

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

9th January 2008

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

S/2102/07/F - COMBERTON

Extension and Garage to Existing Dwelling and Erection of Bungalow to Rear at 64 Barton Road

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 30th January 2008

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the Parish Council objection does not accord with the Officer recommendation.

Conservation Area

Site and Proposal

1. This approximately 1600m² site lies within the village framework of Comberton and within the Conservation Area. Its southern portion lies within the Protected Village Amenity Area (PVAA) which also lies to the south and west. A public footpath runs along the eastern boundary. Mature trees lie to the south and west. Those to the south are protected with Tree Preservation Orders. An existing dwelling on the front portion of the site sits in an elevated position in relation to the road. An existing garage building lies to its east adjacent to the footpath.
2. The full planning application, received 2nd November 2007 proposes rear extensions and alterations to the existing dwelling, the demolition of the existing garage and its replacement with a new single garage and the erection of a new single storey dwelling to the rear. The new dwelling would lie immediately north of the PVAA with its garden within it. The height to the eaves is approximately 2.4m and the ridge approximately 4.7m.

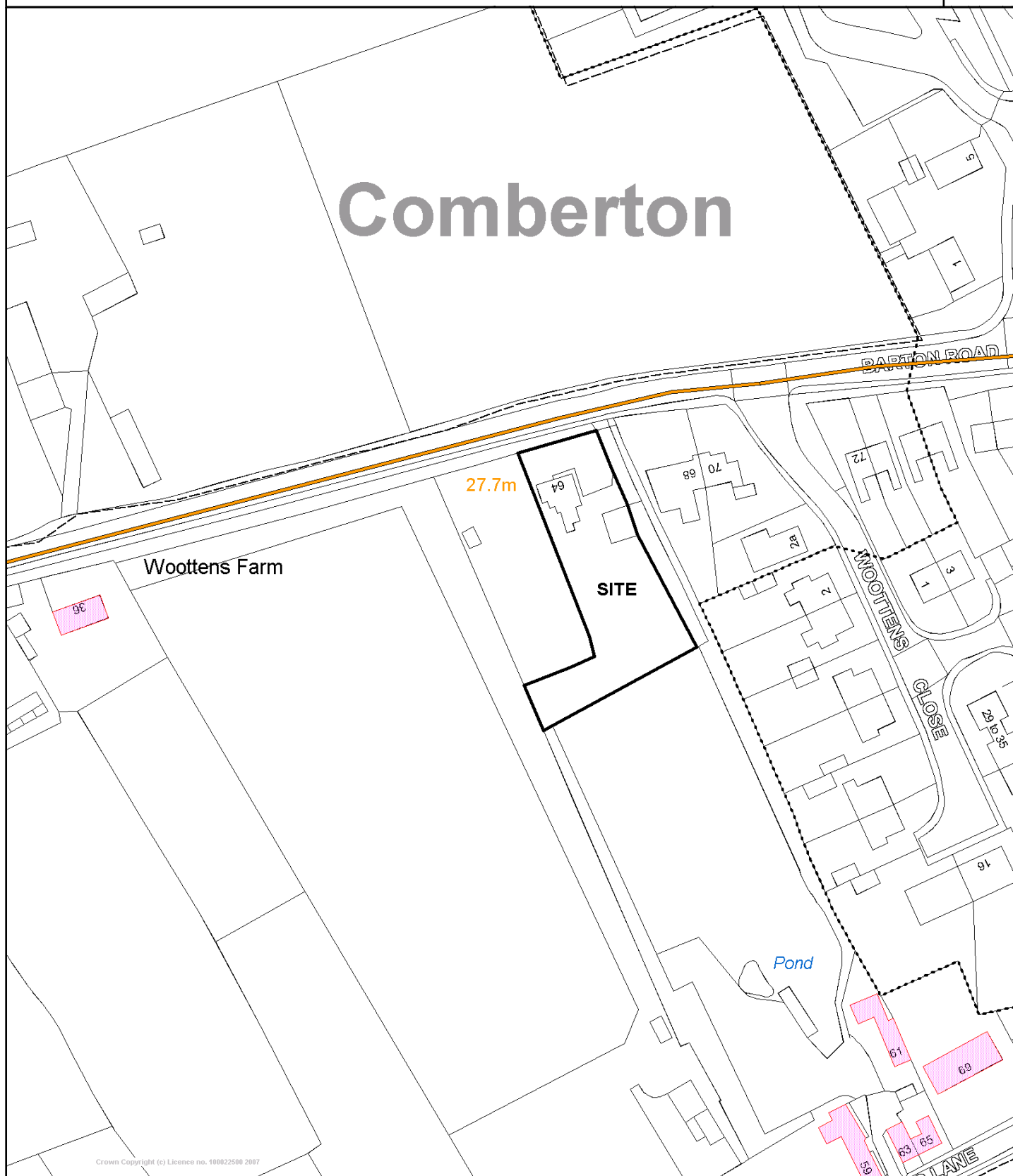
Planning History

3. **S/2259/06/F** – Extension and replacement garage for existing dwelling and erection of new dwelling on land to the rear. This application was refused on 9th March 2007 following the 7th March 2007 Planning Committee resolution to refuse planning permission. The applicant has appealed the decision and the outcome is awaited. The reason for refusal was:

