

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3 November 2010

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)/
Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities)

S/1247/10 – COTTENHAM

Replacement Dwelling, 50 Church Lane, for Mr & Mrs Mac Churchman

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 21 September 2010

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination at the request of Cllr Lynda Harford.

Site and Proposal

1. The application site comprises a residential site of approximately 0.4639ha. Church Lane lies to the north east of the village forming part of the rural edge and as such is outside of the Cottenham Development Framework boundary. No.50 lies just outside of the Cottenham Conservation Area and forms part of the setting of the Grade I Listed All Saints Church.
2. The application site comprises a small post war dwelling built from brick with a corrugated asbestos roof of mansard form. The external elevations are a mix of painted brick and render. The dwelling is of two-storey height, but due to its unusual roof form is very low comparative to the average two-storey dwelling. A relatively large single storey flat-roofed extension projects from the northwest elevation, which is contemporary to the dwelling. To the south east of the dwelling is a detached flat roofed garage of painted render.
3. Church Lane provides a single, un-metalled, track access to the dwelling and other small farm holdings to the southeast beyond. The dwelling is largely surrounded by open countryside and arable fields. However, there are a few sporadic dwellings on the north side of Church Lane within the first few hundred yards of the track. A soft boundary forms the frontage of the site and much of the side and rear boundaries. Where the landscaping is less dense a timber post a rail fence forms the boundary treatment. Adjacent to no.50 on the northwest side of the dwelling is No.40, an old bottling depot of simple, brick built and utilitarian character.
4. The full planning application, submitted on 27 July 2010, proposes the erection of a dwelling of barn-like character to replace the existing. The central element of the proposed dwelling is of two-storey height with single storey accretions projecting from the side, rear and front elevations. In addition a detached three bay garage structure is proposed, this is sited in front of the proposed dwelling. The principal dwelling proposed would have a ridge height of approximately 8.8m and would provide three bedrooms. The application is a resubmission following refusal of application ref. S/1904/09/F that sought erection of a replacement dwelling of almost identical design

to the current proposals. Application ref. An appeal against that refusal is currently being considered by the Planning Inspectorate.

5. The applicants have been informally liaising with the Planning Department regarding the redevelopment of this site since approximately July 2007 and have received pre-application advice stating that the scheme submitted is contrary to local and national policy.

Planning History

6. **S/1904/09/F** – For the erection of a replacement dwelling of very similar design to the application under discussion was refused due chiefly to the fact that the size of the dwelling (in terms of height, floor area, and volume) was contrary to the stipulations of policy HG/7 (Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside) and was consequently found to harm the openness of the countryside. This refusal has been appealed and the Inspectors decision is pending.

Planning Policy

7. **National Planning Policy**

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas states in paragraphs 17 and 19 that authorities considering applications for replacement dwellings in the countryside are required to have regard to certain matters, including the scale of replacement buildings and the impact upon the countryside. Paragraph 19 states that authorities should also set out the circumstances where replacement would not be acceptable and clarify the permissible scale of replacement buildings.

8. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007:**

DP/1 – Sustainable Development

DP/2 – Design of New Development

DP/3 - Development Criteria

DP/7 – Development Frameworks

HG/7 – Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

CH/5 – Conservation Areas

CH/4 – Development within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building

Consultations

9. **Cottenham Parish Council** – Recommends approval and considers that the proposed dwelling would vastly improve the condition of the existing site.
10. **Conservation Officer** – Objects to the proposed development commenting that the proposed design is overly complex and overly domestic and would affect the rural setting of the Conservation Area.
11. **Local Highways Authority** - Raises no objection to the proposals.
12. **Landscape Design Officer** – The landscaping scheme proposed is an improvement on that previously proposed and apart from the two field maple planted near the building on the south east boundary, which is unwise, the planting is acceptable. Suggest that these acers are put closer to the road within the hedge mix B along the side boundary. The area of loose gravel at the front seems excessive. The overhead

cable pole should surely be in the lawn area in order to protect it. Suggests that a deeper lawn at the front would provide a better setting to the house.

Representations

13. Comments received from the Cottenham Village Design Group stating; 'we support a replacement building on site...and welcome the principle of a barn-style unit. However, we still consider the proposed dwelling to have an overly complex footprint and roof plan; a simpler building with fewer projections would better reflect the local vernacular. We support the landscaping scheme'

Planning Comments – Key Issues

14. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
 - Policy HG/7 of the Local Development Framework – The impact upon the countryside
 - Whether the proposals overcome the reasons for refusal of application ref. S/1904/09/F

