

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee 5<sup>th</sup> January 2005

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/1964/04/RM - Sawston**  
**Erection of Medical Centre and Ambulance Station together with Car Park and**  
**Associated Works at Allotment Site, London Road for**  
**Primary Asset Management**

**Recommendation: Approval**  
**Date of Determination: 17<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

### **Site and Proposal**

1. The site is a 0.6 hectare (1.5 acre) area comprising the southern section of allotment gardens on London Road. To the east of the site, beyond an established hawthorn hedge, is a large area of public open space beyond which lies a residential estate. A footpath leading to the recreation area runs along the southern boundary and separates the site from the closest residential property that fronts London Road. There are some significant trees along the west side of the site, close to the southern end, that are protected by TPO and an approximately 1.8 metre high hawthorn hedge that forms the entire western boundary of the site. The northern boundary is unscreened.
2. This reserved matter application, submitted on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2004 and amended on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1<sup>st</sup> December and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2004, seeks to erect a two storey medical centre on the site to replace the existing medical practice in Link Road.
3. A design statement submitted with the application states that the new building will house the basic GP requirements for the local practice along with extensive PCT accommodation and primary care clinics. The scope and scale of the services generate an extensive schedule of accommodation and the size of the building created is therefore far larger than the existing health centre. The site sits approximately 1 metre below the level of the road. This, together with the minimal ceiling heights, creates a structure that sits low in the site. The building will predominantly be constructed of buff brickwork with a slate roof.
4. The medical centre would have a total floorspace of 2757m<sup>2</sup> and would employ 93 people (26 full time and 67 part time). It would be open between the hours of 8am and 6.30pm, Monday to Friday.

### **Planning History**

5. **S/2392/02/O** – Outline planning permission was granted for the medical centre with all matters being reserved for further consideration. This consent was subject to a number of conditions including the widening of the footway at the front of the site.

### **Planning Policy**

6. The site lies within the village framework and also within a Protected Village Amenity Area.
7. **Policy SE10** of the Local Plan states that development of such areas will not be permitted if it would be harmful to the distinctive qualities and functioning lying behind their inclusion in the Protected Village Amenity Area.
8. **Policy Sawston 2** of the Local Plan resists the change of use of recreational land unless the land is no longer required for public recreational use or an alternative area of land, equally suited to the purpose of public recreation, will be provided as a replacement.
9. **Policy P1/3** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The County Structure Plan") stresses the need for a high standard of design and a sense of place which corresponds to the local character of the built environment.

### **Consultations**

10. **Sawston Parish Council** recommends refusal of the application stating:  
  
 "The Parish Council still wish to have traffic calming measures in place to control the traffic flow in London Road. Suggestions:
  - A roundabout;
  - Traffic calming measures;
  - Pedestrian crossing with central refuge
 This application does not address any of these issues."
11. **The Local Highways Authority** states that there are off-site works required in relation to this proposal, namely the footway along the entire frontage of the site needs to be increased in width to a minimum of 1.8 metres. Similarly the existing footway to the northeast between the site and Johns Acre needs to be widened to a minimum of 1.8 metres. The access should be a standard access crossing of the footway/verge with no upstand radius kerbing to be used. The passage of pedestrians on the footway adjacent to London Road should not be interrupted by the access. There is a difference in level between the site and the public highway and cross sections should be submitted indicating how the continuation of the footway is to be achieved.
12. Cross sections have been submitted and I am awaiting further comments from the Local Highways Authority.
13. **The Environment Agency** comments that this Authority will be required to respond in respect of surface water drainage related issues. (Relevant conditions were imposed on the outline planning permission.)
14. **The Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** raises no objections, stating that additional water supplies for firefighting will not be required.
15. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** raises no objections in principle although does express concerns about potential noise disturbance to residents during the construction period. As such, it is recommended that a condition restricting hours of use of power operated machinery be applied to any planning consent. (This condition was imposed on the outline planning permission.)

