

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

1 June 2011

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

**S/0700/11 - Waterbeach
Retention of office porta cabin building in conjunction with the existing
caravan and camping site at The Travellers Rest, Ely Road, Chittering
for Mr Colin Crickmore**

Recommendation: Approve Conditionally

Date for Determination: 31 May 2011

This application has been referred to the Planning Committee for determination because the recommendation of the Waterbeach Parish Council does not accord with the officer recommendation.

Members will visit the site on 1 June 2011.

Site and Proposal

1. The application site is located outside of the village development framework of Waterbeach in the hamlet of Chittering within the open countryside. The site comprises of an open piece of land to the rear of the Travellers Rest Public House, which is currently unoccupied. The site is accessed via an entrance onto School Lane and is adjacent to the Ely Road (A10).
2. The site comprises approximately 1ha of land and has an established use as a caravan and campsite. A former ablutions block has since been removed. The site is currently undergoing ground works in accordance with the lawful consent for the use of the land as a campsite. This includes the provision of a toilet block, disabled toilet and septic tank located within the south east corner of the site. In addition the site has been laid out with a central road spine comprising of hard standing to facilitate ten caravan pitches with a turning head.
3. The proposal comprises the retention of a portacabin building to serve as a manager's site office. The cabin building has a flat roof and is finished in an off white cladding with blue plinth and has UPVC fenestration. The building sits off the ground with timber stairs leading to entrance doors. The building is required to provide essential onsite facilities to ensure that the site is maintained and managed for both visitors and surrounding residents.

Planning History

4. Planning Application **S/0671/08/F** for the siting of a permanent year round warden office was refused on the grounds of flood risk and harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and residential amenity.

5. Planning Application **S/0447/06/F** for the use of existing touring caravan and camping site for the siting of 18 cabin style static holiday units was refused on the grounds of adverse impacts upon the residential amenities of surrounding properties.
6. Planning Application **S/1217/04/F** for redevelopment of existing caravan park to comprise 39 touring pitches, new toilet/shower/laundry block, reception building and internal road and the extension of season to 11 Months from 6th February to 5 January was approved but was never implemented.
7. Planning Application **S/0294/86/F** for all year round touring camp site and shop was refused on the grounds of the detriment to the character of the area.
8. Planning Application **S/1446/73/F** for use of existing touring caravan and camping site for the siting of 18 cabin style static holiday units was approved and was implemented.
9. Planning Application **S/1027/73/O** for a touring caravan site was approved.

Policies

10. 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
 - NE/1** Energy Efficiency
 - ET/10** Tourist Facilities and Visitor Accommodation

Consultations

11. **Waterbeach Parish Council** – Recommend refusal on the grounds that the proposal represents inappropriate development within this location. Furthermore concerns are raised over the correct implementation of the lawful consent for a campsite.
12. **Environmental Health** – No comments have been received.
13. **Environment Agency** – Raise no objections in principle subject to the use of an informative advising the applicant that the consent of the Environment Agency will be required for any private sewage treatment.

Representations

14. 6 letters of objections have been received from local residents raising the following comments:
 - (a) School lane and the junction with the A10 is not adequate to take any further traffic as it is often congested with large agricultural vehicles passing through from Ely;
 - (b) There has never been a site office on the land and the field has already been overdeveloped;

- (c) The site is visible from school lane and the A10;
- (d) Since the planning approval and caravan licence the application site boundaries have been made smaller;
- (e) The office building is sited within close proximity to the playground as the previous siting is no longer in the ownership of the land;
- (f) There is no mention of any landscaping as identified within 1974 license;
- (g) No vehicle parking or site parking spaces have been identified;
- (h) It is expected that the onsite manager will live on the site all year round even though the license is only for 6 months of the year;
- (i) The applicant has attempted to gain wider permission for the site and this is a small step to a larger development proposal;
- (j) The development suggests the potential for future dwellings;
- (k) It is not clear if the development accord with building regulations;
- (l) The validity of the lawful use of the site is in doubt due to the changes to the application site;
- (m) The hard standing will increase the risk of surface water run off;
- (n) Previous consent for a similar building have been refused;
- (o) The office is harmful upon the privacy and amenity of the School House;
- (p) A number of conditions requiring landscaping have not been implemented and are needed to mitigate the impact of the development;
- (q) The application was made after the building was put in situ.

Planning Comments

15. The key considerations in the determination of this application are the impact that the development would have upon character and appearance of the public realm and open countryside and residential amenity.

Public Realm & Open Countryside

16. The site manager's office is sited upon the southern boundary of the site within close proximity to the 1.8m high brick boundary wall serving the Old School house. This location is within close proximity to the toilet building and other utilities creating a tight building group with the backdrop of the linear residential pattern of development fronting School Lane. Whilst the building is visible from views from School Lane and the A10 its position is considered to be less intrusive than other potential locations within the application site. It is considered necessary to group buildings together so their overall group relationship is less prominent from within the countryside. The siting is also required to be close to the entrance to deal with incoming holidaymakers.
17. Notwithstanding the above, the building's form and finish is not considered to be appropriate within the countryside location. A more appropriate finish would allow the building to better assimilate into its surroundings. This could also be said of the existing toilet block building, which is permitted by virtue of the sites caravan license. Given that the application for the building is retrospective the only option to mitigate its current appearance is to clad or paint the structure to enable it to appear softer and more akin within its rural setting. This matter has been raised with the applicant's agent who has confirmed that the building can be painted a dark green or brown to mitigate its appearance. In addition the applicant has agreed to colour the toilet block a similar colour to help assimilate the building group as a whole.

