

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

1st August 2007

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

S/0948/07/F - SHEPRETH

Change of Use from Office to Flat and Temporary Retention of Mobile Home, Shepreth Wildlife Park, Station Road for T Willers

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 30th July 2007

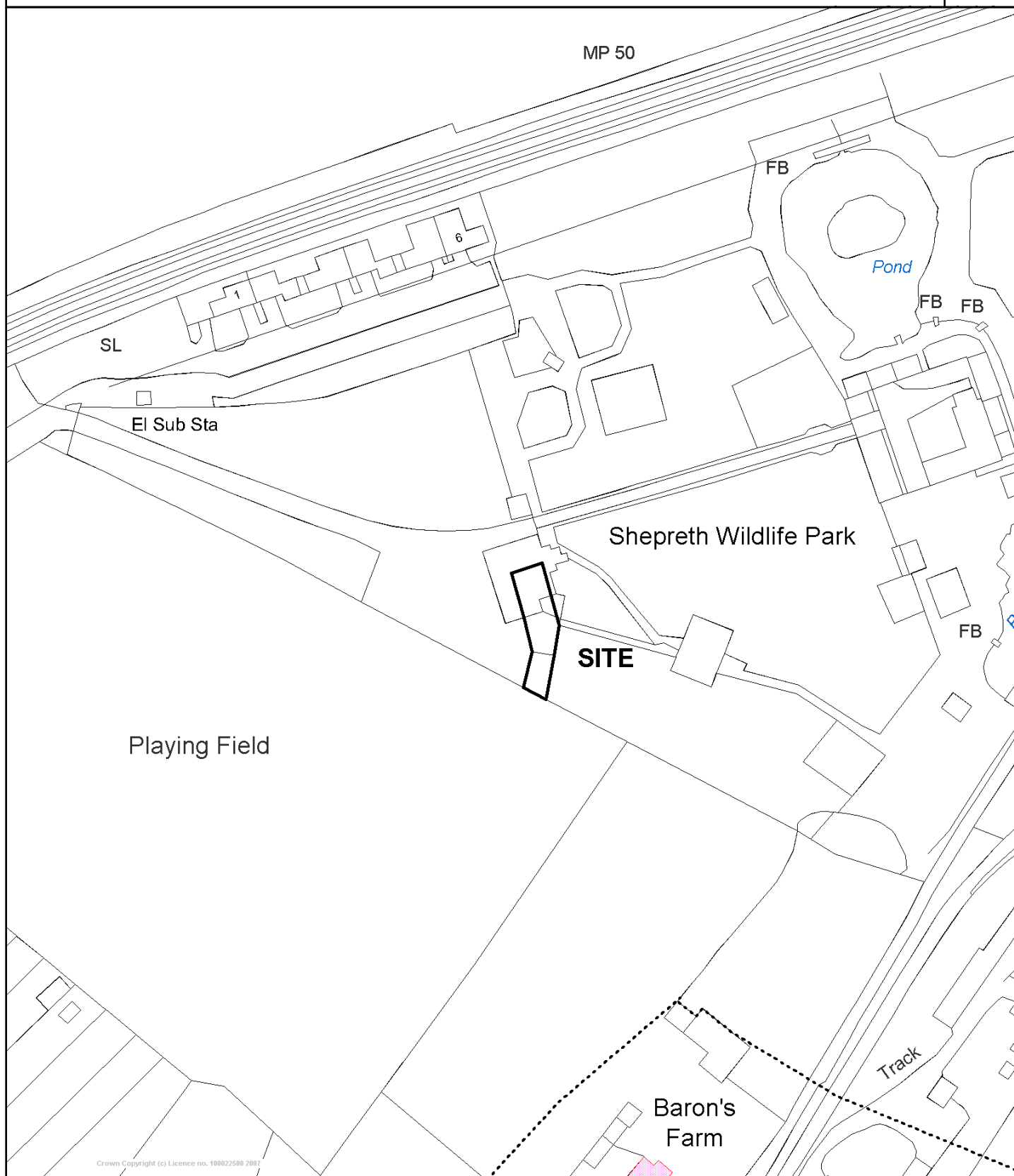
Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because Shepreth Parish Council has objected to the application.