16. **The Trees and Landscape Officer** is satisfied that the scheme, as amended, affords the oak trees along the frontage of the site sufficient clearance. A condition requiring protective fencing and submission of a landscaping scheme should be attached to any planning consent. Some concern is expressed about the car park encroaching into the hedging at the front of the site and its practical long term retention and about the footpath around the building encroaching into a proposed area of planting to the rear. Furthermore, the proximity of the building and its windows would increase pressure to avoid planting to some sections. (Landscaping is an outstanding reserved matter and a scheme is still required to be submitted.)

### **Representations**

17. Letters of objection have been received from Nos. 14, 22, 39 and 72 London Road as well as from the Orchard Park Residents Association. The main points raised are:
- The health centre should be located in the centre of the village;
  - London Road is not suitable for such a public building;
  - The car park must be controlled. Shoppers take up spaces at the present health centre forcing patients to park elsewhere;
  - The windows on the first and second floors of the southern elevation should be fitted with obscure glass to prevent overlooking of No.39 London Road;
  - The two parking spaces nearest to no.39 should be removed;
  - The entrance gates should be locked at all times when the medical centre is not in use;
  - The trees to be planted adjacent to the southern boundary should be of an evergreen variety;
  - The large amount of parking will ruin the rural aspect from the main London Road;
  - A safety audit should be submitted as part of the application;
  - The building is 10.8 metres high and not of domestic scale;
  - No off road access for buses has been made and no crossing has been provided. This will result in highway safety problems;
  - There is no safe walkway to the centre of the village;
  - The number of employees will increase the traffic flow and accident rate;
  - The galvanised vertical bar fence will ruin the rural appearance of the area;
  - Drainage issues need to be resolved;
  - Concerns expressed with regards to the financing of the project.

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

18. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application relate to:
- The principle of the development;
  - The design/visual appearance of the building and its impact upon its surroundings;
  - Residential amenity;
  - Highway safety.

#### ***The principle of the development***

19. The site lies within a Protected Village Amenity Area where development is contrary to the aims of the Local Plan which seeks to protect open spaces for recreational uses. The principle of erecting a medical centre on this site has, however, previously

been considered and established. The outline application was considered by Members at Committee in March 2003 where it was agreed that the benefit of providing such a facility outweighed the harm caused by the loss of part of the allotment site.

20. The proposed medical centre has a total floorspace of around 2700m<sup>2</sup>, a figure well in excess of the 1800m<sup>2</sup> suggested in the illustrative layout accompanying the outline application. I would like to stress that all matters were reserved for further consideration under the outline consent and the overall size of the building has not therefore previously been agreed.

### ***Visual impact of the development***

21. The proposed building is a 2 storey structure standing approximately 10.6 metres high and comprising buff walls and a slate roof. It would be set around 0.5 metres lower than the road level. Although the structure would undoubtedly be a dominant feature in the streetscape, I am satisfied that the design is of sufficient quality to ensure that the development would not result in material harm to the character of the area.
22. The initial application sought to erect a 2 metre high steel fence around the entire site and this was considered by Officers to be unduly intrusive. The plans have therefore been amended to set the fence at least 2 metres in from all boundaries of the site thereby enabling some room for planting along the currently open northern boundary of the site as well as providing sufficient space to access the existing hedges along the eastern and western boundaries. The amended plans are still indicating that the boundary fence would be of vertical steel bar design and, although it would be screened to a large extent by existing and new planting, I have strong reservations about the visual impact of the style of fence proposed. I have discussed the matter with the applicant's agents who have indicated verbally that they would be happy to consider alternative fence designs and I would suggest that a condition requiring boundary treatment details be attached to any planning consent.
23. The Trees and Landscape Officer has expressed some concerns about the proximity of some of the paved areas to the hedge. These parking areas adjacent to the western boundary and footpath next to the eastern boundary, however, do not encroach into the existing hedge but rather into an area of additional planting shown between the existing hedge and new fence. Furthermore, there are additional pockets of land within the site between the building and northern, eastern and southern boundaries that have been set aside for further landscaping.

