

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

3 November 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/1700/04/F - Willingham
**Change of Use from Residential to Office and Business Use (Class B1) at The Grange,
44 High Street for Mrs J. McConkey**

Recommendation: Approval

Site and Proposal

1. This 0.21 ha site (approximately ½ acre) containing a two storey, detached, Regency period, brick dwelling and several outbuildings, is located at the corner of High Street and Covent Garden within the village framework of Willingham. The existing access to the site is from High Street between dwellings 42 and 44. Along the High Street frontage of the site is an old brick wall of varying height, with a modern brick wall along the Covent Garden frontage and the rear property boundary and several brick outbuildings along the northern property boundary. Residential properties surround the site on all sides, with part of the adjacent land to the west under construction.
2. The surrounding area along High Street is primarily residential with scattered retail, commercial and community uses.
3. This full application, received 13 August 2004 seeks to change the use of the dwelling to Office and Business Use (B1) with a floorspace of 269 sq meters. The proposal also involves the conversion of three existing outbuildings into storage and garaging and the demolition of the existing greenhouse, boiler room and iron shed.
4. Amendments to the application were received on the 23 September 2004 and 20 October 2004. These amendments included a change to the vehicular access arrangements with the permanent closure of the existing vehicular access off High Street and the creation of a new vehicular access off Covent Garden, in addition to changes to the car parking and landscaping layout on the site.
5. *In support of the application*, the agent states that the proposal is intended for the relocation of Cambridge Medical Communication Ltd and Cambridge Imaging from their existing premise at Times House, Fen End, Willingham, whose current lease expires next year. The proposed offices are expected to have 17 employees, that is the same as present.

Planning History

6. Outline planning permission was refused in 1988 for the erection of 8 flats on the southern portion of the site, and extending onto land to the west and south of the site **(Ref: S/1976/88/O)**.

Planning Policy

7. **Government Planning Policy Guidance 4 (PPG 4)** “Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms” outlines that it is now “generally recognised that it may not be appropriate to separate industry and commerce-especially small-scale developments-from the residential communities for whom they are a source of employment and services”. It adds that planning permission should normally be granted for commercial and industrial activities of an appropriate scale, particularly in existing buildings, within residential areas “unless there are specific and significant objections, such as a relevant development plan policy, unacceptable noise, smell, safety, and health impacts or excessive traffic generation. The fact that an activity differs from the predominant land use in any locality is not a sufficient reason, in itself, for refusing planning permission”.
8. **PPG 13** “Transport” aims to reduce the growth in the length and number of motorised journeys.
9. **Policy 2/1** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (“The County Structure Plan”) states that economic growth in the Cambridge sub-region will be supported by encouraging a wider range of business and industrial development and enabling the diversification of the rural economy.
10. **Policy 2/2** of the County Structure Plan identifies the aim of locating employment sites so as to:
 - “work towards a balance of jobs and housing;
 - maintain a range of types and sizes of premises for business requirements;
 - encourage a range of employment opportunities for local people;
 - reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car;
 - enable the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling for work-related journeys;
 - maximise the use of previously developed land and buildings; and
 - support rural services and facilities.”
11. **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; enabling the re-use of vacant, derelict or under-used land within villages; helping to achieve a balance of employment with the type and quality of local housing and helping to maintain or renew the vitality of rural areas.
12. **Policy 3/3** of the County Structure Plan states that “Local Planning Authorities will encourage the retention of local facilities and services within urban areas and assess the need for additional provision”.
13. **Policy 8/1** of the County Structure Plan and **Policy TP1** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (“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.

14. **Policy EM6** of the Local Plan states that within village frameworks of Rural Growth Settlements (which include Willingham), “planning permission will be granted for small-scale development in classes B1 – B8 providing that:
- (a) there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic conditions, village character and other environmental factors, and
 - (b) the development would contribute to a greater range of local employment opportunities, especially for the semi-skilled and unskilled, or where initial development is dependent on the use of locally-based skills and expertise”.