“The introduction of a dwelling to the rear of the existing dwelling would result in the loss of a green and open area that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the Comberton Conservation Area. As such the dwelling would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of this Conservation Area and would be contrary to Policy EN30 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and Policy P7/6 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003. Any



Comberton



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enhancement of the site through the proposed works to the existing dwelling and the replacement garage building do not outweigh this identified harm”.

4. **S/1295/06/F** – Erection of two dwellings following demolition of existing house and garage. This application was withdrawn largely due to concerns that the replacement dwelling to the front was not of sufficient architectural quality and the test of preserve or enhance the Conservation Area within Policy EN30 of the, then, South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 was not satisfied.
5. **S/1432/06/CAC** – Application to demolish the existing dwelling was withdrawn.
6. **S/1031/83/F** – Planning permission was approved in July 1983 for a garage.

Planning Policy

7. **Policy P1/3** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (‘ the County Structure Plan’) requires a high standard of design and sustainability for all new development which provides a sense of place which responds to the local character of the built environment.
8. **Policy ST/6** of the 2007 adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy lists Comberton as a Group Village.
9. **Policy DP/2** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007 (LDFDCP) addresses the design of new development. It states, in part, that all new development must be of high quality design and should preserve or enhance the character of the local area and be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area.
10. **Policy DP/3** of the LDFDCP addresses development criteria. It states, in part, that planning permission will not be granted where the proposed development would have an unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity or village character.
11. **Policy SF/10** of the LDFDCP addresses the provision of outdoor playspace, informal open space and new developments. It states that all new residential developments will be required to contribute towards such provision.
12. **Policy CH/5** of the LDFDCP addresses development in Conservation Areas.
13. **Policy CH/6** of the LDFDCP addresses Protected Village Amenity Areas. It states that development will not be permitted within or adjacent to Protected Village Amenity Areas if it would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity or function of the village.

Consultation

14. **Comberton Parish Council** – recommends refusal. It states:
“The proposed second dwelling (to rear) has not responded to our major objections identified in previous applications. We are fundamentally opposed to the second dwelling as it is in a Conservation Area and is adjacent to a Protected Village Amenity Area. Hence this proposed development is contrary to Policy EN30 of SCDC Local Plan and Policy P7/6 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan and Policy CH6 (Protected Village Amenity Areas) since:

- a) This proposal would result in a loss of green and open area and does not “preserve or enhance the special character and appearance” of Comberton’s Conservation area.
- b) The development would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity and function of the adjacent village amenity area.
- c) The proposed development with the hedges, fencing and residential buildings would preclude the enjoyment of the existing open space.
- d) The minor reduction in ridge height compared to the previous application still does not allow an open view by any pedestrian.

The following additional objections also remain:

The public footpath should be ‘at least’ 2m wide – by ancient custom; the gate to the footpath is inadequate; there is no fence between the public footpath and the second driveway so that pedestrians on the footpath would necessarily be obstructed by wing mirrors and by any car doors opened on that side”.

15. **Local Highway Authority**

“The proposed 2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays should be shown for each crossing point and not conflated as shown.

The minimum width of the proposed access to the gates should be 5m to allow two domestic cars to pass or wait off the adopted public highway while the gates are being operated.

Please request the applicant to show the dimensions of the proposed turning area to the new dwelling, this should as a minimum be 11m in length (including any parking area), 3m wide with a radii of 6m.

The Highway Authority would prefer to see the two accessways conjoined this will remove the thin sliver of grass verge, this will make manoeuvring in and out of the accesses easier and remove a potential maintenance issue”.

16. **Conservation Manager**

“Observations:

The current application follows the refusal of a previous application for a broadly similar proposal. There was officer support for that proposal but it was opposed by Parish Council and rejected by committee. There are a number of components to this application and I shall comment on them separately:

Works to Existing House

The existing house dates from Edwardian times but has been unsympathetically altered over the years, with inappropriate replacement windows and concrete roof tiles in place of the original slate roof. The proposals for the house extend it into a 'double-pile' house and restore the original fenestration pattern on the front elevation and slate to the roof. The 'double pile' plan form is a traditional way of extending shallow depth dwellings and the changes to the house will be an enhancement to the conservation area.