### ***Residential amenity***

24. The occupiers of No.39 London Road, located to the south of the site, have requested that all south facing first floor windows be obscure glazed. The south elevation of the proposed medical centre is sited approximately 30 metres away from the north side elevation of No.39. This distance, together with the fact that it is intended to plant trees along the southern boundary of the site, leads me to conclude that such a requirement would be unduly onerous. I am also satisfied that the parking spaces nearest to no.39 are sufficiently distant to prevent any undue loss of amenity to the occupiers of this neighbouring dwelling.
25. Concerns have been expressed about the ambulance garage adjacent to the frontage of the site and its implications for highway safety as well as the amenities of nearby residents if sirens are started on site. The applicants agent has clarified that

there would be no ambulances accommodated on the development and that the garage is intended for paramedic cars only.

### **Highway safety**

26. Concerns have been raised by the Parish Council and local residents about the highway safety implications of the development. The Local Highways Authority has been consulted on the application and has not raised any objections to the scale of the building/use and its implications for highway safety, subject to the widening of the footpath from the site to John's Acre to the north. The requested footpath widening is a condition of the outline consent and therefore does not need to be reapplied to any reserved matter permission. Cross sections through the vehicular access (to ensure a smooth transition of the footpath across the access) have been requested and I am awaiting the Highways Authority's response to the submitted drawings.
27. The Parish Council's request for traffic calming together with the provision of a pedestrian crossing was also made in response to the outline application and was reported to Members at the March 2003 Committee meeting. Members resolved to approve the application subject to discussions between the Highways Authority, applicants and planners to establish the extent of highway/footway improvements required to improve pedestrian access between the medical centre and the centres of Sawston and Pampisford. A meeting was subsequently held on site where it was agreed that the footway should be widened to 1.8 metres for the length of the site and as far north as John's Acre. No further improvements/measures were considered to be necessary.
28. The provision of a pedestrian crossing and traffic calming measures cannot now be introduced or conditioned as part of any reserved matter consent. The feasibility of providing traffic calming/a pedestrian crossing would need to be explored separately between the applicants, the Highways Authority, Parish Council and local residents and can only be implemented if the local residents are fully supportive of the measures.
29. This Authority's car parking standards require the provision of 2 spaces per consulting room together with 1 space per 2 members of staff whilst the cycle parking standards require 2 spaces per consulting room. There are a total of 31 consulting rooms and 93 members of staff resulting in a requirement for 109 car parking spaces and 62 cycle spaces. The scheme as amended provides a total of 90 and 30 spaces respectively. Whilst these figures fall short of the requirements of the Local Plan, I must stress that the car parking standards are maximum rather than minimum standards. Bearing in mind the number of part time staff intended to be employed at the medical centre together with the fact that the medical centre lies on a bus route and is within cycling/walking distance of the centres of both Sawston and Pampisford, I am satisfied that the shortfall in provision is not likely to result in undue highway safety problems.

### **Recommendation**

30. Subject to no objections being received from the Local Highways Authority in respect of the cross sections, approve the reserved matters of siting, design, external appearance and means of access in accordance with the outline planning permission, ref. S/2392/02/O dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2004, as amended by plans date stamped 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1<sup>st</sup> December and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2004, subject to the following additional conditions:

1. Sc5a – Details of materials for external walls and roofs (Rc5aii);
2. Sc5 – Details of the solar thermal collectors (Rc5aii)
3. Sc56 – Protection of trees during construction (Rc56);
4. Sc57 – Landscaping (protection of existing trees) (Rc57);
5. Sc58 – Retention of hedges along the eastern and western boundaries of the site (Rc58);
6. Sc60 – Details of boundary treatment, including details of the type of boundary fencing to be erected (Rc60);
7. Para B10 (Rc10)

## **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 Plan 2004: SE10** (Protected Village Amenity Areas) and Policy Sawston 2
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 and overlooking issues
  - Highway safety
  - Visual impact on the locality
  - Impact upon setting of adjacent Conservation Area

### **General**

1. Should driven pile foundations be proposed, then before works commence, a statement of the method for construction of these foundations shall be submitted and agreed by the District Environmental Health Officer so that noise and vibration can be controlled.
2. During demolition and construction there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site except with the prior permission of the Environmental Health Officer in accordance with best practice and existing waste management legislation.

**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 file Refs: S/1964/04/RM and S/2392/02/O

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