

**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

7 September 2011

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

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**S/1364/11 – STOW CUM QUY  
Conversion and change of use of stable to office (B1a) at Alvescote Stables,  
Newmarket Road, for Mr Martin Flack**

**Recommendation: Approve Conditionally**

**Date for Determination: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

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

**Site and Proposal**

1. The application site comprises a single-storey stable building built from black featheredged weatherboarding and a slate roof. The building sits within a grassed paddock of approximately 0.26ha, which is relatively flat with a high brick wall, gates and timber fence onto Newmarket Road and timber fences enclosing its side and rear boundaries. The site is located outside of the village framework of Stow cum Quy within open countryside and the Cambridge Green Belt. The site is within the wider setting of a Grade II\* Listed building, St Mary's Church, located due west of the site.
2. The stable and paddock is within the same ownership as the adjacent detached bungalow and garage to the northeast, known as Alvescote but is not within the residential curtilage of this property. The site is accessed from Newmarket Road (A1303). Newmarket Road is a fast main road leading from the A14 and is subject to the national speed limit. Running parallel with Newmarket Road, on the north side, there is a pedestrian footpath. The paddock and stables benefit from a separate point of access to Alvescote onto the Newmarket Road, although there is a single crossing.
3. The proposal comprises the conversion and change of use of the stable building into a small office unit (B1a Use Class). This would comprise minor alterations to the building's external elevations such as the insertion of a full height single casement window replacing a timber door upon the front elevation and a double casement window replacing double timber doors upon the rear elevation. The internal conversion of the stable would comprise the insertion of a partition wall around the existing kitchen/wash room to provide a staffroom, store and W/C.
4. A Design and Access Statement supports the proposal.

## **Planning History**

5. Planning Application S/1913/09/F for the change of use of stable and paddock land to residential annexe ancillary to Alvescote was refused on grounds of inappropriate development within the Green Belt and dismissed upon appeal by reason of inappropriateness and other harm.
6. Planning Application S/2051/04/F for the erection of a stable block was refused.
7. Planning Application S/0356/05/F for the erection of a stable block was approved.
8. Planning Application S/1602/07/F for the removal of Condition 9 (removal of stable if no longer in use as such) of Planning Permission S/0356/05/F was approved. Condition 3 of this permission states that 'the stables, hereby approved, shall not be used other than for the purposes of stabling horses or for the use of agriculture'. The reason for this condition was to maintain the rural character and appearance of this sensitive Green Belt location in accordance with policies P9/2a of the approved structure plan 2003 and GB1 of the Local Development Framework 2007.
9. Planning Application S/0577/09/F for an additional vehicular access was refused.

## **Policies**

10. South Cambridgeshire LDF Development Control Policies DPD, 2007:
  - DP/1 Sustainable Development
  - DP/2 Design of New Development
  - DP/3 Development Criteria
  - DP/7 Development Frameworks
  - GB/1 Development in the Green Belt
  - GB/2 Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt
  - ET/7 Conversion of Rural Buildings for Employment
  - CH/4 Development Within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building
11. South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):
  - Open Space in New Developments SPD - Adopted January 2009
  - Biodiversity SPD - Adopted July 2009
  - District Design Guide SPD – Adopted March 2010
12. Planning Policy 2 (PPG2) 'Green Belts'  
Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'

## **Consultations**

13. **Stow cum Quy Parish Council** – Recommend refusal stating that the conversion of the stable into an office would engender a light industrial use of the site.
14. **Local Highway Authority** – Raise no objections subject to the provision and retention of the parking and turning areas and that the visibility splays shown upon drawing 5647/1 and 5647/2 are provided and maintained free of obstruction.
15. **Environmental Health Manager** – Raises no objection from an environmental health standpoint.
16. **English Heritage** - No comments have been received and written or verbal updates will be provided.

## **Representations**

17. One letter has been received from the occupiers of Fen View, which raises concerns over the proposed parking provision and the likelihood of vehicles being parking on the verge, which may obstruct visibility. In addition a concern has been raised over the potential for noise and disturbance and the proposed working hours with vehicles coming and going at all hours.

## **Planning Comments**

18. The key material planning considerations in the determination of this planning application are the impact that the proposed revisions would have upon the Green Belt, countryside, employment provision, the historic environment, and residential and highway safety.