New Garage for Existing House, Boundary Treatment and Drive

The existing garage is an unsightly pre-fabricated concrete structure and the proposed replacement is much more sympathetic addition to the Conservation Area. The new boundary between the existing house and the new dwelling to the rear is to be in hedging (a brick wall was proposed on the previous application). This will again be more sympathetic to the semi-rural nature of this part of Comberton. The driveway is to be in bound gravel which again is an appropriate material (and in this instance it will be necessary to use bound gravel due to the gradient of the drive).

New Dwelling to Rear

The massing of new dwelling to the rear has been significantly reduced from the previous proposal and now comprises a single storey dwelling with reduced roof height and no accommodation contained within the roof. The impact of this dwelling is therefore also reduced when compared to that on the previous proposal. The pattern of development in this part of Comberton has been noticeably changed in the latter half of the 20th Century and there is now significant development in depth away from the Barton Road immediately to the east of the site, and therefore a modest, subservient dwelling discretely sited to the rear of the dwelling will not cause further harm. Due to the ground contours the new bungalow would be largely hidden in views from Barton Road, but would be visible from the public footpath running along the east side of the site.

Recommendation:

Taken as a package, it is my opinion that these proposals would not result in harm to the Comberton Conservation Area and, indeed, the works to the existing dwelling and the removal of the existing garage would be a positive enhancement. I therefore raise no objection to this application. In the event of planning permission being granted I would wish to see a condition requiring the existing garage to be removed and the works to the existing dwelling completed before occupation of the new dwelling. I would also wish to see conditions requiring agreement of all materials, for all external windows and doors to be painted timber and for Permitted Development Rights to the new dwelling to be removed”.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

17. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
 - Impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area,
 - Impact upon the Protected Village Amenity Area and countryside,
 - Impact upon residential amenity,
 - Impact upon the footpath,
 - Impact upon highway safety.
18. Members may recall visiting the site on 5th March 2007 and resolving to refuse the earlier application at the March 2007 Planning Committee meeting. The reasons for the refusal are reproduced above. This application introduces changes to lessen the impact of the proposal.

Changes since the previous refusal

19. This revised proposal leaves the design of the extensions to the existing dwelling unchanged. The new garage has reverted to a single garage to replace the existing poorly designed double garage building. (The previous application initially proposed a single garage replacement but was later amended to a double garage replacement).

20. The main changes, however, are to the dwelling to the rear. The footprint is similar but the overall height has been reduced from 6.8m to 4.7m resulting in a change from a 4 bedroom chalet dwelling to a small scale 3 bedroom bungalow.
21. Additionally the proposed accesses have been split with a small green area to help reduce the level of hardstanding to the site frontage. Bound gravel is proposed for the surfaces in preference to block paving as previously proposed.

Impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area

22. In my previous report I stated:

"I note the comments of the Conservation Manager and that the proposal has been submitted following negotiations with officers. I accept some of the local criticism with regard to the erection of a dwelling to the rear and I agree that this element of the proposal neither preserves or enhances the Conservation Area. However, the proposal should be viewed as a whole. The benefit of the removal of a poor garage building and the improvement works to a very prominently sited existing dwelling amount to an overall development that will enhance the character and appearance of the Comberton Conservation Area.

The dwelling at the front will be far more visible in the street scene than the new one to the rear and its considerable improvements of design and materials together with an appropriately designed garage building to replace a building that is rather ugly will result in an overall enhancement of the site though I accept that the various elements of the proposal need to be weighed in coming to this view.

If Members are minded to approve the application I consider a condition requiring the works to the existing dwelling and replacement garage to be completed prior to the occupation of the new dwelling to ensure that the benefits of the proposal are delivered.

Although, as stated above, I consider that the new dwelling, on its own, would not 'preserve or enhance' I nevertheless do not consider it is otherwise inappropriate. The site lies within the village framework, there is no strong linear character and development in depth exists on the other side of the footpath. A modest dwelling here would not be out of character with the existing settlement pattern.

I am concerned that the block paving material for the driveway may not be wholly appropriate and I await the comments of the Conservation Manager in this regard. The detail of the material used can be controlled through a condition should Members be minded to grant planning permission.

The garage is of simple form and design and will not appear incongruous. It will not therefore harm the Conservation Area or street scene".

23. My views have not changed. The matter is one of balancing the enhancement to the front of the site with the loss of the green space to the rear. The scheme as revised and in particular the reduction in scale of the dwelling to the rear further tips this balance towards the scheme representing an overall enhancement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in my view.
24. I note the proposed use of bound gravel to the access and the introduction of a green separation between the accesses. Both are improvements over the previous scheme.

