

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

7th March 2007

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/2255/06/F - LONGSTANTON
Relocation of Unit 5 and Creation of Landscaped Courtyard
Unit 5, New Close Farm Business Park, Bar Road, Longstanton

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 17th January 2007

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because it represents a departure from Development Plan policies in regard to development in the countryside.

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application site is within a collection of converted agricultural outbuildings and new units that create the small business park on site. It is located approximately 880m north of the village of Bar Hill and 2260m south of Longstanton. It is accessed from Hatton's Road that runs between these two villages. The 106m long access also serves a dwelling situated to the south of the business units.
2. There are a small number of designated business units on site, in two visibly distinct sections. Units 7-9 are set to the north of the site and form a converted farm building. Units 1-4 and Unit 6 form a "C" shape of development, consisting of low single storey buildings, with a two-storey element at Unit 2. Unit 5 currently sits within the "C" shape not attached to any of the other buildings and is a single storey unit measuring 14.8m by 5.4m.
3. The full application received on 22nd December 2007 is for the removal of Unit 5 in its current location, and its relocation joining up with Unit 4. This serves to form a square arrangement of business units and creates an open courtyard to the centre, that can be accessed by foot without passing through any of the buildings. The proposed addition would measure 11.3m by 7 to 7.5m in area. Two additional car parking spaces are also indicated on the site.

Planning History

4. **S/0327/92/F** – This application granted a change of use for Unit 7 from a farm building to B1 and B8 use, dated 19th May 1992.
5. **S/0328/92/F** – The application granted permission for the erection of units 2-5 on the site for use in class B1 or B8, dated 19th May 1992.
6. Units 7 and 9 on site were granted a change of use to a veterinary surgery through application **S/0758/96/F**, dated 11th July 1996. An application was recently approved



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on unit 7 allowing alterations to the roof including the insertion of dormer windows and new windows at ground floor level (**S/0519/06/F**).

7. **S/1704/06/F** – This application dated 23rd October 2006 granted permission for the installation of windows and doors to the existing offices at unit 2 on the site.

Planning Policy

8. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ('the County Structure Plan') states that development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location. This policy is supported by **Policy DP/7** of the Local Development Framework, Submission Draft 2006.
9. **Policy P1/3** of the County Structure Plan requires a high standard of design and sustainability for all new development and which provides a sense of place which responds to the local character of the built environment. This policy is supported by policy DP/2 of the Local Development Framework, Submission Draft 2006.
10. **Policy P2/6** of the County Structure Plan states that sensitive small-scale employment development in rural areas will be facilitated where it contributes to one or more of the following objectives: supporting new and existing business and research and technology clusters (see Policy P2/4); enabling farm or rural diversification where appropriate to the local area, including appropriate rural tourism (see **Policies P4/1 and P4/2**); enabling the re-use of existing buildings; helping to maintain or renew the vitality of rural areas.
11. **Policy EN3** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ('the Local Plan') 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.
12. **Policy EM10** of the Local Plan focuses on the conversion of rural buildings and future extensions. It states that outside village frameworks planning permission will be granted for the change of use and conversion of rural buildings to employment use subject to a number of provisions including:
 - (a) The buildings do not require major reconstruction;
 - (b) The conversion will not prejudice village vitality;
 - (c) The appearance after conversion is in keeping with the surroundings;
 - (d) The conversion does not materially change the character of the building or impact upon the surrounding countryside;
 - (e) Safe access and satisfactory provision for parking and turning of vehicles can be achieved without detriment to the setting of the building or the surrounding landscape;
 - (f) Scale and frequency of traffic generated can be accommodated on the road system without undue effects.

Paragraph 5.49 states: "Because most rural buildings in South Cambridgeshire are small the potential scale of activity of converted buildings will usually be similarly modest. Any elements of increased floorspace contained within conversion proposals

will be strictly controlled and usually limited to that which may be necessary to achieve an enhanced design or integrate the scheme with its surroundings”.

13. **Policy CS5** of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for development where the site is liable to flooding, or where development is likely to: (1) increase the risk of flooding elsewhere by materially impeding the flow or storage of flood water; or (2) increase flood risk in areas downstream due to additional surface water runoff; or (3) increase the number of people or properties at risk, unless it is demonstrated that the above effects can be overcome by appropriate alleviation and mitigation measures and secured by planning conditions or planning obligation providing the necessary improvements would not damage interests of nature conservation.
14. Adopted Local Development Framework ('LDF) core strategy **Policy ST/1** states that a Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge. The detailed boundaries will be established in Development Plan Documents. The key Diagram suggests that the site will be in the Green Belt. It is not at the present time. **Draft Policies GB1 and GB2**, relating to Green Belt, will apply if adopted. **Policy GB1** states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Cambridge Green Belt. Inappropriate development is defined in Section 3 of PPG2: Green Belts. **Policy GB2** further states that any development considered appropriate within the Green Belt must be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt. 2. Where development is permitted, landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained, will be attached to any planning permission in order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.
15. Draft Local Development Framework **Policy ET/9** states that when considering proposals for replacement buildings in the countryside for employment use, any increase in floor area will be strictly controlled, and must be for the benefit of the design, or in order to better integrate the development with its surroundings.

