

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2nd June 2010

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)/
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S/0438/10/F - LONGSTANTON

Continued Use of Land as Immigration Reception Centre, Former Oakington Barracks, Rampton Road for the United Kingdom Border Agency

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 23rd June 2010

Notes:

This application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because it is a major development. The Officer recommendation is also contrary to the response from one of the Parish Councils that was consulted.

Site and Proposal

1. The existing immigration reception centre is located on the former Oakington Barracks, which is situated to the south east of the village of Longstanton and to the north of Oakington. The site has an area of approximately 22 hectares and comprises the former main accommodation blocks within the barracks, the boundaries of which are fenced. It does not include the former industrial units, hangars or runway area to the south of the site.
2. A full planning application was received on 24th March 2010, for the continued use of the land and buildings as an immigration centre, for a temporary period up to 30th June 2013. The use of the site as an immigration centre falls within use class C2A (secure residential institutions). Although a date in 2013 is identified in the application documents the applicant hopes to vacate the site by summer 2011.

Planning History

3. **S/2218/02/CIRC 18/84** - Continuation of use of land and buildings as an immigration reception centre for a further temporary period of 2 years – no objections.
4. **S/1172/04/CIRC 18/84** - Continuation of use of land and buildings as an immigration centre for a further temporary period to 31 December 2006 – no objections.
5. **S/7001/05/O** - Application for the new settlement of Northstowe (up to 8,000 dwellings and associated development) – withdrawn.
6. **S/2424/06/F** – Erection of 5.2 metre high security fence – refused due to the visual impact and the increase in the perceived threat to the local community.
7. **S/2040/06/F** – Continuation of use of land and buildings as an immigration centre for a further temporary period to 31 December 2007 – refused, due to

the requirement of the proposed 5.2 metre high security fence to facilitate the continued change of use.

8. **S/2333/07/F** – Application for continued use of land and buildings as an immigration centre to 30th June 2010. Approved subject to conditions requiring the following:
 - (a) The development shall be for a temporary period up to 30th June 2010;
 - (b) The Home Office shall undertake to hold annual liaison meetings open to the local community and Parish Councils in Longstanton Parish for the duration of this authorised use; and
 - (c) The number of detainees held at the Centre shall not exceed 400.
9. **S/7006/07/O** – Application for the new settlement of Northstowe (approximately 9,500 dwellings and associated development) – pending decision.

Planning Policy

10. East of England Plan 2008:
N/A
11. South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document, adopted January 2007:
N/A
12. South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD, adopted July 2007:
DP/3 - Development Criteria
13. Northstowe Area Action Plan, adopted July 2007
E3 – Delivering Northstowe
14. Supplementary Planning Documents, adopted 2009:
N/A
15. **Circular 11/95 (The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions)** - Advises that conditions should be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

Consultations

16. **Bar Hill Parish Council** has not responded to the consultation.
17. **Cottenham Parish Council** recommends approval.
18. **Histon and Impington Parish Councils** have made no recommendation.
19. **Longstanton Parish Council** recommends approval.
20. **Oakington and Westwick Parish Council** recommends approval.

21. **Over Parish Council** has made no recommendation.
22. **Rampton Parish Council** recommends approval.
23. **Willingham Parish Council** recommends refusal, on the grounds of an inappropriate location and could potentially delay the new town of Northstowe.
24. **East of England LGA** this proposal does not give rise to any conformity issue with the East of England Plan (May 2008).
25. **GO- East** is unable to comment in case the planning application comes before the Secretary of State.
26. **The Environmental Agency** has no objection, in principle, to the proposal.
27. **Police Architectural Officer** has no objection to the application.
28. **The Highways Agency** has no objection.

