

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

4 August 2004

**S/1278/04/F – Croxton
Change of Use to Hand Wash and Security Fencing (Retrospective) at Former
Q8 Petrol Filling Station, Cambridge Road (A428), Croxton for T. Mason**

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Site and Proposal

1. The former Kuwait Petrol Filling station lies on the southern side of Cambridge Road (A428), opposite Whitehall Farm and the junction with Toseland Road. The site measuring 0.23 hectares retains its petrol canopy and kiosk, and has been closed for over two years.
2. Adjoining the site to the east is the former Spread Eagle Public House which has been empty for several years. To the west is the Ponda Rosa Restaurant.
3. The full application, received on 23 June 2004, seeks retrospective approval for a change of use to a hand car wash and the erection of security fencing. The hand washing occurs under the existing petrol canopy, with the existing kiosk used as an office and staff room. Landscaping is proposed at the north-east and north-west corners of the site. Green palasade fencing 1.8m high has been erected around the perimeter of the site, with 6m wide access gates. The site is accessed off Cambridge Road opposite the Toseland Road junction, with vehicles leaving via a shared access with the adjacent restaurant.
4. The canopy on the site has been painted bright yellow with the words "Hand Car Wash" hand painted in blue lettering, on the eastern and western elevation of the canopy.
5. The agent has stated in a letter dated 16 July 2004 that at "maximum flow which from experience is 11am to 12.30pm the site is expected to clean a car every 5-6 minutes, 10-12 cars per hour maximum. The site is of sufficient size to allow 'car stacking' within the site. The sight of a queue normally discourages customers because of obvious delay, however my client intends to have a mobile sign positioned at the entrance instructing clients not to queue on the highway. Normally four employees would be on site; if necessary this could be increased to six, never more than this. The opening hours would be 8am to 7pm Monday to Saturday and 9am to 5pm on Sunday."

Planning History

6. Planning permission was refused on 13 May 2003 for a change of use to car sales with ancillary works (Ref: S/1991/02/F).

7. A planning application to use the site for the sale of garden pots and associated items, including the siting of 2 portacabins and security fencing, was withdrawn prior to it being considered by the Committee in June 2002 (**Ref: S/0820/04/F**).
8. A planning application has been recently approved for the conversion and extension of the former Spread Eagle Public House adjacent the site, to a dwelling (**Ref: S/1146/04/F**).

Planning Policy

9. The site lies within the Countryside, to the west of the village framework of Croxton.
10. **Government Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) 7** "Countryside" does not contain specific policies concerning road side sites but generally encourages the reuse of existing buildings in rural areas, subject to no adverse impact on the countryside.
11. **PPG 13** "Transport" aims to reduce the growth in the length and number of motorised journeys.
12. **Policy P1/3** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The County Structure Plan") requires a high standard of design for all new development that responds to the local character of the built environment.
13. **Policy P1/2** of the County Structure Plan restricts development in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
14. **Policy 2/6** 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 objectives, including enabling the re-use of existing buildings and enabling the re-use of vacant, derelict or under-used land within villages.
15. **Policy 8/1** of the County Structure Plan encourages the use of sustainable transport policies in Local Plans. This policy states that "in rural areas there may be instances where small-scale development which is provided for under Policies P2/6, P3/4 and P5/5, is unable to be located in an area which is or can be made highly accessible to public transport. In such circumstances, developments should be located and designed so far as possible to meet the remaining requirements of this policy."
16. **Policy P7/4** of the County Structure Plan and **EN1** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") seek to protect areas from development which would adversely affect the character and appearance of the local landscape.
17. **Policy EM10** of the Local Plan 2004 states that "outside village frameworks planning permission will be granted for the change of use and conversion of rural buildings to employment use providing that:
 1. The buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;
 2. Conversion does not lead to dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality;

3. The form, bulk and general design of the building both before and after conversion are in keeping with their surroundings;
 4. The buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside;
 5. Safe and satisfactory vehicular access can be provided together with adequate space within the curtilage to accommodate ancillary requirements such as car parking and lorry manoeuvring without significant detriment to the setting of the building and the landscape within which it is located; and
 6. The scale and frequency of traffic generated by the proposal can be accommodated on the road system without undue adverse effects."
18. **Policy TP1** of The Local Plan aims to promote more sustainable transport choices, to improve access to major trip generators by non-car modes, and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

Consultation

19. **Croxton Parish Council** – Recommendation of Refusal. They add:
- "No! No! No!
Fencing and signage are an eyesore. Agree with change of use only as a temporary site. Not to be permanent."
20. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** – No objection. "I conclude that there are no significant impacts from the Environmental Health standpoint."
21. **Highways Agency** – Response to be verbally reported
22. **Environment Agency** – No objection but recommends the use of conditions relating to foul and surface water drainage in the event that the application is approved.
23. **Anglian Water Services Ltd** – Response to be verbally reported
24. **Landscape Design Officer** – No objection, but states that the proposed planting selection is very ornamental for this type of location and they would suggest they discuss types of species further.

Representations

25. None received at the time of writing the Committee Report.

Planning Comments

26. The key issues for consideration in the assessment of this application are the suitability of this use in a rural location, the visual impacts of the change of use and security fencing on the visual amenities of the Countryside and impacts on highway safety. It is noted that planning permission is not required for the repainting of the canopy and kiosk. The signage painted on the canopy is not a material consideration in the assessment of this application, as it would be subject to a separate application for advertisement consent.