Consultation

15. **Willingham Parish Council** – Recommendation of Refusal. The Council opposed the “conversion of central residential properties into businesses and objecting to further traffic movement on an already very busy route with two adjacent junctions into major housing estates. Consideration should be given to a dedicated business park.”
16. In response to an amendment to the access arrangements being received, the Parish Council responded that “Willingham Parish Council has generally opposed business development in the main residential areas and opposed the original ‘change of use’ application partly on that basis. The amendment does not change this view.”
17. **Conservation Manager** – No objection
18. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** – No objection, subject to recommended conditions of consent.
19. **Local Highways Authority** originally objected to the proposed means of vehicular access to High Street by reason of inadequate visibility splays. A suggestion was made that the applicant might wish to investigate access from Covent Garden. Comments to be reported verbally at Committee upon the amended means of access.

Representations

20. None received at time of writing

Representations by Agent

21. The agent has submitted the following additional information in support of their application:
- The proposal is compatible with the relevant development plans and Government guidance;
 - The proposal will help to maintain the long term viability of these local businesses, which contribute to the village economy;
 - The proposal can be accommodated at this site without detriment to its village character or the largely residential environment;
 - The proposal will not create any additional traffic movements along the High Street, as it effectively involves the relocation of existing businesses within the village;

- As the proposed vehicular access will be off the residential estate road (Covent Road), any potential conflict with traffic moving in and out of this housing estate will not arise; and
- The County Highways Authority has not objected to these proposals in terms of traffic generation.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

22. The key issues for consideration in the assessment of this application are whether the principle of a change of use from residential to offices (class B1) is acceptable in this location, and potential impacts on residential amenity, highway safety and local employment.

Change of Use from Residential to Offices (Class B1)

23. Regional and local planning policies, in addition to Government guidance are supportive of the location of small-scale employment uses in predominantly residential areas, unless there is specific evidence of harm to adjacent land uses.

Residential Amenity

24. The proposed change of use is not considered to seriously harm the residential amenity of adjacent residential properties. The proposed office use will be contained in the existing brick dwelling and the site is well screened from adjacent properties. I am of the view that the residential amenity of adjacent properties can be adequately protected through the use of conditions of consent.

Highway Impacts

25. The proposal is not anticipated to result in a significant loss of highway safety for vehicles travelling along High Street (B1050) or Covent Garden. On-site car parking will be provided on the site, in compliance with Council's maximum car parking standards. It is noted that Local Highways Authority has not objected to the application on the grounds of traffic generation.

Impacts on Local Employment

26. The proposal will allow for the relocation and retention of existing businesses and 17 jobs within Willingham. The proposal is considered to be a suitable use of an existing vacant building within Willingham village.

Recommendation

Approve, as amended by layout plan franked 20th October 2004 subject to receipt of support from the Local Highways Authority

Conditions of Consent

1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
2. The existing vehicular access onto High Street shall be permanently and effectively closed within 28 days of the date of bringing into use of the new access in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in

writing by the Local Planning Authority; the vehicular access shall thereafter remain permanently closed.

(Reason - In the interests of highway safety).

3. Vehicular access to the application site shall be via a standard access crossing of the footway. No radii to be used. The width of the access shall be 5.0m with pedestrian splays each side of 1.5m by 1.5m.
(Reason - In the interests of highway safety).
4. Before development commences, a plan specifying the area and siting of land to be provided clear of the public highway for the parking, turning, loading and unloading of all vehicles visiting the site, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - In the interests of highway safety).
5. The permanent space to be reserved on the site for turning, parking, loading and unloading shall be provided before the use commences and thereafter maintained.
(Reason - In the interests of highway safety).
6. Sc5f – Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas.
(Reason – To minimise disturbance to adjoining residents).
7. Sc51 – Landscaping (Rc51).
8. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52).
9. RC26 Restriction of hours of use of power operated machinery during construction. (Rc 26).
10. Sc27 – Details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment. (Rc 27).

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: P2/1** (Employment Strategy), **P2/2** (General Location of Employment), **P2/6** (Rural Economy), **P3/3** (Local Facilities and Services in Urban Areas), and **P8/1** (Sustainable Development – Links between Landuse and Transport).
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: EM6** (New Employment at Rural Growth and Limited Rural Growth Settlements) and **TP1** (Planning for More Sustainable Travel).
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Residential amenity

- Highway safety

Other

Before existing outbuildings on the site are demolished, a Demolition Notice will be required from South Cambridgeshire District Council's Environmental Health Department establishing the way in which the property will be dismantled, including any asbestos present, the removal of waste, minimisation of dust, capping of drains and established hours of working operation.

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

- Planning Policy Guidance Note 4: Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms;
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport;
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004;
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003;
- Planning file Ref: S/1700/04/F and S/1976/88/O

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