Representations

29. A representation has been received from Gallagher Estates on behalf of the Joint Promoters for Northstowe (Gallaghers Estates and the Homes and Communities Agency). The Joint Promoters are grateful to the Home Office for confirming their intention to vacate Oakington barracks in a timely manner and that this is likely to be by summer 2011.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

Impact upon the delivery of Northstowe

30. The previous application for a continued change of use of the site was submitted several weeks before the outline application for Northstowe. The application was then determined at a time when there was a clear timetable for the delivery of the new town. Although all sides are still committed to the delivery of Northstowe the project has slowed down and it has been well over a year since officers last met with the Joint Promoters or their consultants in order to discuss potential amendments to the outline application.
31. Notwithstanding the fact that the determination of the Northstowe planning application is presently delayed the applicant states that its lease of the site has a three-month break clause that can be implemented by either the applicant or the owner of the site, the Homes and Communities Agency. With this clause in place the Joint Promoters have sufficient control of the site to allow for the timely delivery of Northstowe, once planning consent has been granted. This should therefore allay the concerns expressed by Willingham Parish Council.
32. Although permission has been sought until 2013 the applicant hopes to vacate the site before then. The request for a further three-year period is considered appropriate in order to limit the need for the applicant to seek a further planning consent if its target date to vacate the site is not met

Impact on the character and amenity of the area

33. Unlike the two 2006 applications that were refused there are no physical alterations that are proposed to facilitate the continued use of the land and buildings as an immigration centre.

34. In terms of the location of the development with the delay in the delivery of Northstowe this site, which has already been modified to house detainees, would most likely become derelict once vacated by the applicant. The continued use of the site allows for the buildings to be kept in a good condition. In addition to this the Centre's staff also contribute positively to the local economy.

Compliance with the conditions of S/2333/07/F

35. Condition 1: This application has been submitted within an appropriate timescale to ensure that a new, time limited planning consent can be in place before 30th June 2010, which is the date when the existing consent expires.
36. Condition 2: Community liaison meetings have been held on 28th April 2008 and 23rd July 2009. Although no meeting has yet been held this year by attaching the same condition to this planning consent the applicant would be required to hold a meeting within three months of the grant of planning permission.
37. Condition 3: The applicant has confirmed that the number of detainees shall not exceed 400.

Staffing and Traffic

38. Approximately 300 staff are employed at the reception centre working on a range of shifts and in a variety of positions. There is no proposal to increase the number of staff or detainees. Therefore the transport movements to and from the site will remain the same.

Other

39. The applicant has provided supporting information regarding the general profile of the detainees, which includes a small proportion awaiting deportation following a prison sentence. The proportion of these detainees, who have not committed serious crimes, remains minimal and their detention is subject to a rigorous risk assessment procedure.

Recommendation

40. Delegated powers are sought to approve the application subject to the following conditions:
1. The change of use hereby permitted shall be for a temporary period up to 30th June 2013 or such other date, to be notified by the Local Planning Authority, whichever is the sooner.
(Reason – To ensure that the use of the site as an immigration reception centre does not hinder the timely delivery of Northstowe, in accordance with Policy E3 of the adopted Northstowe Area Action Plan 2007.)
 2. The United Kingdom Border Agency shall undertake to hold annual liaison meetings open to the local community and Parish Councils in Longstanton Parish for the duration of this authorised use, or until such time as the use hereby permitted ceases. The first of which is to be held within 3 months of the grant of this planning permission.
(Reason – To monitor and control in the interests of public amenity, in accordance with the Policy DP/3 (j) of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

3. The number of detainees held at the Centre shall not exceed 400.
(Reason - To avoid pressure to increase the Centre site area and infrastructure, in accordance with the Policy DP/4 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007)

Informatives - none

Reasons for Approval

1. The approved development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: DP/3 (Development Criteria)
 - Northstowe Area Action Plan 2007: E3 (Delivering Northstowe)
2. The proposal conditionally approved is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Impact upon the delivery of Northstowe
 - Inappropriate location

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Development Control Policies, adopted July 2007.
- Northstowe Area Action Plan, adopted July 2007.
- Circular 11/95.
- Planning File Refs: S/2218/02/CIRC, S/1172/04/CIRC, S/7001/05/O, S/2040/06/F, S/2424/06/F, S/2333/07/F and S/7006/07/O.

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