

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

1st December 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/1137/04/F - Croydon

Conversion of Agricultural Buildings to 4 home/work dwellings (mixed use Classes C3 and B1), car parking and alterations to access at Croydon House Farm for Optima (Cambridge) Ltd.

Recommendation: Approval

Site and Proposal

1. The site lies off the B1042 to the south west of Croydon, approximately 1.2km outside the village framework. It forms a group of traditional and more modern agricultural buildings accessed off the B1042.
2. The more traditional buildings are predominantly single storey and enclose a courtyard area. To the north of this group lie two large modern buildings.
3. To the north of the site lies the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the medieval village of Clopton and the Clopton Way public footpath.
4. The full planning application, received 2nd June 2004, proposes the change of use of the traditional agricultural buildings to live/work units and the demolition of the two modern agricultural buildings to the north. Each dwelling will have one room dedicated to workspace and each will have a separate workspace unit.
5. The existing point of access off the B1042 is to be used as the sole access to the site. The point of access is proposed to be improved – involving amongst other measures, widening to a minimum of 5.5m with increased kerb radii.
6. The dwellings will be predominantly single storey with units 2 and 3 having a first floor element.
7. Parking is to be provided for 9 cars with an additional parking bay for the disabled, 4 visitor parking bays and a waste collection point to serve a bin store and green waste facility.
8. Gardens and paved courtyard areas are to be kept within the main courtyard that is formed within the group of traditional buildings.
9. The existing boundary walls to the south of the site are to be repaired and recapped.

Planning History

10. In July 1999 planning permission was granted for the change of use of part of the group of more traditional buildings (northern and western sides) to a furniture workshop. The permission has not been implemented.

11. In October 1999 planning permission was granted for the change of use of part of the group of buildings (on the eastern side) to holiday accommodation units. The permission has not been implemented.
12. In July 2003 an application for alteration, extension and conversion of agricultural buildings into 6 dwellings and B1/B8 use together with access improvements was withdrawn.
13. In May 2004 an application for conversion of agricultural buildings to six home/work dwellings (mixed use classes C3 and B1), car parking and alterations to access was withdrawn.

Planning Policy

Policy EM9 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (the Local Plan) – Teleworking.

14. This Policy states that the District Council will support proposals for teleworking schemes which bring home and workplace physically together on sites within village frameworks or by conversion or adaptation of rural buildings outside village frameworks provided that there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic, character and the environment generally.

Policy EN15 of the Local Plan – Development affecting Ancient Monuments or other Archaeological sites.

15. This Policy aims to protect, preserve and enhance sites and features of archaeological importance.

Policy CS10 of the Local Plan – Education

16. This policy states that in developments of 4 or more dwellings financial contributions will be sought towards the provision of additional permanent or temporary accommodation in those cases where the new development would cause the planning capacity of permanent buildings at the local primary and secondary schools to be exceeded during the 5 years following the date of the application.

Policy P2/6 – Rural Economy of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (“The County Structure Plan”) states (in part):

17. “Sensitive small-scale employment development in rural areas will be facilitated where it contributes to, amongst others:
 - providing opportunities for home working, or making good use of new information and communication technologies;
 - enabling farm or rural diversification where appropriate to the local area, including appropriate rural tourism (see Policies P4/1 and P4/2);
 - enabling the re-use of existing buildings;
 - helping to maintain or renew the vitality of rural areas.

Consultation

Croydon Parish Council

18. "Council believes the site to be outside the village envelope, and also contrary to SDCDC policy for redevelopment of redundant farm buildings, and so refuses the application with the following comments:
- The development of Croydon House farm buildings into Live and Work units, with significant traffic movements, is incompatible with the local environment and parish of Croydon.
 - The proposed site entrance onto the dangerous and accident-prone B1042 near to a bend is unacceptable.
 - Council has concerns about drains/sewerage by soakaway in this low-lying heavy chalk/clay area."

Local Highway Authority

19. "I note that the extent of development is now much less than that originally proposed.
20. It is my view that the traffic likely to be generated by the development proposed now is unlikely to be greater than that which could be expected to be generated by the holiday let (if implemented) and storage use of the buildings.
21. The improvements to the access as shown on plan 200/02/10 must be completed prior to the occupation of any of the dwellings."

Chief Environmental Health Officer

22. No objections subject to conditions to control the operating hours of power operated machinery and other safeguarding measures both for the development and during the conversion and renovation period.

Environment Agency

23. No objections subject to a condition to require submission and implementation of a scheme for the provision of foul water drainage.

Cambridgeshire County Council (Chief Financial Planning Officer)

24. "The County Council is concerned that adequate secondary school capacity is not available at Bassingbourn Village College to meet additional demand for secondary education that can be expected to be created by this development.
25. In these circumstances, we would ask that you seek a contribution from the developer to cover the cost of one secondary school place in the sum of £10,000."

Ecology Officer

26. "It is quite clear that several of the barns have been used as rest sites for a barn owl(s) as feathers and pellets were found. I am not able to confirm if any nests are present in the barn to be demolished as I did not go on to the upper levels of the silos. The farmer confirmed that he knew barn owls were present. *Clearly in completing the application form (part 6f) this fact has either not been considered or ignored.*

A condition is required in order to protect the barn owl(s)...