Suitability of Use in Rural Location

27. Regional and local planning policies, in addition to Government guidance are supportive of the reuse of existing buildings in rural locations. The proposal does not involve the erection of new buildings and structures, and requires a road-side location due to its dependency on passing trade for business.
28. It is noted that the use of the site as a petrol filling station has ceased over two years ago, and no appropriate use for the site has since been found. If the hand car wash use is refused, the site is in danger of becoming vacant and derelict.
29. I am of the view that the proposal represents an appropriate use for a brownfield site in a rural location.

Character and Appearance

30. As stated previously, the colour of the petrol canopy and the signage painted on this canopy do not require planning permission (although the signage does require advertisement consent) and hence are not material considerations in the assessment of this application.
31. The proposed use is of modest scale and involves the reuse of existing buildings and structures on the site. The use as a hand car wash by itself will have no additional impact on the visual amenities of the area than the former use of petrol filling station.
32. Green palisade security fencing has been erected around the perimeter of the site. I am of the view that landscaping behind the frontage fence would be advantageous in softening the impact of this fence in this rural location, and a landscaping condition has been recommended.
33. Members will be aware of the difficulties in finding alternative uses for derelict petrol filling sites, and in this case the visual implications of the use and associated security fencing are considered acceptable, particular given the petrol filling station appearance of the site and the adjacent commercial use to the west.

Traffic and Highway Safety

34. Although the petrol filling station use has ceased on the site, planning permission would not be required for the recommencement of this use. Kuwait Petroleum has previously informed planning officers during the assessment of the last planning application on the site (Ref: S/1991/02/F), that the filling station used to generate approximately 300 vehicular movements a day when operational.
35. It is noted that Cambridge Road (A428) is a heavily used truck road with 18,600 daily movements in 2001 and subject to the national 60mph speed limit. The carriageway along the length of the A428 is marked as a clearway, and therefore a continuous white line marks the edge of the carriageway of the Truck Road, except where the access points occur.
36. Based on the traffic estimates supplied by the applicant, it is estimated that the maximum number of vehicles entering the site per day would be 132. However, it is considered unlikely that the use would generate the estimated maximum number of vehicles per hour for each hour that the business is open. On the basis that the use for hand car wash will generate a lower number of vehicular movements than the permitted use of the site as a petrol filling station, there is no indication that the proposed use would significantly affect the operation of the highway at this point.

37. It is expected that the business will be dependent on passing trade, as opposed to generating a large number of deliberate trips to the site by non-local residents. The proposed use is unlikely to generate a significant number of extra trips on the A428 than would not otherwise have taken place. It is noted that planning policies make allowances for small-scale development in rural areas that are not readily accessible by public transport and the nature of the use means that customers are unlikely to travel to the site by public transport regardless of its location.
38. There is sufficient room on site for the parking and manoeuvring of several vehicles, including customer and employee parking without impact on highway safety.
39. I await the comments of the Highways Agency but am minded to recommend a one year temporary consent in order to monitor impact on the free flow and safety of traffic on the A428.

Recommendations

Subject to the nature of outstanding representations from the Highways Agency and Anglian Water, delegated approval after the expiration of the consultation period to the adjacent property.

Conditions of Consent

1. The use hereby permitted, shall be discontinued on or before 31 July 2005.
Reason: in order that the effect of the use upon highway safety can be assessed during this period, so that any future application can be decided on this assessment.
2. Sc51 – Landscaping (Rc51);
3. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52);
4. Within two months of the date of this decision, a scheme for the provision and implementation of pollution control, which shall include foul and surface water drainage, shall be submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans and within the timescale agreed in the scheme.
Reason: To ensure a satisfactory method of surface/foul water drainage and to prevent the increased risk of pollution to the water environment.

Informatives

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:**
P7/2 (Environmental Restrictions on Development) P1/3 (Sustainable design in built development), P2/6 (Rural Economy),
 - **P7/4** (Landscape) and **P8/1** (Sustainable Development – Links between Land Use and Transport)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: EM10** (Employment in the Countryside), **EN1** (Landscape Character Areas) and **TP1** (Planning for More Sustainable Travel)

2. All 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.

Other

The existing signage on the petrol canopy does not form part of this planning application and a separate application for advertisement consent is required for its retention.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the fencing does not encroach onto the Highway verge without the consent of the Highways Agency.

Environment Agency comments of letter dated 30 June 2004:

1. Only clean, uncontaminated surface water should be discharged to any soakaway, watercourse or surface water sewer.
2. Prior to being discharged into any watercourse, surface water sewer or soakaway system, all surface water drainage from lorry parks and/or parking areas for fifty car park spaces or more and hardstandings should be passed through an oil interceptor designed compatible with the site being drained. Roof water shall not pass through the interceptor.
3. Surface water from roads and impermeable vehicle parking areas shall be discharged via trapped gullies.
4. All foul sewage or trade effluent, including cooling water containing chemical additives, or vehicle washing water, including steam cleaning effluent shall be discharged to the *public* foul sewer.
5. All drums and small containers used for oil and other chemicals shall be stored in bunded areas which do not drain to any watercourse, surface water sewer or soakaway.
6. Site operators should ensure that there is no possibility of contaminated water entering and polluting surface or underground waters.

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

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 – Countryside
Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 – Transport
Planning File Refs S/1278/04/F, S/1146/04, S/1991/02/F and S/0820/02/F

Contact Officer: Allison Tindale – Planning Assistant
Telephone: (01954) 713159