

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4th July 2007

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

S/0692/07/F – GREAT SHELFORD

Extension to stores and retail area, Scotsdales Garden Centre, Cambridge Road, for Scotsdales Nursery and Garden Centre

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 8th June 2007

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because approval of the application would be a departure from the Development Plan.

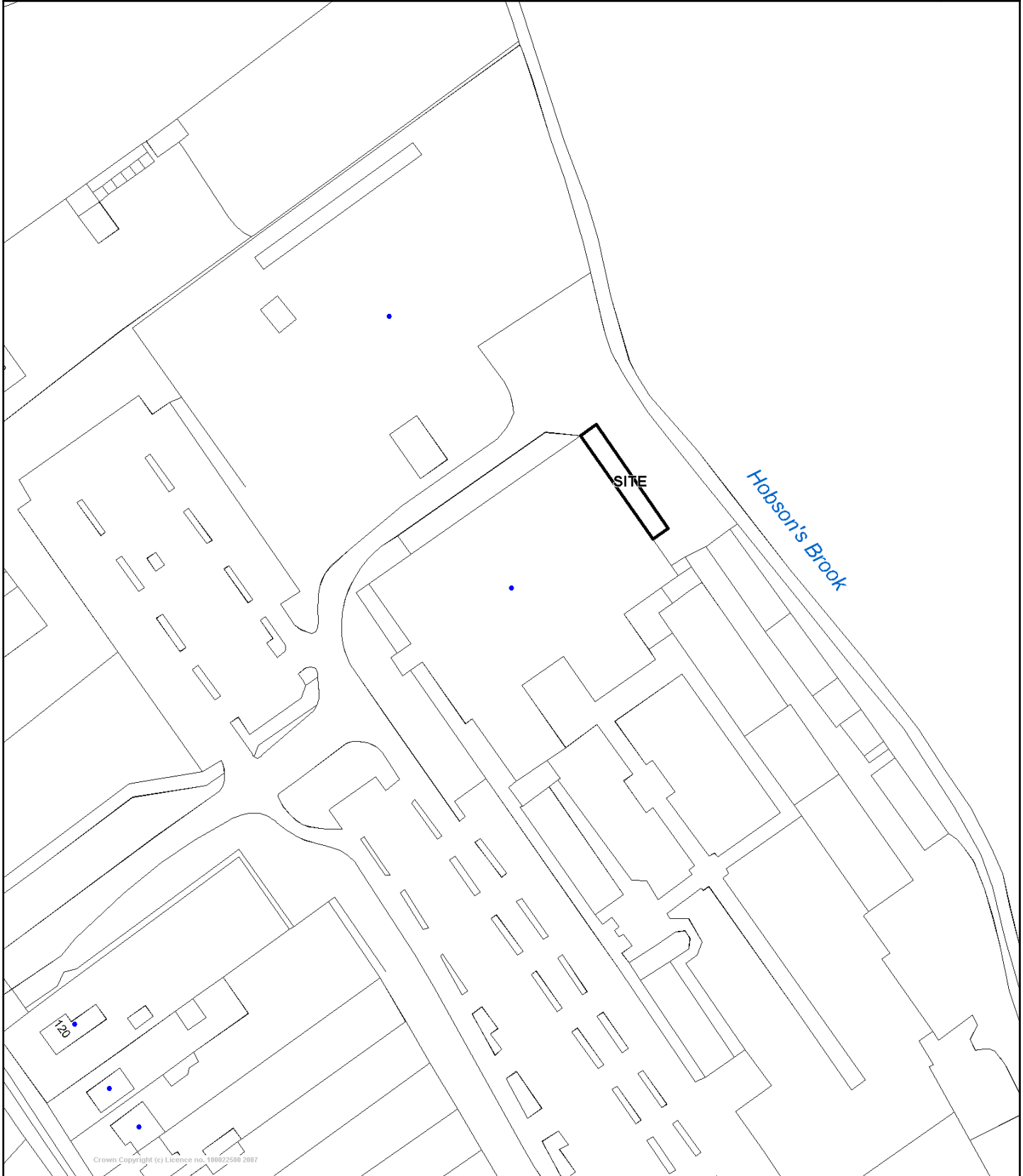
Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to an established retail garden centre on Cambridge Road. The site lies in the rural area and Green Belt. The north eastern (back) boundary of the site adjoins Hobson's Brook, and is marked by mature trees and hedgerow.
2. The full application, dated 2nd April 2007, proposes the erection of a full height extension at the rear of the garden centre. This would provide an enlarged stores area in which an electronic point of sale (EPOS) system could be installed to facilitate stock control. The existing first floor retail area will be taken into store use, and re-provided in part of the new extension. There would be no net increase in retail floor area.
3. The extension is shown to have dimensions length 46.0m x depth 8.2m x height 7.0m, to match the existing building. The extension is to be clad in brickwork, wall cladding and roof sheeting to match the existing building.
4. A range of single storey storage buildings at the rear of the building are to be removed from the site, to retain the facility for vehicles to pass along the rear of the building after the extension has been constructed. The volume of the buildings to be removed is equivalent to that which would be created by the extension, that is 1,657 cubic metres.