There is evidence of bats feeding within at least one of the barns proposed for conversion. However, I could not detect any obvious roost sites. Many of the barns were very droughty and dusty which is generally indicative of sub-optimal conditions.

Nevertheless, bats are utilising parts of the site and measures should be incorporated within the new development to sustain them... [This to be controlled by condition]

Various species of birds are clearly using the structures for nesting. Condition required to protect nesting birds..."

27. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (Community Risk Management Group)**
"...the Fire Authority is of the opinion that additional water supplies for firefighting are not required."

Representations

28. Six letters of objection have been received, two from the occupiers of The Willows, Lower Road, two from Meadowside, Lower Road and two from Croydon House Farmhouse, Lower Road.

29. The main points of objection are:

The Willows

30. Object to noise and pollution from car park immediately behind very small back garden which is the only place to go to escape the noise from traffic on the B1042.
31. If the demand for home/working dwellings is so high why aren't other buildings of this type being built in Cambridgeshire.
32. What happens if the work units fail, as they probably will and how will the occupation be monitored.
33. Noise would spoil the peace and tranquillity that we have enjoyed for eight years.
34. We do not want a small housing estate, a small trading estate or a car park adjoining our back garden.
35. Car parking should be to the north of the buildings where demolition is proposed.
36. The barn attached to the garden wall (shown as workspace unit 1) should be demolished and a small woodland planted which would give appropriate separation and be good for the birds and wildlife.
37. The stated 32 traffic movements per day represents a 3200% increase on what we used to have when we just had the odd tractor or vehicle occasionally using this site.
38. There have been two people killed along the stretch of the B1042 in the last four years, and there have been numerous other accidents. Another 32 vehicles will add to the accidents and loss of life.
39. No bus service and no footpaths on the B1042 for people to walk half a mile to the nearest bus stop.

Meadowside

40. Bats are seen around the buildings during summer evenings
41. Object to demolition of building attached to one of my buildings.

42. The modern farm buildings, erected with grant aid, have until very recently been in use for grain storage and could be used to store hay, silage or fodder for animals that could use the land to the north of the buildings for grazing. They could also be used to house such animals in inclement weather. They should remain in agricultural use.
43. What is going to happen to the 35 acres of grassland now neglected by Optima, part of which forms part of the preserved medieval site of Clopton.
44. Highway safety [points raised similar to those above from The Willows]

Croydon House Farmhouse

45. No objection to work-from-home office based use or residential development of an appropriate scale but object to industrial or workshop activity which would materially increase the heavy goods traffic.
46. Highway safety issues through the use of the access. The amount of traffic should compare with that which a working farm would generate.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

47. The key issues are: sustainability, highway safety, impact on residential amenity and impact on the surrounding countryside.

General

48. The proposal is supported by Policy EM9 of the Local Plan provided the use is for teleworking. This policy falls within the employment section of the Plan. It is my view that the site should be considered primarily as a place of employment with associative residential use and in this way differs from dwellings with 'studies'.

Sustainability

49. The site lies well outside any defined settlement framework and is only realistically accessible by car. Cycling on the B1042 would not be safe, there is no bus service and no footpaths. This is not a site that would be considered acceptable for conversion to housing for these reasons.
50. The proposal aims to bring home and work place together which will reduce the need to travel. Journeys to schools, shops and doctors etc will of course be necessary by car but provided the workplace and home are located together the proposal is more sustainable than if these buildings were simply converted to residential. It will also meet the needs of benefiting the rural economy by the reuse of buildings but in a more sustainable way.
51. It will be important to ensure that the occupation of the dwellings is linked to the use of the employment space and the use of the employment space is restricted, in the main, to occupiers of the dwellings and that the employment space is not converted to additional residential accommodation. To this end it will be essential for the applicants to enter into a Section 106 agreement to control these matters.

Highway safety

52. I note the comments of the Local Highway Authority. Previous applications have been withdrawn because the scale of proposals and the resultant harm to highway safety would, in all probability, have led to refusals of planning permission. Following these withdrawals the applicants approached the Local Highway Authority to ascertain what level of vehicle movements would be similar to the active use of the site as a farm or

by the permitted uses. This proposal follows that negotiation and it is now considered that the 32 vehicle movements stated in the application would be similar to that that is already permitted.

53. The required improvements to the access can be secured by condition.

Residential amenity

54. The proposal will introduce a degree of activity to the rear of the three properties that front the road. However this should be judged in light of the potential agricultural use that could occur on site and in my view is acceptable. It will, however, be important to ensure that the employment uses do not generate unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance. To this end the uses should be limited to Class B1(a), offices.

55. Part of the development will back immediately onto the rear garden wall of The Willows. Car parking was shown within 2m of this wall but has since been moved to 7m away following negotiations and a 7m wide planted area created. One of the workspace units will be adjacent to this wall but I do not consider that the level of noise and activity from within this building will be likely to have an adverse impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of The Willows and in any case will be less disruptive than the use of this building for agricultural purposes.

