

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6 July 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/0380/11 & S/0381/11 – BABRAHAM

Alterations and Conversion of Offices and Annexe to Dwelling and Annexe at Chalk Farm, High Street for Mr and Mrs N. Kotschy

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 22nd April 2011

Notes:

This application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination at the request of the Local Member

Site and Proposal

1. The site is located within the Babraham village framework and conservation area. Chalk Farm, High Street comprises a grade II listed, detached, two-storey, render and plain tile farmhouse that is set on the back edge of the footpath with gardens to the north and south; a grade II listed, single storey, brick/flint and tile granary that has been converted to a residential annexe to the north east, and a range of single storey, brick/flint and pantile /slate curtilage listed outbuildings are situated to the south east that are used for domestic purposes (garaging/stores) and offices. The buildings are situated around a gravel parking area. Access is from a single track driveway between the garden to the farmhouse and the granary.
2. An access track and some redundant grade II listed agricultural buildings lie to the north east with The George Inn Public House beyond. A dwelling lies to the south east.
3. This full planning application, received 8th March 2011 as amended 3rd June 2011, proposes alterations and conversion of offices and annexe to dwelling and annexe, (i.e. the existing annexe would be associated with the new dwelling to which it is attached, rather than the existing farmhouse as at present). The alterations comprise the insertion of a window in the north-east elevation of the building, the installation of internal flues that terminate at ridge height with vents, and a revised internal layout with the insertion of partition walls.

Planning History

4. Listed building consent was granted for alterations and conversion of outbuilding to residential annexe under reference **S/1887/99/LB**.
5. Planning permission and listed building consent was granted for alterations and conversion of stables into offices under references **S/0499/93/F** and **S/0500/93/LB**. Condition 1 of the planning consent stated "The use, hereby permitted, shall only be carried on so long as the residential property known as Chalk farmhouse is occupied

by the present or any future owner of the application premises or by an employee of such an owner working at the application premises". The reason for this condition was to protect the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of Chalk Farmhouse due to the proximity of that property to the application site.

6. Planning permission was refused for use as a preparatory school under reference **S/0939/92/F**.

Planning Policy

7. **Local Development Plan Policies**

South Cambridgeshire LDF Core Strategy DPD, 2007:

ST/7 Infill Villages

South Cambridgeshire LDF Development Control Policies DPD, 2007:

DP/1 Sustainable Development

DP/2 Design of New Development

DP/3 Development Criteria

DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments

DP/7 Development Frameworks

NE/1 Energy Efficiency

HG/1 Housing Density

ET/6 Loss of Rural Employment to Non-Employment Uses

CH/3 Listed Buildings

CH/4 Development Within the Setting of a Listed Building

CH/5 Conservation Areas

SF/10 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments

SF/11 Open Space Standards

TR/1 Planning for More Sustainable Travel

TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards

South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Open Space in New Developments SPD - Adopted January 2009

Development Affecting Conservation Areas SPD - Adopted January 2009

Listed Buildings SPD - Adopted July 2009

District Design Guide SPD - Adopted March 2010

8. **National Planning Guidance**

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development)

Planning Policy Statement 4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth)

Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment)

9. **Circulars**

Circular 05/2005 Planning Obligations

Circular 11/95 The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions

Consultation

10. **Babraham Parish Council** – Recommends approval.
11. **Conservation Officer** – Recommended refusal as originally submitted on the grounds that the change of use and subdivision of the site would have a significant impact upon the setting of the listed farmhouse and the character and appearance of

the curtilage listed buildings. Comments on the amended plans are awaited although informally I have been advised that the changes may have addressed the objections.

12. **Trees and Landscape Officer** – Has no objections.
13. **Landscape Design Officer** – No reply (out of time).
14. **Acting Environmental Health Manager** – Has concerns that problems could arise from noise and light pollution and suggests conditions in relation to the hours of use of power operated machinery during the alterations and any external lighting scheme to be agreed. Also requests an informative in relation to the burning of waste on site.
15. **Contaminated Land Officer** – Requires a condition in relation to an investigation into contamination from the former agricultural use of the buildings and the presence of potential contaminants. This is due to a residential use being more sensitive as a result of the increased occupational time and garden areas and that receptors would be placed at a higher risk to any contamination present than an office use.
16. **Economic Development Panel** – The proposal would result in the loss of a currently occupied small unit of employment within a village framework. Considers that a low scale employment use would not harm the setting of the listed building or the amenities of Chalk Farmhouse through noise and disturbance and that an application should be submitted to remove condition 1 of planning consent S/0499/93/F so that the existing office use can be marketed separately before conversion to a non-employment use is considered acceptable.