Planning History

5. Planning permission to change the use of the site to a garden centre was granted in 1973 (**C/1630/73/F**). Between 1991 and 2005 a number of planning permissions to extend the premises were granted. The most recent application, **S/0053/05/F**, for the erection of an extension to provide storage and retail areas in the same position as the current application, was refused as being inappropriate development in the Green Belt with no very special circumstances having been demonstrated.



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Planning Policy

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

6. **P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development) - development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
7. **P9/2a** (Green Belt) – within the Green Belt, new development, including change of use, will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, or other uses appropriate to a rural area

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

8. **GB2** (Green Belt General Principles) - states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. It also states that development is 'inappropriate' unless it comprises, amongst others, uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt. It requires any development considered appropriate in the Green Belt to be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.
9. **GB3** (The Location of Development) - Development which is not inappropriate, as defined in Policy GB2, will be located within or adjoining existing complexes or entail the redevelopment of redundant buildings to protect the rural nature and openness of the Green Belt.
10. **SH12** (Garden Centres) - Garden centres will not be permitted unless they conform to the following criteria:
 - (1) Convenience sales will not be permitted where it would have a significant adverse impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the viability and vitality of the existing the Rural and Limited Rural Growth Settlements in South Cambridgeshire, or other village centres;
 - (2) Not be located within the countryside or in such a location that the visual amenities of the countryside would be adversely affected;
 - (3) Be well related in scale and character to the settlement or surrounding development;
 - (4) Be conveniently located and well related to the primary road network and accessible by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians;
 - (5) Not create local traffic difficulties;
 - (6) Not prejudice the residential environment; and
 - (7) Not conflict with other policies and proposals in the Structure and Local Plans.

South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (Inspector's Report on the Examination received May 2007)

11. **GB/2** (Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt)

1. 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.

Consultation

12. **Great Shelford Parish Council** – Recommendation of approval, commenting that “the existing sheds and containers are untidy and an eyesore, their total removal and replacement by this extension will improve the appearance of this part of the site”.
13. **Local Highway Authority** - No objection to the grant of planning permission.
14. **Landscape Design Officer** – Comments awaited.
15. **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)** – No objection from an environmental health standpoint.
16. **Drainage Manager** – Comments awaited.
17. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** - Comments awaited.

Representations

18. None received.

Planning Comments

19. The design and scale of the extension match the existing building, and it is sited at the rear of the building where there would be few public views of it. I consider that, if constructed, the extension would have little effect on the openness of the Green belt or the appearance of the countryside. I consider that the proposal complies with Policy SH12.
20. The proposal is, by definition, inappropriate in the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. The previous application, S/0053/05/F, was refused because no such circumstances were put forward. In the current application, the removal of longstanding outbuildings at the rear of the site with an equivalent volume as the extension, will result in an improvement to the appearance of this part of the Green Belt. In these circumstances, I believe that very special circumstances have been demonstrated, and that the proposal is acceptable as an exception to Policies P1/2, P9/2a, and GB2 of the Development Plan.
21. In these circumstances I do not consider that the proposal needs to be referred to the Secretary of States under the Town and Country Planning (Green Belt) Directions 2005.

Recommendation

22. Approval, subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard Condition A (time limit) Reason A);
2. The extension, hereby permitted, shall not be used other than as ancillary to the consented nursery and garden centre use of the site. (Reason – To ensure that the premises remain as a single planning unit with a use appropriate to its Green Belt location);
3. SC19 (matching materials) (RC19);
4. The extension, hereby permitted, shall not be brought in to use until all ancillary storage outbuildings located to the north east (rear) of the main building as indicated on submitted site layout plan drawing no. SR/3317/104 revision F date stamped 13th April 2007, have been removed from the site);
5. Any conditions required by Landscape Design Officer, Drainage Manager or Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the proposal is not in accordance with Policies P1/2 (Environmental Restrictions on Development) and P9/2a (Green Belt) of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy GB2 (Green Belt General Principles) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004, it is considered that an exception to these policies is acceptable in this case, taking into account the following factors:
 - The lack of any significant adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt;
 - The nature of the site as previously developed land within an existing complex;
 - The nature of the proposed use and service to be provided;
 - The benefit to the openness of the Green Belt of the removal of ancillary storage buildings from the site of similar volume to the extension proposed.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (Inspector's Report on the Examination received May 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File refs S/0692/07/F, S/0053/05/F, C/1630/73/F.

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