Countryside

56. The planning application withdrawn in July 2003 proposed the conversion of the more traditional buildings to 6 dwellings and the use of the two larger modern buildings for B1 and B8. Apart from objections on highway safety, the scale of development was felt to be excessive and to have too great an impact on its surroundings.

57. This proposal involves the demolition of the two large modern agricultural buildings which will be to the benefit of the visual quality of the surrounding countryside and to the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Clopton.

58. The activity, gardens, car parking etc is largely confined to the inner courtyard of the proposal. The openings in the external elevations have been the subject of negotiation. I consider that the number and style of openings is not excessive or out of keeping with the surrounding rural character and will not adversely impact on the visual quality of the countryside. Significant planting has been done around the site which will in time help soften the development. Notwithstanding this, landscaping will need to be controlled by conditions.

Condition of buildings

59. A full structural survey of the buildings has been submitted. This survey was submitted for the most recent previous application and in a memo dated 4th February 2004 from the Senior Building Control Surveyor it was stated: "I visited the site on 3rd February 2004. The buildings appear to be of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction."

Ecology

60. I note the comments of the Ecology Officer and consider that the conditions suggested are necessary.

Car Parking

61. No car parking standards exist specifically for live/work units. However the standards for dwellings require a maximum of 2 spaces per dwelling. The 9 spaces provided plus the additional disabled space and visitor spaces are in excess of this but are not in my opinion excessive as it is anticipated that the cars will be on site for more time

than in a typical residential situation (where people are at work) and space will be required for the occasional delivery vehicle or perhaps visiting clients etc.

Conclusion

62. The buildings are capable of conversion, the demolition of the existing large modern buildings will be of benefit to the quality of the surrounding countryside and the medieval Clopton monument, the use is sustainable, the impact on highway safety acceptable and the proposal does not in my opinion adversely affect the amenity of neighbours.

Recommendation

63. Subject to the prior signing of a Section 106 agreement to ensure the live/work relationship is maintained and to secure the education contribution, Approval, as amended by plans reference 200/02/03 E and 200/02/04 D and subject to the following conditions:
1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 2. Sc5a – Details of materials for external walls and roofs (Rc5a(ii));
 3. Sc51 – Landscaping (Rc51);
 4. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52);
 5. Sc60 – Details of boundary treatment (Rc60);
 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. The workspace areas shall not be used as additional living accommodation unless expressly authorised by planning permission granted by the Local Planning Authority in that behalf. (Rc – To ensure compliance with Policies P2/6 of the County Structure Plan 2003 and EM9 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.)
 8. The live/work units, hereby approved, shall not be occupied until the access improvement works, indicated on plan No. 200/02/10, hereby approved, have been completed in accordance with the approved details. (Reason – In the interest of highway safety).
 9. During the period of renovation and conversion, and thereafter, no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays) unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions. (Reason – To protect the amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties.)
 10. Details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment, including equipment for heating, ventilation and for the control or extraction of any odour, dust or fumes from the buildings but excluding office equipment and vehicles and the location of the outlet from the buildings of such plant or equipment, shall be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the local

Planning Authority before such plant or equipment is installed; the said plant or equipment shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and with any agreed noise restrictions. (Reason – To protect the amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties.)

11. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of foul 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/specification at such time as may be specified in the approved scheme. (Reason – To prevent the increased risk of pollution to the water environment.)
12. The live/work units, hereby approved, shall not be occupied until the buildings annotated on plan no. 200/02/05 B as “Agricultural usage grain / machinery storage 936m² (to be removed)” have been completely demolished, all materials removed from the site and the land restored to its former condition. (Reason – To ensure that, visually the development relates well to its surroundings).
13. Prior to any form of disturbance, demolition or destruction of the present buildings upon the site two artificial barn owl nest boxes shall be erected. Full details of design, siting and their means of erection shall be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority prior to any development commencing. (Reason - Conforms to policy EN 14 of the Local Plan 2004 regarding the conservation of barn owls in agricultural buildings).
14. Prior to any development commencing full details of measures for the provision of artificial roost sites for bats including their design, siting and means of erection shall be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. (Reason - Conforms to policy EN 14 of the Local Plan 2004 regarding the conservation of bats).
15. No demolition or destruction of the present buildings upon the site shall take place during the period between February 15th to July 15th (inclusive) in order to prevent damage or disturbance to nesting birds. Should nesting birds be present within the buildings then a method statement on the progression of the development and measures for compensatory nest provision shall be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority prior to works commencing. (Reason - All nesting birds receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. Additionally, the Barn Owl is a Schedule 1 listed bird which affords it a greater level of protection including that against reckless disturbance. In order to conform with policy EN 13 of the Local Plan 2004 regarding Protected Species).

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: P2/6**
(Rural Economy)

- **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:** EM9 (Teleworking), EN15 (Development affecting Ancient Monuments or other Archaeological sites), CS10 (Education)
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 including noise disturbance.
 - Highway safety
 - Visual impact on the locality
 - Sustainability

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Working planning files reference S/1137/03/F, S/2312/03/F, S/1137/04/F, South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003.

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