

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation  
Control Committee

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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4<sup>th</sup> August 2004

**S/1310/04/F – Great Wilbraham  
Erection of a Dwelling on Land to the Rear of Rookery Farm, Frog End, Great  
Wilbraham for Wilbraham Estates Trustees**

**Recommendation: Refusal**

Members will visit the site on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2004

**Site and Proposal**

1. Rookery Farm is located on the south-western edge of Great Wilbraham with housing either side and open paddock opposite the site abuts the village framework boundary of Great Wilbraham and is located adjacent to the Green Belt. The site is very open and located adjacent to Rookery Farm House and Rookery Farm Barn, both of which are Grade II Listed Buildings. Both date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
2. This outline application, submitted on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2004 seeks consent for the siting and means of access to serve a dwelling located to the rear of Rookery Farm, Great Wilbraham. Access to the site is to be provided via the existing farm access with the dwelling sited adjacent to the four existing silos which are to be removed as part of this application. Design and landscaping are reserved for further consideration. The density equates to 8 dwellings per hectare.

**Planning History**

3. S/2422/86/F – Planning permission refused and later appeal dismissed to convert Rookery Farm Barn into two dwellings.
4. S/2420/86/O – Outline planning permission granted for the erection of a dwelling on land adjacent to Rookery Farm Barn to the south east adjacent 39 Frog End. This application has been renewed over the last 18 years most recently in 2002, reference S/2361/02/O. This approval remains extant.

**Planning Policy**

5. **Policy P1/3** of the Structure Plan requires a high standard of design to be adopted that responds to the character of the built environment.
6. **Policy P7/6** of the Structure Plan states that development should protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
7. **Policy SE4** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (“Local Plan”) generally supports new residential development within Group Villages, such as Gt Wilbraham subject to a number of criteria.

8. **Policy SE9** of the Local Plan states that development on village edges should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact
9. **Policy EN28** of the Local Plan states that development must safeguard the character, appearance and setting of Listed Buildings.
10. **Policies CS3 and CS5** of the Local Plan aim to protect the water environment and avoid increase flood risk.

### **Consultations**

11. **Great Wilbraham Parish Council** – Raised concerns with regard to wildlife living in nearby barns and outbuildings. Subject to a legal agreement being drawn up to ensure that the house is for rental only with the income going to maintaining and improving the listed barn, members recommend approval of this outline consent. Requested Members visit the site.
12. **Conservation Manager** – The erection of dwelling to the rear of the former farmyard would compromise the setting of the listed building. The existing farmhouse would be visually divorced from the barn and other outbuildings, which would harm the setting, well-being and attractiveness of the group.
13. An alternative site for a new dwelling on the land to the southeast of the barn has been discussed previously. Development of this area would have less impact on the setting of the listed barn and would have no impact on the listed farmhouse. Sale of this land would provide sufficient income to re-thatch the barn and carry out essential repairs and if the remainder was invested, perhaps provide sufficient funds for future repairs. In addition the character of the farmyard would not be compromised and the existing access retained, should a new use be found for the barn and curtilage buildings in the future.
14. For the above reasons the proposed dwelling is considered to be contrary to policy EN28 of the Local Plan.
15. **Environment Agency** objects – Insufficient information has been submitted in respect of surface and foul water drainage to allow the agency to fully assess the proposed development. A flood risk assessment should be submitted.
16. **Ecology Officer** – Comments will be reported to Members verbally.

### **Representations**

17. Two letters of objection were received from nearby residents.
18. No 6 Toft Way have raised concerns with regard to the impact of the development on the curtilage of the listed barn, the siting of the dwelling with regard to the village framework and the impact of the development on the character of the area.
19. The owners of Rookery Farm have raised concerns with regard to the lack of privacy that will be provided between the farmhouse and the proposed dwelling, and the impact of the development on wildlife that current resides in the listed barn and surrounding sheds. Reference also made to the Green Belt boundary and house values.

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

20. The main issues to consider in this case are the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area and surrounding open countryside and Green Belt, the setting of the Listed Barn and Farmhouse, and the impact on the residential amenity of nearby properties. Reference will also be made to flood risk.

***Character and appearance of the area and surrounding open countryside and Green Belt***

21. Prior to the submission of this application, the proposed erection of a dwelling on the site was the subject of lengthy pre-application discussions. Initially it was proposed that part of the site would be located outside of the village framework, within the Green Belt. The siting of the dwelling has since been amended and the entire site is now located within the village framework.
22. Whilst the proposed dwelling is now located within the village framework of Great Wilbraham, land on the village boundary is considered an important feature that complements the rural nature of the village. The erection of a detached dwelling in this location being between 0.5m – 1.5m of the Green Belt boundary will have a considerable impact on the surrounding open countryside and would fail to respect the rural character of Great Wilbraham.
23. This part of Frog End is characterised by a more linear form of development with the surrounding residential properties located alongside the highway. The rear gardens of these properties along with other undeveloped land then forms a pleasant backdrop to the open countryside. Where there is encroachment beyond this linear line, this tends to be in the form of agricultural buildings such as the listed barn and silos. The development of this back land plot to form a dwelling, built tightly to the village framework boundary, would encroach upon this rural backdrop and introduce a more intense form of development that would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding open countryside and Green Belt.
24. The area of land located south east of the barn already has an extant outline consent for the erection of a dwelling. This site is located adjacent to 39 Frog End and would continue the linear form of development adjacent to the road. Whilst this in its own right is considered acceptable, in considering this application, Members should consider the potential loss of further open space on the edge of the village.
25. In the supporting statement of this application it is stated that the four-grain bins are to be removed to make way for this development, which, according to the agent, will improve the visual appearance and amenity of the site. Whilst these buildings may not have any great architectural merit, agricultural buildings are common in the countryside and when viewed within their rural setting do not appear so intrusive. It is not considered that the removal of these structures provides sufficient justification to outweigh the harm caused by this cramped form of development hard on the village edge.