18. It was the opinion of officers that the building would be better sited due west of its current location to further enclose the building group within a tighter relationship. The applicant has confirmed that he does not accept that the building should be moved. He has however confirmed that he will paint the building and plant around it if necessary. It is unclear to officers how sufficient planting can be achieved between the building and the boundary with the Old School House. Nevertheless, officers are of the opinion that subject to the finish of the building, within its current location no unduly adverse harm upon the character or appearance of the public realm and open countryside has occurred.
19. It is the view of officers that the proposals would be made acceptable by conditions requiring the agreement and implementation of the finish of the building and soft landscaping around it are to be submitted within 3 months of the issuing of the decision.

Residential Amenity

20. The office building is sited due north of the residential rear garden serving the Old School house. The building is sited approximately 2m from the existing 1.8m brick wall that denotes the edge of the curtilage of this property and sits approximately 3m in height, with 1.2m of the building being visible above the boundary wall from within the curtilage of the property. There are a number of mature trees sited along this boundary within the curtilage of the Old School House, which offer a degree of screening and visual softening of the building and the wider camp site.
21. It is acknowledged that in addition to the site managers building the existing permitted toilet building would also be sited within close proximity to the boundary of the rear garden serving the Old School House. As a consequence the northeast corner of this boundary would be enclosed by the portable buildings, both of which measure 10m in length. Whilst this is an unfortunate relationship for the outlook from the amenity of this property it is evident that the dwelling and its immediate amenity area within this garden is located approximately 24m away from this common boundary. As a comparison the District Design Guide specifies the minimum acceptable back-to-side relationship of buildings to be 14m and in this instance the building in question is only partially visible above the existing boundary treatment. Therefore in consideration of the existing boundary treatment, screening and height of the structure relative to its distance from the immediate amenity areas of the Old School House it is the view of officers that no adverse impact upon the amenity currently enjoyed by its occupiers has occurred.
22. The office building does contain a window overlooking the garden of the Old School House, which serves a toilet. A condition specifying this window to be obscure glazed and fixed shut apart from top vent opening only would address any potential overlooking and safeguard the privacy of the occupiers of this property. Furthermore, the site office will only be required during the months when the site is in operation. Therefore a condition shall also be imposed ensuring that the building is only occupied from April to September in accordance with the overall site restrictions imposed by the Site Licence.

Other Matters

23. Representations raised by local residents have raised concerns over the implementation of the wider consent for the site's use and permitted development for ancillary and essential buildings. These are not material to the determination of this application for the retention of a site managers office and have not been taken into consideration in the determination of this planning application.
24. Notwithstanding the above, officers have sought the council of senior legal officers and confirm that the use of the site as a seasonal camp site is lawful and has been implemented despite the application site being sub-divided over the years. Furthermore, certain facilities and utilities such as septic tank and toilet building are permitted development in accordance with the site's caravan licence.

Conclusion

25. Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is considered that planning permission should be approved in this instance.

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. The building, hereby permitted, shall cease and all equipment and materials brought onto the land for the purposes of such use shall be removed within 28 days of any one of the following requirements not being met:
 - i) Within 3 months of the date of this decision there shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority schemes for the external finish of the building and soft landscaping, the said schemes shall include a timetable for their implementation.
 - ii) Within 6 months of the date of this decision, the external finish of the building and soft landscaping schemes shall have been approved by the Local Planning Authority or, if the Local Planning Authority fail to approve such schemes, or fail to give a decision within the prescribed period, an appeal shall have been lodged and accepted by the Secretary of State;
 - iii) In the event of an appeal being made in pursuance of requirement (ii) above, that appeal shall have been finally determined and the submitted schemes shall have been approved by the Secretary of State.
 - iv) All works comprised in the schemes as approved shall be implemented and completed within the timetable set out in the approved schemes.

(Reason - To ensure that a scheme of soft landscaping and external finish of the building are implemented in accordance with Policy DP/2 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

2. Within 2 months of the date of this decision, apart from any top hung opening vent, the windows in the southern elevation of the building, hereby permitted, shall be fixed shut and permanently glazed with obscure glass, and no further windows shall be installed within this elevation without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To prevent overlooking of the adjoining properties in accordance with Policy DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

3. The building, hereby permitted, shall not be occupied
- other than by a site manager,
 - before the 1 April or after the 30 September, and
 - unless the site is open and available to the public as a caravan and camping site.

(Reason - To ensure that the site is retained for seasonal/tourist use only in accordance with Policy ET/10 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

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

- South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents: District Design Guide
- Planning file reference: S/0700/11.

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