

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

4th August 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0511/04/F - Fowlmere
**Extension and Conversion of Buildings into a Dwelling and Erection of
Garage/Carport, Mill Farm, Fowlmere Road, Melbourn, for Plum Developments**

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. This application, registered on 12th March 2004, seeks consent for the erection of an extension and conversion of buildings into a 4 bedroom dwelling at Mill Farm, on the road between Melbourn and Fowlmere.
2. The existing buildings comprise three single storey elements and were formerly used as offices/labs and pig housing. The buildings are converted to a 4-bedroom dwelling with an internal conservatory link. A new garage and carport is to be erected to the north of the buildings. The dwelling will be accessed from an existing entrance on this side of the buildings.
3. The application shows the removal of one of two small bungalows to the south of the buildings. The site abuts the River Shep to the south.

Planning History

4. Planning consent was granted in 2003 for the conversion of these buildings to a dwelling and small B1 office unit, following demolition of one of the small bungalows (Ref: **S/0498/03/F**). At the same time outline consent was granted for the erection of a replacement dwelling for the other bungalow on land to the southeast of the current application site (Ref: **S/0499/03/O**).

Planning Policy

5. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The County Structure Plan") states that development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
6. **Policy EM8** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") sets out criteria when considering the conversion, change of use or re-development of existing employment sites to non-employment uses within village frameworks.
7. There are no policies in the Local Plan 2004 that support the conversion of buildings in the countryside to residential use, other than as holiday lets.

Consultation

8. **Fowlmere Parish Council** recommends refusal. “The Committee recommend refusal of this application as the proposal is out of policy for the open countryside. The proposed dwelling is also far too large. The meeting would prefer all buildings to be demolished and replaced with a more modest bungalow in a better position with road safety in mind.
9. The **Local Highway Authority** has no objections to the scheme from a highway point of view although it points out that a small part of the land included within the application site appears to be within the public highway. Amended plans are required omitting this land. The existing access to Fowlmere Road should be permanently and effectively closed within 28 days of the new access being brought into use.
10. The **Environment Agency** points out that the proposed development is in a particularly sensitive location. Fowlmere Nature Reserve and Watercress Beds SSSI are within 0.5Km to the southeast. Fowlmere’s reedbeds and pools are fed by natural chalk springs and a chalk stream runs through the reserve, which runs adjacent to the proposed development site. The watercourse then flows northwest and provides the water supply for the fishery at Shepreth Mill trout farm, and subsequently to Willers Mill wildlife park (which includes a population of ornamental fish).
11. It is essential that the excellent quality of the water in this watercourse is maintained for the fish populations and associated pristine habitats.
12. It suggests that the site is subject to a detailed scheme for the investigation and recording of contamination and a report submitted together with detailed proposals in line with current best practice for the removal, containment or otherwise rendering harmless of any such contamination, as may be found.
13. Conditions should be attached to any consent requiring the submission and implementation of foul and surface water drainage.
14. The Agency also puts forward safeguarding comments.
15. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests conditions restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the construction process and requiring the submission of a scheme investigating any contamination of the site and putting forward any remedial works.

Representations

16. The occupier of “Paddleworth”, Fowlmere Road, has no objection.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

17. The principle of the conversion of these buildings to a dwelling was accepted at the time of the previous application. The narrow nature of the road between Fowlmere and Melbourn in my view make these buildings unsuitable for employment use and the associated traffic generation.
18. This application does not specifically include within its description the demolition of the existing small bungalow which currently stands in what would become part of the curtilage of the proposed dwelling, although this dwelling is shown as being removed. It is my view that this application can be considered on its own merits.

19. The previous approval for the conversion of these buildings showed the site accessed from an existing entrance close the River Shep. By accessing the buildings from the entrance to the north as now proposed it allows the area to the south of the buildings to become curtilage to the proposed dwelling down to the an approach this has been supported by the Ecology Officer. Although this alteration requires the erection of a garage and car port to the north of the buildings I am of the view that this should be supported given the improvements it allows to the land south of the building.
20. The applicant is in discussions with the Local Highway Authority concerning the boundary of the site. The area of land in dispute does not affect the principle of the scheme.
21. The requirements of the Environment Agency and Chief Environmental Health Officer can be dealt with by condition.
22. Having regard to the scale of the proposal and the recent history of approval, I do not consider it to be necessary to refer the application to the Secretary of State.

Recommendation

23. That delegated powers of approval be given to approve the application once the statutory period for the Departure Advertisement has expired and subject to safeguarding conditions.

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. In determining this application the Local Planning Authority has had regard to Policies in the approved development plan. In resolving to approve this application as a departure from the plan consideration has been given to the fact that the site benefits from an extant consent for the residential use of the buildings, to the scale of the proposed use and that the location of the site on a narrow road renders them unsuitable for employment use.
2. All other 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.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
Planning Application File S/0511/04/F

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