Site and Proposal

1. Shepreth Wildlife Park is a private business and local tourist attraction on the edge of the village of Shepreth. Due to the nature of the animals housed at the park the site is enclosed by tall post and wire fencing, the northernmost section of which abuts the tracks of the Kings Cross to Cambridge railway. To the south of the said section of fence there is an earth bund that visually screens the majority of the site from the open countryside to the north. Within the site itself there is a range of artificial habitats with associated built development that have been created to house the Park's animal inhabitants. There is also a dwelling within the site that is occupied by the applicant and his family.
2. The access to the Wildlife Park runs adjacent to a linear commercial/industrial estate that abuts the rail tracks to the north. To the southwest of the site the Park's parking area abuts village playing fields. The closest residential properties to the boundaries of the site are two pairs of semi-detached properties in Angle Lane (Edieham Cottages). A public footpath runs to the north past the eastern boundary of the site and the front elevations of Edieham Cottages and out into the open countryside to the north. At the front of the site there is a mobile home adjacent to the pitched roof entrance building that is surrounded by a tall close-boarded fence.
3. The full planning application received on the 14th May 2007 proposes to convert part of the existing office space (39.8 sq.metres) on the first floor of the entrance building to staff accommodation/flat and retain the aforementioned mobile home for a limited period. The office in question, which is above the park shop and visitor entrance, is accessed by way of an external timber staircase on the side of the building. There are two existing rooflight openings in the front elevation that face the gravelled car park and there are no external alterations that are proposed. If consent is granted for the conversion of the office space then it is proposed to remove the mobile home by the 31st August 2007.

S/0948/07/F



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Scale 1/1250 Date 17/7/2007

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Planning Committee August 2007

Planning History

4. The planning history of Shepreth Wildlife Park is a long and complicated one that consists of planning approvals and refusals, a considerable number of which were determined at appeal. Planning permission for a wild animal sanctuary on the site was approved in 1986 (**S/0113/86/F**). In 1992 permission was granted for an extension of the shop with the only condition placed on the consent relating to the prior approval of materials (**S/0036/92/F**). Ten years later an application for a change of use of land at the front of the site was granted for the siting of a mobile home (**S/0910/02/F**), which was conditioned to be occupied by a park employee and was to be removed by the 30th June 2007. More recently consent was granted for the conversion of a stable block within the site to a dwelling (**S/0038/07/F**).

Planning Policy

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

5. **Policy P1/2 'Environmental Restrictions on Development'** states that developments in the countryside will be restricted unless demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
6. **Policy 4/1 'Tourism, Recreation and Leisure Strategy'** requires that new or improved tourism, recreation and leisure developments protect or improve the local environment, landscape and residential amenity.

Local Development Framework (Adopted July 2007)

7. **DP/1 'Sustainable Development'** states that new development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that it is consistent with the principle of sustainable development.
8. **DP/7 'Development Frameworks'** states that outside urban and village frameworks only development and uses that need to be located within the countryside will be permitted.
9. **HG8 'Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside for Residential Use'** states that permission will only exceptionally be granted where it can be demonstrated, having regard to market demand or planning considerations, that it is inappropriate for any suitable employment use or for employment with residential conversion as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.

Consultation

10. **Shepreth Parish Council** – Recommends that the application be refused, it has also criticised the lack of adequate plans and information provided.
11. **Environment Agency** – Has no objection, but originally requested that a condition be attached to any consent granted relating to the submission and implementation of a scheme of foul water drainage. Following the receipt of additional information from the applicant this condition was no longer considered necessary. The proposal is acceptable, in respect of flood risk, due to the scale and nature of the development.

