

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

7th July 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/0593/04/F – Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth
Residential development following demolition of existing and alterations to access
road, 131 The Causeway and land adjoining for Mrs C Parker**

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Site and Proposal

1. This application, registered on 22nd March 2004, seeks outline consent for the redevelopment of an existing 0.33ha (0.81acre) area of land to the north of The Causeway, Kneesworth. The site currently comprises No131 The Causeway, an Edwardian house facing the main road, and its residential curtilage. It has its own access direct from The Causeway. In the rear part of the site, behind the garden of No131, is a vacant brick built commercial building with a corrugated roof. Along the west side of the site is a roadway from The Causeway that serves the vacant commercial building and another single storey industrial building to the rear of the application site. The site contains several trees including a large Copper Beech in front of the house and a line of planting within the garden of No131 to the east of the roadway.
2. To the west of the site is a semi-detached house fronting The Causeway to the rear of which are houses in Tower Close. To the east of the site is a chalet bungalow facing The Causeway with a rear garden that extends the length of the application site.
3. All matters are reserved apart from the means of access. A drawing accompanying the application proposes the upgrading of the existing roadway to a width of 5.5m with 1.8m wide footpaths either side and 10.5m kerb radii.
4. The application is accompanied by a report on the marketing carried out in respect of the existing commercial building within the site.

Planning History

5. In October 2003 a similar planning application was withdrawn prior to determination.
6. A 1991 consent for the erection of additional dwellings in Tower Close, immediately west of the site, included a condition requiring a scheme of insulation works to the commercial building to the rear of the current site to be submitted and agreed prior to any of the dwellings approved at that time being occupied.

Planning Policy

7. The site is located within the village framework for Kneesworth for purposes of the Local Plan and should be considered against those policies rather than the ones that relate to Bassingbourn itself.

8. **Policy SE5** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (“The Local Plan”) identifies Kneesworth as an infill only village. Within such settlements residential development will normally be restricted to not more than two dwellings. Examples of such development cited in the policy are a gap in an otherwise built up frontage to an existing road, provided that it is not sufficiently large to accommodate more than two dwellings on similar curtilages to those adjoining; the redevelopment or sub-division of an existing residential curtilage; or subject to the provisions of Policy EM8, the conversion or redevelopment of a non-residential building where this would not result in a loss of local employment. All development is subject to the caveat that the site in its present form does not form an essential part of village character, and development is sympathetic to the historic interests, character, and amenities of the locality.
9. Policy SE5 also states that in very exceptional cases a slightly larger development may be permitted if this would lead to the sustainable recycling of a brownfield site bringing positive overall benefit to the village.
10. **Policy Bassingbourn 3** of the Local Plan 2004 confirms that development in Kneesworth will be restricted to infilling within the framework of the settlement, “In view of the very limited facilities available in Kneesworth and the problems of access onto the A1198 (“ (Para 9.26).
11. **Policy HG7** of the Local Plan 2004 states that the Council will negotiate with applicants to secure affordable housing before it determines any application in villages with a population of 3000 or fewer where there is a clear need for affordable housing in the particular local area. In such settlements affordable housing may represent up to 50% of the total number of dwellings for which planning permission may be given, dependant on the level of clearly identified local need, although higher or lower percentages may be agreed in the light of factors such as proximity to local services; access to public transport; the particular costs associated with the development; and whether or not the provision of affordable housing would prejudice other planning objectives warranting greater priority in the particular case.
12. **Policy EM8** of the Local Plan 2004 seeks to resist the conversion or redevelopment of employment sites in villages to non-employment uses unless they are causing a nuisance by virtue of noise, smell or traffic generation or where it is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand.
13. The accompanying text states that applications for change of use of premises in or last occupied for employment use will need to be accompanied by documentary evidence that a site is not suitable or capable of being made suitable for continued employment use, including evidence that the property has been adequately marketed for a period of not less than 12 months on terms that reflect the lawful use and condition of the building.

Consultation

14. **Bassingbourn Parish Council** recommends refusal stating that the plan is too vague for judgement.
15. The **Local Highway Authority** comments that it would be helpful to know the type of commercial use of the building to the rear and the present daily traffic flows to the site. There is concern that in order to retain access to the commercial use at the rear it has been considered essential to construct a straight section of carriageway from

The Causeway to the commercial site, which will not restrain vehicle speed and could become a road dominated layout.

16. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests conditions restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the demolition and construction process, and requiring a contamination report. Comments are made in respect of the use of driven pile foundations and burning of waste on site.
17. The **Environment Agency** requests conditions in respect of ground contamination investigation, assessment and remediation, and pollution control (including foul and surface water drainage). In addition the Agency offers safeguarding comments.
18. The **Trees and Landscapes Officer** states that there are several good trees on site, particularly a Cedar and Copper Beech, plus tree belt to the boundaries. Any application should retain these trees and afford them sufficient space.
19. The **Chief Financial Planning Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council** is concerned that the capacity of the secondary school is fully committed to meet the needs arising from existing houses therefore a contribution of £10,000 is requested to cover the cost of an additional place.
20. The comments of the **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** will be reported verbally.

Representations

21. A letter has been received from the occupiers of 166 The Causeway, opposite the site. The letter expresses concern that an increase in properties will also mean an increase in car activity and noise levels. No166 is directly opposite the proposed access road which would give rise to problems when entering and leaving where visibility is already obscured by vehicles parked in the layby. Cars are prone to speed excessively and overtake unnecessarily along this stretch of road and another access will aggravate an already dangerous situation. The house will be devalued as a result.
22. At the present time the access road is only used for the industrial units behind the site during working hours. If it became a residential access at nighttime there would be the glare of headlights using the road which would look straight into the living and bedroom windows of No166. Is there another option for the access road?

Planning Comments – Key Issues

23. The key issues to be considered with this application are whether the development accords with the infill only policy; the loss of an existing employment use; the provision of affordable housing; and the affect of the proposal on residential amenity, the character of the area and highway safety.
24. The application is submitted in outline and at the present time does not include any indication of the number of dwellings proposed. Although the Parish Council suggests that the application is too vague to comment on it must be judged in principle as submitted.
25. Although Kneesworth is identified as an infill only village the policy does allow for a slightly larger development where it would lead to the sustainable recycling of a brownfield site bringing positive overall benefit to the village. This is a brownfield site.

26. The existing commercial building in the rear part of the site has been marketed in accordance with the requirements of Policy EM8 of the Local Plan and I accept the view put forward with the application that given the poor state of the building and its location that a user is unlikely to be found.
27. The number of any units on the site will be restricted by its shape, the relationship to adjoining properties and existing trees within the site. Any development should provide for the principle of affordable housing in accordance with Policy HG7. Such provision can be secured in a Section 106 Agreement
28. The existing Edwardian house at the front of the site is attractive but the Conservation Manager expressed the view at the time of the earlier application that it would not fulfil the necessary criteria to enable it to be listed as an example of that period of architecture. I am of the view that whilst the retention of this building is desirable the retention of the site in its present form could not be considered to form an essential part of village character and some redevelopment could take place.
29. Careful layout of any dwellings within the site will be required to protect the amenity of adjacent residents. This would be a consideration at the Reserved Matter application stage.
30. I share the concerns of the Local Highway Authority in respect of the form of access proposed. The widening of the access as currently will result in the loss of existing planting on the western side of the site, which will have an adverse effect of the character of the area. Although this matter is included in the application as a matter for consideration at this stage I would wish to exclude it in so far as it relates to the roadway within the site.
31. I am of the view that the use of the existing access to serve a residential development will not cause sufficient harm to the occupiers of No166 The Causeway to warrant a refusal of the application.
32. The requirement of Cambridgeshire County Council for a contribution towards education provision can be included in a Section 106 Agreement.
33. The protection of existing trees, requirements of the Environment Agency, and the Chief Environmental Health Officer can be dealt with by condition.
34. In my view this site is suitable for limited redevelopment as a brownfield site within the village framework in line with Policy SE5 of the Local Plan

Recommendations

35. That the applicant is invited to enter into a Section 106 agreement securing the provision of affordable housing and an education contribution. Subject to the prior signing of this agreement that delegated powers be granted to issue outline consent subject to safeguarding conditions.

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The approved development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2003 – Policy SE5
HG7 and EN8

2. The proposal conditionally approved is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:

Residential amenity
Highway safety

3. All other material planning considerations have been taken into account. None is of such significance as to outweigh the reason for the decision to approve the planning application.

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

Application file S/0593/84/O

Application S/1488/03/O

Structure Plan 2003 and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

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