

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation                      3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004  
Control Committee  
**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/1863/04/F - Steeple Morden  
Refurbishment, Part Demolition, Re-build and Extension of Existing Building for use  
as 19 Flats, The White House, 66 Hay Street, for A R J Construction Ltd**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval**

### **Departure Application**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. The White House, 66 Hay Street, Steeple Morden is a former nursing home standing in extensive grounds (2.85ha) to the rear of residential properties in Hay Street. Access to the site is via a narrow driveway between houses in Hay Street and is also the route of a public footpath.
2. Members will recall granting delegated powers of approval for the extension and conversion of the building into 18 flats at the July meeting (Item 8) subject to the prior signing of a Section 106 Agreement requiring an education contribution and securing a scheme for an amenity area within the site for use by the Parish Council. Since that time the applicant states that structural and soil reports have highlighted the need to demolish and rebuild the older southern wing of the existing building.
3. This full application, registered on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2004, proposes the refurbishment, part demolition, rebuild and extension of the existing building to form 19 flats, comprising 4 one-bedroom and 15 two-bedroom units. The proposal includes 2 two-storey extensions on the east and west sides of the building at its northern end, small first floor additions over existing ground floor elements and the raising of the roof of the original part of the building by up to 2 metres from that proposed in the earlier application. A total of 38 car parking spaces are provided to the south and west of the building.
4. The proposal includes drawings showing the improvements to the existing access and footpath from High Street to meet agreed Highway Authority standards.
5. The application includes a proposal to provide an area of the grounds which will be made available to the Parish Council with access from the adjacent public footpath.
6. The site is outside the village framework and the application has been advertised as a departure from the development plan.

#### **Planning History**

7. Delegated powers to approve an application for the extension and conversion of the building into 18 flats at the July meeting (Item 8) subject to the prior signing of a Section 106 Agreement requiring an education contribution and securing a scheme for an amenity area within the site for use by the Parish Council. **(Ref: S/0989/04/F)**.

8. Planning consent was granted in the late 1980's for a substantial extension to the building in connection with its former use as a nursing home (**Ref: S/0989/04/F**).
9. Two applications for the demolition of the existing building and the erection of 8 dwellings were refused and dismissed at appeal in 2002. (**Refs: S/2105/00/F and S/0559/01/F**).
10. Following the dismissal of these appeals the site was sold and work commenced on converting the building for use as a psychiatric hospital. As this use falls within the same use class as a nursing home no formal consent for change of use was required, however applications for extensions to the building and erection of a fenced compound were withdrawn following considerable local opposition to the proposals. (**Refs: S/2171/02/F; S/2172/02/F; S/0235/03/F and S/0236/03/F**).

### **Planning Policy**

11. **Policy SP1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The County Structure Plan") states that development in the countryside will be restricted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular location.
12. **Policy SE4** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") identifies Steeple Morden as a Group Village where development is restricted to 8 dwellings on sites within the village framework. Exceptionally development may consist of up to 15 dwellings if this would make best use of a brownfield site.
13. **Policy SE8** of the Local Plan 2004 states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
14. **Policies HG7 and HG8** of the Local Plan sets out the Council's policy in respect of affordable housing.

### **Consultation**

15. **Steeple Morden Parish Council** recommends approval. Its comments are attached as Appendix 1.
16. **The Local Highway Authority** comments "as you are aware, the visibility splay associated with this development should be 2.4m x 70.0m. I have however, accepted a reduction in such splay to the north to that which can be achieved with the relocation of the post box. With the relocation of the post box the available splay may be in excess of the 45.0m stated, for this reason the dimension of 45.0m should not be given (unless of course it can be proven by survey that 45.0m is the maximum that can be achieved). No upstand radius kerbing must be installed at the junction. Any radii must be achieved within the surfacing material of the standard crossing of the verge. The crossing of the verge must be to CCC specification".
17. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests a condition be imposed on any consent restricting the hours of operation of machinery during the period of construction. Informatives are included in respect of the burning of waste on site and the need for a Demolition Notice.
18. **The Chief Financial Planning Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council** is concerned that adequate secondary school capacity is not available in this area to meet additional demand created by residential expansion. A contribution of £15,000

is requested to cover the cost of 3 secondary school places. Adequate primary school capacity exists.