Representations

12. None received

Planning Comments – Key Issues

13. The long and varied history of planning applications and developments at Shepreth Wildlife Park is a matter of concern for nearby residents and property owners as well as for the Parish Council. Unlike recent developments at the park this latest application is not retrospective, though the condition requiring the removal of the mobile home has since been breached during the processing of this application. Visually the proposed change of use will not materially alter the external appearance of the existing shop building, and will result in the loss of the mobile home at the front of the site. Therefore the main issue for Members to consider in the determination of this application is the appropriateness of allowing a more permanent dwelling in the countryside in place of the mobile home and the appropriateness of allowing the retention of the mobile home for a limited period whilst the new dwelling is being fitted out.

Conversion of existing dwelling in the countryside

14. When consent was granted for the mobile home in 2002 it was accepted that there was a functional need for workers to live on site, especially given the nature of some of the animals housed within the park. It is recognised that another application was granted (and went before Members on the 7th March 2007) for the conversion of stables to an additional dwelling stating that the additional accommodation was required for the very same reason. This earlier application was for the applicant's son, whereas the occupants of the mobile home are not members of the Willers family. Therefore I do not consider that it is inappropriate that the proposed dwelling is removed from the Mr Willers' family home, whilst still being located within the boundary of the site.
15. Notwithstanding the earlier approval it is accepted that the site employs a number of staff who are often required to be on hand to deal with the animals all through the day and night, when necessary. Given the fact that the only works required to convert the building are internal I consider that the proposal is in accordance with policy HG8. Moreover the loss of office space will not jeopardise the overall viability of the site as an employment site, therefore I do not consider that it is necessary to require that the first floor of the building be retained in its present form.
16. Considering that the overall aim of policy DP/1 is to promote more sustainable forms of development I consider that this application accords with this aim in that it allows members of the Park's staff to be accommodated at the site of their employment, and therefore lessening their reliance on private motor vehicles or public transport in their daily travel to work.
17. Although on the outskirts of the site the new dwelling will still be in a location where occupation independently of the wildlife park would be unlikely. However to prevent the dwelling from being let or sold independently of the Park I would recommend a condition be used to tie the occupation of the dwelling to workers employed at the wildlife park, and any dependents of such persons.

Retention of existing mobile home

18. During the determination of the original application for the mobile home in 2002 there were no objections to the development. Therefore, even though the time limited

consent has expired since this application was submitted, I do not consider the retention of the mobile home for a limited period to be unacceptable. The applicant has requested that the mobile home be permitted to be retained for a further two months from the end of June 2007, which can be controlled by way of a condition. However given the time taken to submit and determine this application, if approved I consider it reasonable that the date for the removal of the mobile home be able to be extended at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority. The recommended condition below has been worded to reflect this additional flexibility in the date for removal of the mobile home.

19. In response to the Parish Council's concerns about the adequacy of the plans that have been submitted I consider that they are acceptable for the determination of this application. Moreover, although the flood risk assessment that has been submitted is the same as for the application that was approved earlier this year, it is relevant to the entire site, and has been considered to be acceptable by the Environment Agency.

Recommendation

20. Approval

Conditions

1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
2. The use of the land for the siting of a mobile home, hereby permitted, shall be discontinued and the land restored to its former condition on or before the 31st August 2007, or within a period previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (which shall be no later than two months after the aforementioned date).
(Reason – Retention of the mobile home would be contrary to Policies P1/2 of the Structure Plan 2003 and DP/7 of the Local Development Control Policies 2007 once the flat, hereby permitted, has been completed.)
3. The occupation of the flat, hereby permitted, shall be limited to a person or persons solely or mainly working at the application premises (Shepreth Wildlife Park) and to any resident dependants.
(Reason – The Local Planning Authority would not normally grant permission for such a development and this permission is granted solely in order to fulfil a specific requirement of the use of the application premises in accordance with Policies P1/2 of the Structure Plan 2003 and DP/7 of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007.)

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The 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)
 - P1/3** (Sustainable Design in Built Development)
 - P4/1** (Tourism, Recreation and Leisure Strategy)

- **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF)**, adopted July 2007
 - DP/1** (Sustainable Development)
 - DP/7** (Development Frameworks)
 - HG8** (Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside for Residential Use)

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

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007
- Planning File Ref: S/0948/07/F; S/0038/07/F and S/0910/02/F

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