Protected Village Amenity Area

25. I do not consider the proposal will harm this designation. No part of the dwelling will lie within the PVAA (apart from a small paved area) and for the reasons given above in relation to the setting of the Conservation Area I do not consider the proposal will visually harm the setting of the PVAA. In relation to its character, amenity, tranquillity and function for the village this is an important and extensive largely undeveloped green space within the village. It does include buildings, dwellings and their curtilages but it also provides an open and informal space within an otherwise built up village centre. The proposed bungalow is low at only 4.7m in height and does not lie within this area. It lies at a lower ground level to that of the existing dwelling (finished floor level 19.25m and 20.0m respectively) and there are a number of mature trees within the PVAA that are between this site and the more open area of the PVAA. I do not therefore consider the character, amenity, tranquillity or function will be adversely compromised.

Residential amenity

Front dwelling extensions

26. There are no windows proposed in the eastern elevation at first floor level that would have the potential to overlook the side and garden of the adjacent property, No. 68. A condition to ensure that no windows are added could be imposed if Members are minded to grant planning permission.

Rear dwelling

27. The site abuts the gardens to No. 68 Barton Road and No 2 Woottens Close. The dwelling is single storey and set on lower lying ground. I do not consider there will be any loss of privacy to existing dwellings and its rear garden will not be overlooked. Some planting will be necessary to restrict views from the adjacent footpath.
28. I do not consider there are any material overbearing or overshadowing issues in relation to either dwelling.

Footpath

29. I have not received the comments of the County Council Definitive Maps Officer. However I note that no objections were raised to the earlier scheme. The public footpath will not be directly adversely affected and views from it will not be harmed for the reasons given above.

Highway Safety

30. Each property will be served off its own access and parking and turning can be achieved for both properties. Appropriate pedestrian visibility splays can also be achieved. Subject to conditions to ensure these controls are in place I do not consider the proposal will result in any danger to highway safety.
31. I note the comments of the Local Highways Authority with regard to the green space between the accesses. This can be omitted within the highway but retained within the site. I have suggested this to the LHA and it has agreed that this would be acceptable.

The previous refusal

32. The reason for refusal is reproduced above. For the reasons given above I consider this proposal to be an improvement over the original scheme but it does not overcome these reasons of refusal. In particular, the green and open area that was identified as positively contributing to the character and appearance of the Comberton Conservation Area would still be lost by the introduction of a dwelling, albeit a smaller dwelling. The enhancement through the proposed works to the existing dwelling and the replacement garage building have not changed (other than the proposed garage has reverted to a single garage) so they cannot be regarded as now outweighing the harm of the loss of the green and open area.
33. Members may consider that since the reason for refusal has not been addressed that the scheme should be refused. However, the officer recommendation for the earlier scheme was 'approval' after having undertaken the difficult task of balancing the identified enhancements to the Conservation Area against the impact of the dwelling to the rear. This subjective exercise led officers to conclude that overall the scheme resulted in a net enhancement. Members clearly felt that the balance tipped the other way.
34. The submitted scheme, in my opinion, tips this balance further in favour of granting approval and will further enhance the Conservation Area. The reduction from a 1½ storey chalet dwelling to a single storey bungalow will make the dwelling to the rear even less visible from the street scene and when viewed from the adjacent footpath its impact will be similarly reduced.
35. Although the scheme does not overcome the reason for refusal I remain of the opinion that the proposal overall represents an enhancement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and I invite Members to balance the positive and negative elements of this revised proposal in coming to a decision.

Open space requirements

36. Approximately 40m² informal open space is provided on site at the end of the access to the rear dwelling.
37. Since the refusal of the earlier application the Council has adopted a revised open space policy, SF/10, that now requires *all* residential developments to contribute to open space requirements. In this case a payment will be required for off site provision of formal outdoor sport space and children's play space. The payment, including maintenance sums will be in the order of £4,853 to be paid to the Parish Council. This can be secured through a condition to require a scheme for the provision of open space.

Recommendation

38. Approval subject to conditions to require submission of details of materials for walls, roofs, windows, doors and hard surfaced areas, landscaping and its implementation, boundary treatment, removal of permitted development rights for rear dwelling, no further windows in the first floor east elevation of front property, no occupation of the rear dwelling until the works to the front dwelling and the demolition of its existing garage building have been completed, parking, turning, access width and visibility, replacement of green space between accesses within the Highway with hard surface to be agreed and a scheme for the provision of open space.

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: P1/3** (Sustainable design in built development)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007 ST/6** (List of Group Villages)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007 DP/2** (Design of New Development)
DP/3 (Development Criteria)
SF/10 (Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space and New Developments)
CH/5 (Conservation Areas)
CH/6 (Protected Village Amenity Areas)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Character and Appearance of the Streetscene
 - Character and Appearance of the Comberton Conservation Area
 - Protected Village Amenity Area
 - Impact on the public footpath
 - Highway Safety

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2007
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Ref: S/2102/07/F and S/2259/06/F

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