requiring 24 spaces as provided. The other 10 bedrooms are used on a casual basis for residents’ overnight guests and late or early working staff. The operator has confirmed that on average 5 of these bedrooms would be occupied each night. It is considered that as there are fewer staff in the building at night, the parking need of the non-resident bedrooms would be at a time of lower car park occupancy. The shops and coffee shop also attract a parking requirement, which would be 34 spaces, although it can be assumed that customers would park in the settlement centre public car parks (rear of the vets, rear of Morrisons). The applicant is willing to accept a condition requiring a Travel for Work plan and has already indicated that a minibus will be employed to transport shift staff to and from nearby villages. This will address the reality of 39 staff being on site at the busiest times, and will also be required to include staff of the retail and coffee shops units.
22. **Refuse Collection** - The plans have been amended to show bin storage areas more appropriately located adjacent to the kitchen and in the service yard associated with the retail and coffee shop units. This clarifies that bins will not be stored near to neighbouring residential properties.

23. **Landscaping and External Works** - A more detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted with the amended plans, setting out the principle of landscaping which go some way to addressing the concerns raised by consultees. A condition can be added to require a fully detailed scheme, and conditions are also required for the submission of hard surfacing details, ecological enhancements and lighting.
24. **Sustainability** - This issue has not been addressed in the application, but a care home will have a high demand for energy, especially for heating, hot water and laundering. It is recommended that a condition be added to agree a scheme of energy and water conservation and the use of renewable energy.

Recommendation

25. Approve, as amended by plans stamped 22nd December 2006 and 8th and 9th January 2007, subject to conditions relating to the following issues:
 - (i) Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 - (ii) Details of materials for external walls and roofs;
 - (iii) Landscaping scheme;
 - (iv) Implementation of landscaping;
 - (v) Details of boundary treatment and any access barrier;
 - (vi) Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas and the frontage pavement;
 - (vii) External lighting scheme;
 - (viii) Ecological enhancement scheme;
 - (ix) Scheme for renewable energy, and energy and water conservation;
 - (x) Restriction of hours of construction;
 - (xi) Travel for Work Plan

Informatics

This permission does not relate to shopfronts, details of which were not included in the application. These will need separate applications for planning permission, and advertisement consent, in due course.

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)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:** Cambourne 1, Cambourne 2, SE7, SH4.
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:

- Residential amenity including noise and disturbance, security, overlooking and landscaping;
- Biodiversity
- Highway safety and parking;
- Design and visual impact on the locality

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/6379/06/F

Contact Officer: Kate Wood – Principal Planning Officer, Major Developments
Telephone: (01954) 713264