***Setting of the Listed Building***

26. The proposed dwelling is to be located to the rear of the barn, less than 15 metres from this listed structure and less than 10 metres from the listed Farm House. The erection of a dwelling in such close proximity to both these listed buildings would not only seriously harm their setting but, through the creation of a separate focus, would undermine the visual relationship of the two listed structures. The farmhouse would, as a result of this development, appear divorced from the barn and other outbuildings, to the detriment of the setting, well-being and attractive nature of the farm yard.

27. As stated previously should permission be granted for a residential plot to the rear of the Listed Barn and Farmhouse, both this and the land located to south east of the barn could be developed for residential use. Irrespective of the final design that is adopted for either plot, (the submitted details are indicative only), this more intense form of development within such close proximity of the barn would have a further detrimental impact on the setting of the listed building.
28. It is stated within the supporting statement of this application that, if approved, the dwelling will remain in the ownership of the Wilbraham Estate. The dwelling will then be let and the monthly income will reinvested to secure the continued maintenance and management of the listed barn.
29. The roof of the barn requires re-thatching and I would welcome any form of investment that secures the future existence of the listed structure. On the basis of the submitted details however I cannot see how this proposal will provide the necessary source of funding.
30. Having spoken informally with the Conservation Manager, it is suggested that if the roof were re-thatched, any further repairs that would be required to make the barn structurally sound and watertight would be minimal. The agent has estimated that the cost of re-thatching would be in the region of £50,000. This figure is considerably less than the construction cost of the new dwelling and considerably more than the annual rent that will be generated through this development.
31. The sale of the site located to the south east of the barn, which already has consent, would on its own be able to fund the re-thatching of the barn. It would however not appear that consideration has been given to this within the supporting statement of the application. The justification in support of this application is therefore unsatisfactory. It would appear that other options still exist that would have a far less damaging affect on the setting of the listed buildings and character of the area. If the erection of an additional dwelling is required to raise the necessary income to fund the restoration of the barn, this should not be at the expense of the setting of the Listed Building.

***Amenity of nearby properties***

32. The only residential property that is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed dwelling, is the adjacent Rookery Farm House. This property is located within close proximity of the site and has a southwest facing window that will look over the garden of the proposed dwelling. Irrespective of the above, it is considered that sufficient separation will be maintained between the two properties while a suitable screen could be erected to reduce the overlooking potential. It is suggested on the submitted plans that a wall be erected between the two sites. Suitable details could be agreed to ensure the amenity of both properties are protected.

***Flood Risk***

33. The Environment Agency has stated that insufficient information has been submitted in respect of surface and foul water drainage. As a result objections have been raised on the grounds of the potential flood risk and risk of pollution to the water environment.

***Other issues***

34. The owners of Rookery Farm House have made reference to a number of animals that use the listed barn and other outbuildings, some of which are to be demolished

as part of this application. The views of the Councils Ecology Officer have been sought and any comments raised will be reported verbally to the committee.

## **Recommendation**

### **Refuse**

The application site is located to the rear of Rookery Farm House and Rookery Farm Barn, two Grade II Listed Buildings. The site is also sited on the village framework boundary, adjacent to the Green Belt.

- 1) The proposed siting of a dwelling on land to the rear of Rookery Farm Barn would, result in a cramped form of development that would significantly increase the built up appearance of the rural and open back drop to the village edge. The poor relationship between the site and the adjacent barn and farmhouse would result in the proposed development appearing out of character within this predominately rural farm yard setting and would have a considerable impact upon the openness of the surrounding countryside and Green Belt.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be contrary to Policy P1/3 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policies SE4 and SE9 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

- 2) The erection of a dwelling within such close proximity to the Grade II Listed Barn and Farm House would not only seriously harm the setting of these listed structures, but, through the creation of a separate focus, would undermine the visual relationship currently shared between the two buildings.

The cumulative affect of developing both this site and the land to the south east of the barn which already has consent for a dwelling, (reference S/2361/02/O) would represent a further intrusion within the setting of the listed Barn and Farm House.

The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy EN28 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

- 3) Notwithstanding the above reasons, insufficient information has been submitted in respect of surface and foul water drainage to allow the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Environment Agency to fully assess the proposed development. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies CS3 and CS5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

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

- Application files S/1310/04/O and S/2361/02/O)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

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