

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

7th July 2004

AUTHOR: Director of Development Services

S/0560/04/F – Gamlingay Extensions To Dutch Barn, Brook Farm, Little Heath For R Woodcraft.

Recommendation: Delegated Powers of Approval

Site and Proposal

1. The site lies to the south west of the village and outside the defined settlement framework for Gamlingay. It is an area of approximately 1.5ha and forms part of an enterprise that is split over 11 locations, all except this site being outside South Cambridgeshire District, and covers some 151.67ha in total. The 1.5ha at Brook Farm is the only land owned and approximately one third of the land is held on seasonal licences.
2. An agricultural bungalow, The Conifers, lies at the front of the site. Other buildings include a block built machinery workshop and store with an open fronted lean-to for the storage of fertilizer and machinery, a timber store, formerly a chicken shed which is used for general storage and a modern Dutch Barn that is positioned approximately centrally within the site.
3. The site is essentially open but field boundaries are marked with trees and hedgerows.
4. The full planning application, received on 18th March 2004, proposes lean-to extensions to either side of the Dutch Barn which will extend the existing footprint of approximately 450m² to approximately 1050m².
5. The extended barn would be used to store straw and hay, as is the existing.

Planning History

6. SC/64/386 – Erection of bungalow and garage – Approved with conditions (including restriction to agricultural occupancy only)
7. S/1502/83/F – Private garage – Approved with conditions 14th October 1983
8. S/2261/00/F – Extension to bungalow – Approved with conditions 26th January 2001.
9. In June 2003 no objections were raised to details of siting and appearance of a Dutch Barn of approximately 432m² under reference S/0307/03/PNA.

The barn constituted permitted development

Planning Policy

10. **Policy P1/2 (Environmental Restrictions on Development)** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 states (in part): "Development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location".
11. **Policy EN5 (The landscaping of new development)** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 requires hedges and other natural features to be retained wherever possible and for landscape schemes to be required where appropriate to the character of the development.
12. **Policy CS2 (Water resources)** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states (in part) that permission will not be granted where there are inadequate land drainage systems to meet the anticipated demands of the development unless there is an agreed arrangement between the developer and the relevant service provider for the provision of the necessary infrastructure.

Consultation

13. **Gamlingay Parish Council** recommends refusal. It states:
"Object due to concerns of:
 - (i) Highways – The use of the unadopted road for amount of traffic. Condition of access poor.
 - (ii) Visual Impact - Concern expressed at already a large scale barn on small parcel of land which can be viewed from hill.
 - (iii) Use increased for agricultural storage – size/concern over increased fire risk of hay/straw storage".
14. **Senior Farms Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council** states:
15. "...Approximately one third (53.48 hectares) of the 151.67 hectares are held on seasonal licences: despite the fact that the Applicant has held them (apart from Millow Hall Farm) for a number of years they are, in my opinion, insecure. However, he assured me if any such licences were lost, then he would acquire replacement land. The remainder of the land, apart from that owned (1.51 hectares) at Brook Farm, has no medium to long term security in my opinion.
16. Apart from some 31 hectares of cereals and 7.2 hectares of grass ley (grass which has been sown), the remainder of the land is in permanent grass (often known as 'meadow' grass. There are no livestock on the holding.
17. The Applicant works full-time: his son...has recently joined him. The Applicant's wife...assists in a part-time capacity on administration and secretarial work. In addition, a driver is employed for delivering hay and straw over the winter months. The Applicant and his family live at Brook Farm (in a bungalow recently extended) and the part-time driver lives in Potton.
18. The buildings are all situated at Brook Farm on the Applicant's own land and the base of the Applicant's activities. Apart from the building erected in 2003, other buildings comprise a timber frame and block wall construction machinery workshop and store

with an open-fronted lean-to for the storage of fertilisers and machinery, and a former poultry shed which is used for domestic storage – neither can be regarded as suitable for hay and straw storage.

19. The Applicant's business is predominantly one that either grows, buys or sells hay and straw. The general pattern is that hay is baled, stored and sold before the end of February the following year and the straw is normally baled, stored and sold up to harvest in the following year though currently all straw baled in 2003 has been sold. As the new building empties so machinery from outside in the adjoining yard is then placed under cover.
20. Besides growing hay and straw, the Applicant also:
 1. Buys in straw on the swath (that is straw which has not been baled and is lying on the cereal stubble) and bales that: this may be stored in outside stacks on the farm of origin and does not affect building storage requirements.
 2. Buys in at the annual hay and straw sales organised by local Agents/Surveyors in January-April each year, baled hay and straw – known as traded hay and straw. The hay and straw would normally continue to be held on the farm of origin and delivered to a new purchaser straight from that farm: hence does not affect storage requirements.
21. On occasions hay and straw may be taken from farms on 1 and 2 to Brook Farm for under cover storage (if there is spare capacity) but the main purpose of the building and the proposed lean-to's is and would be to serve the managed land.
22. These elements (1-2 above) of the Applicant's business do not, in my opinion, fall with the definition of 'agriculture'...
23. In my opinion the proposed lean-to's are not absolutely 'essential' for the part of the business that falls within the definition of 'agriculture'. They are, though, a logical progression in an expanding business...The 'agricultural' side of the business, based on owned or managed land..., and anticipated yields for 2004, would more than fill the barn and the proposed lean-to's with hay and straw. Hay and straw does not have to be stored under cover and both can and are stored in the open in stacks or sold off the farm at harvest. Such stacks, if away from frequent observation, are potentially more prone to arson attacks...more certain though is the wastage from rain etc to side and bottom bales (20-30% wastage not uncommon). Both would impact to a greater or lesser extent on the profitability of a business.
24. The proposed lean-to's would be extensions to the barn: such a barn, from a design point of view, is easily capable of taking the extensions.
25. The managed land is dispersed...I would estimate 8-10km from Gamlingay (Brook Farm) to the furthest block. The seasonal licence tenancies are in my opinion insecure, the other tenancies are insecure in the medium to longer term. However, it is not unusual for a business such as this to hold land on such arrangements. Furthermore, it would be unwise, in my opinion, to seek to invest money in a building on land with a medium or medium to long term insecurity of tenure. The barn is located on the only owned land where the Applicant and his family live, and is the base for their business."
26. **The Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board states:**

