

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

7th July 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0470/04/F – Bourn

Removal of Agricultural Occupancy Condition (Condition 1 of Planning Permission S/0017/86/F), Beck Farm, Toft Road, for Mr C White.

Recommendation: Approval

Introduction

1. The application relates to a chalet bungalow located at Beck Farm to the south of the B1046 at Bourn. The application is seeking to remove the agricultural occupancy restriction upon the dwelling.
2. Members considered the application at the meeting of the Development and Conservation Committee of 2nd June 2004. Members resolved to defer the application to enable further comments to be obtained from the Senior Farms Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council about the extent and effectiveness of the marketing of the dwelling whilst subject to the agricultural occupancy condition. A copy my report to Members is attached as Appendix 1.

Subsequent Developments

3. Further advice has been obtained from the Senior Farms Manager. He remains of the opinion that the marketing of the property was carried out sufficiently widely and for a sufficient period to enable a thorough exposure to the market to be achieved. He considers that the property was fairly valued at £450,000 which included a reasonable discount (25%) to reflect the agricultural restriction. He notes that for eight months invitations were to be made for “offers from compliant purchasers” without any guide price, to attract the interest of the farming community. He concludes that the chances of finding a willing and compliant purchaser at this stage is “most remote”. A copy of his letter is attached as Appendix 2.
4. The agent acting for the applicant has supplied further information. He has provided two examples of very recent appeal decisions, both from the south of England, where the agricultural restriction was lifted despite the concerns of the Local Planning Authority about marketing. In one case the property was marketed at £950,000 including a 37% discount for the occupancy condition, for a period of 7 months without success. In the other case, the property was marketed for a period of 23 months at £550,000 with a 30% discount, again without success. In both cases, in allowing the appeals, the Inspector found that the length of marketing and guide price were reasonable.

Planning Comments

5. Members will note that the property has been marketed nationally in the *Farmers Weekly* over 10 months, and in the *Cambridge Evening News Property Section* over 3 months.

A survey of agricultural need was circulated to 102 farmers in the area to gauge local agricultural need. 25 responses were received but from these only 5 said that they were looking for an agricultural dwelling and no offers for Beck Farm were received. In addition, the property is currently advertised on the agents' website and has so been since September 2002.

6. My recommendation of approval remains before Members given the substance of advice received since your earlier consideration of the proposal.

Recommendations

7. Approval (no conditions).

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The approved development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: Policy P1/2 – (Environmental Restrictions on Development)**
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: Policy HG17 (Relaxation of agricultural occupancy condition)**
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:
 - size of the house and holding and the potential for full-time farming income to be derived from it;
 - the marketing of the property and the valuation placed upon it, and the offers to purchase received.
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: PPG7 The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development (1997); Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003; South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004; application forms, documents, plans and correspondence on file.

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