Policy HG/7 and the Impact of the Proposals upon the Countryside

15. The site is visible in views along Church Lane, however the current dwelling does not have a significant visual impact upon the surrounding countryside. This is due to its small floor plan and low height and the relatively mature boundaries that partially surround the site.
16. DCP Policy HG/7 supports the one for one replacement of a dwelling in the countryside (with a maximum enlargement of 15% of volume) providing the proposed replacement is in scale with the existing (is no higher), is in character with its surroundings and would not materially increase the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.
17. Policy HG/7 alludes to a permitted 15% increase in volume for replacement dwellings over and above that of the existing. This element of the policy relates to permitted development rights. It is accepted that since this policy was adopted householder permitted development rights have been relaxed (October 2008) and thus it is potentially possible that a greater than 15% increase in volume over the original could be achieved outside of the scope of planning control. However it is considered that more pertinent than the prescriptive element of this policy are the considerations of the impact of re-development of the site upon the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. This is the key objective of policy HG/7.
18. Notwithstanding the above, it is still expedient to look at the proportional relationship between existing and proposed volumes. For this we must rely upon the data provided by the applicant as the plans do not allow for a calculation of the existing volume. The volume of the existing dwelling is stated as being 356m³ with the volume of outbuildings stated as being 160m³, giving a total of 516m³. The volume of the proposed replacement dwelling and outbuildings is stated as being 1421m³. Thus the proposed replacement dwelling has a volume that is 275% of that of the existing dwelling and outbuildings.

19. The additional volume of the proposed dwelling over that of the existing is emphasised by the substantial scale of the proposed dwelling, which at its highest point stands approximately 8.8m tall. The existing dwelling has a substantially lower maximum height standing at approximately 6.05m in height.
20. The proposed replacement dwelling is described as being barn-like. Whilst it is considered that a barn-like idiom is wholly appropriate for the site, the plan form and elevational form of the proposed dwelling are unduly complex and not reflective of traditional barn buildings in this part of the district. The proposed rear elevation departs almost entirely from the barn style that the proposal seeks to emulate and has a strong residential articulation that is conveyed by the fenestration on this elevation and a large chimney breast and stack. The vernacular architecture for barn structures in the area is conveyed by simple buildings of utilitarian character with few additional accretions or apertures. This is emphasised in the Cottenham Village Design Guide.
21. The additional scale and mass of the proposed replacement dwelling is considered to reduce the openness of the countryside at this point and to introduce a complex and alien form of structure that is not contextual to the rural surroundings or the vernacular of the adjacent settlement of Cottenham. The proposal is therefore contrary to criteria 1.b and 1.c of DCP policy HG/7.
22. It is acknowledged that the existing dwelling on the site is of little architectural merit and certainly the proposed dwelling is an architectural improvement. However it is reasonable to suggest that the same degree of architectural quality could be employed upon a replacement dwelling of a scale and mass that is in accordance with the stipulations of policy HG/7. To this end the Parish Council's assertions that the proposal is an improvement over the existing do not constitute a sufficient reason to disregard this adopted policy.

Whether the proposals overcome the previous reasons for refusal of application ref. S/1904/09/F

23. Application ref. S/1904/09/F was refused by virtue of the significant scale and mass of the proposed dwelling and the resultant impact upon the openness of the surrounding countryside relative to the current site.
24. The proposed scheme differs only subtly from the previously refused scheme. Three rooflights have been removed from the street fronting roof slope of the proposed dwelling and a second floor door and balcony on the south east elevation has been replaced with a vertically paneled timber door. The most notable revision is the reduction and re-orientation of a covered parking area in the front elevation. To the untrained eye the two proposed schemes would appear almost identical.
25. The scale (ridge height of 8.8m) of the proposed dwelling remains the same as the scheme previously refused. The volume of the proposed dwelling has been slightly reduced from that of the previously refused scheme which was stated as being 1488m³ and is now 1421m³. This appears to have been solely achieved via the slight reduction in the size of the covered parking area proposed on the front elevation.
26. Having regard to the above it is considered that the proposals fail to overcome the reasons for refusal of the previous application on the site ref.S/1904/09/F and as such the proposals cannot be approved without undermining this previous decision.

Recommendation

27. Refuse.

For the Following Reason:

1. The proposed replacement dwelling is disproportionately larger than No.50 Church Lane, which it is intended to replace. The proposed design, although pursuing a barn-like ideal, is considered overly complex by way of its roof form, numerous accretions and the contradictory residential character of the rear elevation. Notwithstanding the proposed materials, the resultant structure is not contextual to the vernacular of traditional barn buildings in the area. By virtue of this disproportionate size and complexity the proposal is considered to have a materially harmful impact upon the relationship of the site to the surrounding open countryside, which largely comprises arable farmland. To this end the proposal is found to be contrary to policy HG/7 of the South Cambridgeshire District Council, Local Development Framework, Development Control Policies DPD, 2007 which seeks to ensure that all replacement dwellings in the countryside are in scale with the existing, are in character with their surroundings and would not materially increase the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Cottenham Village Design guide

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