Representations

20. The **Local Member** supports the application and considers that it complies with policy ET/6 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPS 2007.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

23. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are the principle of the use, the loss of local employment, and the impacts of the development upon the character and appearance of the curtilage listed buildings, the setting of adjacent listed buildings (Chalk Farmhouse, the Granary and barn), and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Principle of Development

24. The site is located within the village framework of an infill village. The conversion of the building to a residential use of up to two dwellings that comprise the redevelopment or sub-division of an existing residential curtilage is therefore considered acceptable in principle subject to all other planning considerations.

Housing Density

25. The site measures 0.12 of a hectare in area. The conversion of the building to one dwelling would equate to a density of 8 dwellings per hectare. Although this would not meet the density requirements of 30 dwellings per hectare, it is considered satisfactory in this case, given the sensitive location and nature of the site.

Loss of Employment

26. The building currently provides 185 square metres of B1 office space that is currently partially occupied by an architect's practice that has 5 employees. The conversion of the building to a dwelling would result in the loss of a small employment unit within the village. Whilst it is acknowledged that the property has a planning condition that links the offices to the main farmhouse and that both uses have been marketed for 12 months with no offers being made, evidence has been provided that states there would be commercial interest in the offices if not tied to the dwelling. Therefore, it is considered that to approve the use as a dwelling without firstly submitting an application to remove the condition that ties the dwelling and office uses, and then market the uses separately, would be premature, inappropriate, and contrary to Policy ET/6. Although it is accepted that the reason for the condition on the original planning consent that tied the offices to the dwelling was to protect the amenities of Chalk Farmhouse, officers consider that the site would be suitable for a low key (B1a) employment use without causing harm to that neighbour and would enable the retention of a local employment site. It is noted that the Babraham Institute is close by and employs a number of staff, but this employment is of a specialist nature and the site provides a different type of employment opportunity.

Listed Buildings / Conservation Area

27. The proposed alterations to provide a dwelling would be limited and are not considered to result in harm to the simple agricultural character of the curtilage listed building, nor damage the setting of the adjacent listed farmhouse, or adversely affect the character and appearance of the conservation area. It should be noted that the building has already been altered significantly to create the existing office use.
28. The subdivision of the site to create two separate dwellings is not considered to damage the setting of the adjacent listed farmhouse or harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. No physical subdivision would be introduced and the provision of domestic paraphernalia could already arise from the current uses.

Neighbour Amenity

29. The proposed dwelling is not considered to seriously harm the amenities of neighbours or the occupiers of the new dwelling. The proposed new bedroom window in the south east elevation facing the neighbour at 'Fidelis Fortis' would replace a kitchen window to the offices and would overlook a driveway. This opening would not therefore result in a loss of privacy.
30. The proposed new bedroom window in the north east elevation facing the access is not considered to result in harm to the occupiers of the new dwelling through noise and disturbance, given the limited use of the access. The existing windows on this elevation would not serve the main habitable rooms.

Highway Safety

31. The proposal is not considered to be detrimental to highway safety, given that the existing level of traffic from the office use may be reduced by use as a dwelling and there is adequate parking on the site for both dwellings.

Developer Contributions

32. The South Cambridgeshire Recreation Study 2005 identified a surplus of sport and play space within Babraham. However, it stated that new facilities are required to

meet local need. No open space would be provided on site. Due to the increase in the demand for the use of such space, a financial contribution of £3,104.38 (index linked) is required towards the provision and management of open space off-site and within the village to comply with Policy SF/10 of the LDF. The applicants have agreed to the contribution.

33. The South Cambridgeshire Community Facilities Assessment 2009 did not audit the standard of indoor community space in Babraham. However, it identified that there is a shortfall of such space. Due to the increase in the demand for the use of this space from the development, a financial contribution of £513.04 (index-linked) is sought towards the provision of new facilities or the improvement of existing facilities in order to comply with Policy DP/4 of the LDF. The applicants have agreed to the contribution.
34. South Cambridgeshire District Council has adopted the RECAP Waste Management Design Guide which outlines the basis for planning conditions and obligations. In accordance with the guide developers are required to provide for household waste receptacles as part of a scheme. The current fee for the provision of appropriate waste containers is £69.50 per dwelling. The applicants have agreed to the contribution.

Other Matters

35. The proposal is not considered to result in significant noise or contamination of its occupants subject to safeguarding conditions.

Conclusion

36. 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 refused in this instance.

Recommendation

37. Refusal

The proposed alterations and conversion of the offices to a dwelling would result in the loss of local employment. Given that the site is considered suitable for an employment use, such development is considered premature and inappropriate without first considering the removal of the current condition that ties the existing dwelling and offices, and the uses then marketed separately. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy ET/6 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007 that states the conversion, change of use or re-development of existing employment sites to non-employment uses within village frameworks should be resisted unless it is demonstrated that the site is inappropriate for any employment use to continue having regard to market demand.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents: Open Space in New Developments, Development Affecting Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, and District Design Guide
- Planning Policy Statements 1, 4, and 5
- Planning File References: S/0380/11, S/0381/11, S/1887/99/LB, S/0499/93/F, S/0500/93/LB, & S/0939/92/F

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