Consultation

16. **Longstanton Parish Council** – no comments received at time of writing report. Comments will be reported verbally at Committee.
17. **Lolworth Parish Meeting** - no comments received at time of writing report. Comments will be reported verbally at Committee.
18. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** – has considered the implications of the proposals in terms of noise and environmental pollution, and there are no significant impacts from the Environmental Health standpoint.
19. **Environment Agency** – confirms that it is the Local Authority's responsibility to address flood risk, on behalf of the Agency using standing advice provided in the flood risk matrix.

Representations

20. No representations have been received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

Visual Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Countryside

21. Whilst the proposed development represents a technical departure from existing policy, as it represents 'new build' development in the countryside, it is worth noting that the proposed unit creates an identical amount of floorspace to that which contained within the existing unit 5, which is to be demolished as part of the scheme. The applicant has stated that the new structure is being sought as the existing structure, whilst capable of re-use, requires refurbishment at a cost equivalent to new build without providing best facilities, particularly for disabled use. The claimed intention is that by replacing the existing unit the overall business park is enhanced, by improving the quality of buildings and the amenity space that serves them. This approach is supported in the principles proposed in draft LDF Policy ET/9 and Planning Policy Statement 7, "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas", which indicates that the Government is supportive of replacement of suitably located, existing buildings of permanent design and construction for economic development purposes, particularly where the replacement building would bring about environmental improvements.
22. The proposed replacement unit is designed to be of a similar height, scale and form to the existing Unit 5, which is to be demolished as part of these proposals. The existing unit is a single storey, timber clad structure, which measures 4.2m to the ridge. The proposed structure, by comparison, is also a single storey, timber clad structure that measures 4.7m in height to the ridge. The two structures have an identical internal floor area (74.8m²) and matching eaves heights. Whilst the proposed structure will therefore be marginally taller than the existing, by virtue of the overall design, scale and form of the structures being similar, and given that the backdrop of the proposed unit will be a much larger, two storey barn, the impact of the development will be minimal in the countryside. Furthermore, the scheme offers improved amenity value within the business park estate, facilitating the creation of an landscape area within the development, which also serves to improve the visual appearance of the park.
23. For these reasons I do not consider that the proposal materially prejudices Development Plan Policies to warrant referral of the application to the Secretary of State.

Highway Safety

24. The principle of business units operating in this location has been established for a significant period of time. The proposed unit has a floor area matching that of the existing area of office accommodation that it is to replace. As such the proposed development would not result in a material increase in traffic generated by the business park as a whole. By repositioning the business floorspace two additional car parking spaces are created to serve the business park. The overall number of parking spaces on the site remains within the parking standards set out in Appendix 7/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

Appropriateness in the Green Belt

25. The existing development is not in the Green Belt, but it is possible that this might change in the future. As discussed above, the principle of business accommodation in this location has been previously established, and the proposed development would not exacerbate the existing relationship with regard to vehicular and people movements. I am of the view that the proposed development would therefore be consistent with future Green Belt policies and would not have a materially greater impact on the openness of the area.

Environmental Impact

26. I have recommended the repetition of a number of conditions from the consent relating to the existing unit below, in order to safeguard the character and relationship between the existing business units and the neighbouring residents. These include restriction of the permitted use class, hours of operation for any power operated machinery and details of the type and location of any power driven plant or equipment.

Flood Risk

27. The site is within Flood Zone 2 (medium risk). A flood risk assessment has been submitted as part of the application. The details contained within the assessment follow the standing advice, provided by the Environment Agency. Floor level will be the same as existing buildings. No additional run off will result. Rainwater will discharge to the existing on site surface water drainage system (soakaways).

Recommendations

28. Approval
1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 2. Sc5 - Materials to be used for the external walls and roofs;
 3. Sc51 – Landscaping (Rc51);
 4. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52);
 5. Sc5f – Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas (Reason – To minimise disturbance to adjoining residents);
 6. Notwithstanding the provisions of Regulation 3 and Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order), the following classes of development more particularly described in the Order are expressly prohibited in respect of the property unless expressly authorised by planning permission granted by the Local Planning Authority in that behalf:- I) Part 8, (Industrial and Warehouse Development) Class A. (Reason – To safeguard the character of the area.);
 7. No power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 0700 hours on weekdays and 0800 hours on Saturdays nor after 1900 hours on weekdays and 1230 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays), unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions. (Reason – To minimise the noise disturbance to adjoining residents.);
 8. Details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment including equipment for heating, ventilation and for the control or extraction of any odour, dust or fumes from the building but excluding office equipment and vehicles and the location of the outlet from the building of such plant or equipment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before such plant or equipment is installed; the said plant or equipment shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and with any agreed noise restrictions. (Reason - To minimise the noise disturbance to adjoining residents.).

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the proposal does not comply with Policy P1/2 of the Structure Plan 2003, it will not result in a greater amount of development in the countryside and will represent an environmental improvement in accordance with PPS7, "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas". The development is considered generally to accord with other Development Plan policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
P1/3 (Sustainable design in built development)
P2/6 (Rural Economy)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
EN3 (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development in the Countryside)
EM10 (Conversions of Rural Buildings and Future Extensions)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)**
ST/1 (Green Belt)

2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Highway safety
 - Visual impact on the Character and Appearance of the Countryside
 - Appropriateness in the Green Belt if extended over the site
 - Flood Risk

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning Files Ref: S/2255/06/F, S/1704/06/F, S/0328/92/F, S/0327/92/F and S/0758/96/F

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