27. "It is not clear from the above application which method of storm water disposal is to be employed.
28. However if the method of storm water disposal is to be by way of soakaways then it is essential that the ground conditions be investigated and if found satisfactory the soakaways constructed in accordance with the latest Building Research Establishment Digest".
29. **The Local Highways Authority**
30. Following discussion with the Local Planning Authority (where the concerns of the Parish Council were made clear) the Highways Authority wished the applicant to provide projected traffic movements resulting from the extended building. The applicant has now stated that there will be no increase in vehicle movements and a possible decrease due to a reduction in vehicle movements to remove waste from damage due to current outside storage. The Local Highways Authority comments to this response are awaited.

Representations

31. No representations have been received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

32. The key issues are the impact of the development on the surrounding countryside, the justification for a building of this size and the likely impact on highway safety.
33. ***Visual impact***
The extensions to the buildings are large and the resultant building will be in excess of 1000m². However the extensions are relatively low (6.5m at the highest points) and extensions of this type (where the lean-to slopes out of the eaves line of the building) are common in the rural landscape. I note the comments of the County Farms Manager in this regard.
34. I am concerned that the layout plan is inaccurate as it shows the northern lean-to extending right up to the northern boundary. Looking at a recent aerial photograph it would appear that there is approximately 16-20m between the northern edge of the existing barn and the northern site boundary which would allow 4-8m between the northern extension and the northern site boundary. I would not want to see the hedge on this boundary compromised and I would also like to see some additional planting to help assimilate the resultant building into its surroundings. I have requested an amended layout plan to achieve necessary landscaping. Members will be updated at the meeting.
35. ***Justification***
The building will have an impact and requires justification. Policy P1/2 of the Structure Plan states that proposals need to be essential in a particular rural location. It would appear from the comments of the Senior Farms Officer that some of the enterprise is not 'agricultural' by definition but it is clear that the use as a whole is a rural one and that the business would suffer without the extensions, that there are no other buildings available and that it would be financially unwise for the applicant to consider erecting a building on land that is not within his ownership i.e. on any of the occupied land elsewhere. It is therefore, in my opinion, reasonable to consider this proposal essential to meet the needs of this business to protect the hay and straw from arson

and/or rain damage. The Senior Farms Officer has also confirmed that the capacity of the building is appropriate to the scale of the operation.

36. **Highway Safety**

The comments of the Local Highways Authority are awaited. The applicant has stated that the proposed extensions will not result in an increase in traffic movements. There are no restrictions to the amount of outside storage of hay and straw and I am not convinced that providing indoor storage will lead to an increase in vehicle movements.

37. **Fire risk**

The Parish Council has raised the issue of a fire risk. In my opinion this is no greater than the fire risk from outside storage and there are no properties in close proximity that would be adversely affected.

Recommendation

38. Subject to the receipt of an amended layout plan showing sufficient space for landscaping to the northern boundary and the comments of the Local Highways Authority delegated powers of approval are sought subject to the following conditions:

1. **The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.**
(Reason – To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development which would not have been acted upon.)
2. **The external materials of construction for the building works hereby permitted shall be identical to those used for the existing building unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.**
(Reason – To ensure that the appearance of the development blends in with the existing building and in accordance with the requirements of Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003)
3. **No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measure for their protection in the course of development.)**
(Reason - To enhance the quality of the development and to assimilate it within the area in accordance with the requirements of Policy EN5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004)
4. **All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.**

(Reason – To enhance the quality of the development and to assimilate it within the area in accordance with the requirements of Policy EN5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004)

5. **No development shall take place until details of surface water drainage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

(Reason – To ensure satisfactory drainage of the site in accordance with the requirements of Policy CS2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004)

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: P1/2 (Environmental Restrictions on Development),**
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: EN5 (The Landscaping of New Development), CS2 (Water resources).**
2. The proposal conditionally approved is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material considerations, which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Visual impact
 - Justification
 - Highway Safety
 - General amenity
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:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Ref: S/0560/04/F

Contact Officer: Nigel Blazeby – Senior Planning Assistant
Telephone: (01954) 713256