19. The comments of the **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** will be reported verbally but it previously requested that adequate provision be made for fire hydrants.

### **Representations**

20. None received. The Statutory consultation period expires on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

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

21. The principle of the use of this building for conversion to 18 flats has already been agreed when considering the earlier application. The key issues to be considered here are whether there is sufficient justification to warrant a further departure from the development plan by allowing the rebuilding of the older southern section of the building, along with the introduction of an additional flat, having regard to the impact on residential amenity, the wider countryside and suitability of the access; and whether the scheme should provide an element of affordable housing.
22. The proposal to extend and convert the building into 19 units represents a scale of development which is considerably above that which would normally be acceptable in a group village. The Policy does exceptionally allow for development of up to 15 dwellings where it makes best use of a brownfield site but such sites should be within the village framework. The appeal Inspector recognised that that part of the site which contains the building could reasonably be described as brownfield land.
23. The additional height of the rebuilt section of the building will not, in my view, materially alter the impact of the building on the wider countryside. Although the increase in height will be perceived by adjoining properties in Hay Street there is sufficient distance between The White House and these properties for any impact not to have an adverse effect. The second floor has been designed with dormer style openings in the rear elevation facing away from residential properties, with rooflights in the west facing elevation towards Hay Street, with the exception of two dormer windows in the rebuilt section. A condition can be imposed to ensure that the rooflights are placed at sufficient height to prevent overlooking, although at the nearest point the existing building is 30m from the rear boundary of properties in Hay Street.
24. Adequate car parking has been provided within the site and whilst this requires the removal of some existing planting there is ample space for replacement planting to be carried out
25. The Local Highway Authority has confirmed that the access can be improved to cater for the scale of the development proposed.
26. Members have previously accepted that affordable housing should not be required. Given the applicant's claim that the additional unit now proposed is required to help offset the increased development costs due to the need to demolish and rebuild the southern section of the building, I consider that this earlier position remains appropriate.
27. A draft Section 106 Agreement has already been circulated by the officer and covers the requirement of the County Council for a education contribution and the provision of the amenity area.

28. The Parish Council requests that permitted development rights are withdrawn to maintain the character and setting of The White House and its surroundings. As the development is for flats no permitted development rights exist and therefore such a condition is not necessary.
29. The Parish Council requests replacement of any planting lost as a result of improvements to the existing access and driveway. There is limited room to require additional planting within the site along the improved access however, I understand that the applicant has agreed to undertake new planting within the garden of No64 and has discussed this with the occupier. Whilst planting on land outside the site could not be controlled by condition it could be included within the Section 106 Agreement if such planting were considered essential and could not be accommodated within the site.
30. A condition can be attached to any consent requiring details of any external lighting to be submitted for approval prior to its installation.
31. This is an unusual case given the scale of the existing building and its location just outside the framework of the village. I am therefore of the view that there is sufficient justification in this case to warrant a departure from the development plan.

### **Recommendation**

32. That the application be referred to the Secretary of State as a departure from the Development Plan on the grounds that Members are minded to approve the scheme subject to the prior signing of a Section 106 covering the provision of the amenity area and securing an education contribution, and subject to safeguarding conditions.

### **Informatives**

### **Reasons for Approval**

1. In resolving to grant planning permission for this development regard has been given to the policies contained within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004. Although the site is outside the village framework of Steeple Morden it is well related to the village and given previous uses of the site and its relationship to existing residential properties the proposal for refurbishment, part demolition, rebuild and extension of the existing building to form 19 flats is considered to be an acceptable alternative use.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Application Files S/1863/04/F; S/0989/04/F

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