## ***Green Belt & Countryside***

19. Planning Policy 2 (PPG2) 'Green Belts' stipulates that the re-use of buildings should not prejudice the openness of Green Belts, since the buildings are already there. PPG2 states that re-use of buildings inside a Green Belt is not inappropriate development providing that it does not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt. Strict control is exercised over any associated uses of land surrounding the building, which might conflict with the openness of the Green Belt and the form, bulk and general design of the building is in keeping with its surroundings.
20. Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' requires policies to set out the criteria for permitting conversion of rural buildings for residential uses. This is due to considerable pressure to convert barns and vacant rural buildings into residential units, which is contrary to the general policy of restricting housing proposals outside established village limits. Policy ET/7 supports conversion of appropriate buildings for employment uses, and this remains the preferred use for such buildings. PPS7 also states that local planning authorities should resist the loss of local facilities for employment uses. Policy ET/7 states that the change of use or adaptation of buildings in the countryside for employment use will be permitted provided the building is structurally sound, not makeshift in nature, capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside and that the form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings.
21. In consideration of the above the proposed conversion of the stable is considered to result in modest and sympathetic alterations to the stable that would be in character with the rural appearance of the building and its surroundings. Furthermore, the building is of permanent construction and is well maintained and would require little alteration internally to facilitate the proposed use. The proposals would result in no additional extensions or increased built form to the building or its surroundings. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the proposed office use may engender additional vehicle movements and car parking to that of the existing stable use. Notwithstanding this, the scale of the office is modest and suitable controls by way of conditions would limit the occupation of the building to no more than two employees, and prohibiting storage or the siting of associated materials of the business outside of the building other than any associated car parking. In addition the application site (plan edged red) encompasses the building and means of access only; therefore the surrounding paddock would remain open in character.

21. In relation to the previously refused application the appeal Inspector stated that the stable building was of substantial construction and would be capable of conversion. It was also stated that the proposed external works to allow daylight to the proposed annexe would reduce the appearance of a countryside building and that the association of a residential use in and around the building would result in erosion to the openness of the Green Belt and intrusion into the countryside. The current proposal addresses these issues by proposing such minor alterations as the inclusion of two windows designed to appear like vertical narrow doorways. In addition the paddock that the building would sit within would remain open in use and appearance. Taking these matters into account, officers consider that the proposed change of use would not represent inappropriate development and would not result in other harm to the openness, character or visual amenity of the Green Belt.

### ***Employment Provision***

22. In light of the above the proposal is considered to accord with the criteria of Policy ET/7 for the conversion and change of use of a rural building for employment use. The Inspector in the earlier appeal did not consider that a more intensive use for the stable building would be appropriate in this location due to the impact of the conversion and the use on the Green Belt. This opinion was arrived at based upon the proposal before the Inspector at the time. The current proposal would provide a small-scale employment opportunity within the village for a small office business, which is within walking and cycling distance of the village. The proposals are therefore considered to address the concerns raised by the Inspector in providing an employment use whilst adhering to the principles of Green Belt policy.

### ***Residential Amenity***

23. The conditions proposed to limit the intensity of the proposed office use are considered to be sufficient to safeguard the residential amenity of Alvescote or other dwellings within the vicinity. A partly erected timber close boarded fence of approximately 1.8m height separates the application site and the adjacent dwelling at Alvescote. This fence is currently under construction and does not require express planning permission. The proposal would involve no material alteration to the vehicle access to the stable building and the proposed access runs parallel with that to the dwelling. In addition to the boundary treatment, a detached single storey garage serving Alvescote separates the dwelling and the stable building.

### ***Highway Safety***

24. Newmarket Road (A1303) is subject to the national speed limit of 60mph and the site's existing access is gated. The proposal would provide an independent access to the site with the parking for two vehicles and a turning area to allow the cars to enter and exit the site within a forward gear. In addition the adjacent dwelling will retain two parking spaces and a turning area. It is acknowledged that the proposed use would result in an increase to the vehicle movements likely to be created by the lawful use as a stable. Newmarket Road is served by a cycle path linking with Stow and Cambridge, and the building would provide cycle storage and a shower to encourage local occupiers to cycle to and from work. The existing access is served by 2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays and 2.4m x 215m vehicle to vehicle splays in both directions with provision for a vehicle to be clear of the adopted highway in order to enter through the gated entrance. In light of the above it is considered that the existing access is appropriate to serve the proposed business use and would not result in detriment to highway safety.

### ***Historic Environment***

25. The application site is not within the curtilage of the Grade II\* Listed Church but does abut its curtilage. The proposed external alterations to the stable are minor and suitable conditions should be imposed to ensure all materials or equipment associated with the building are kept inside the building in order to safeguard the potential impact upon the listed building. As such, the proposals are not considered to result in a detrimental impact upon the setting of the adjacent listed building.

### ***Conclusion***

26. 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***

27. Approve, subject to conditions;
- 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.**  
(Reason - To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development, which have not been acted upon.)
  - 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 5647/1, 5647/2 & 5647.**  
(Reason - To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)
  - 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification), the premises shall be used for an office and for no other purpose (including any other purposes in Class B1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification).**

(Reason - To protect the amenities of adjoining residents in accordance with Policy DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

**4. No materials or equipment shall be stored on the site outside the buildings save that waste materials may be kept in bins for removal periodically.**

(Reason - In the interests of visual/residential/rural amenity in accordance with Policy DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

**5. No external lighting shall be provided or installed within the site other than in accordance with a scheme, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

(Reason -To minimise the effects of light pollution on the surrounding area in accordance with Policy NE/14 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

**6. The use, hereby permitted, shall be restricted to no more than two employees unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

(Reason - To limit the impact of vehicle movements on residential amenities in accordance with Policy DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

**7. Prior to the first occupation of the use, hereby permitted, the area for turning and parking shown upon drawing number 5647/2 shall be provided and thereafter permanently maintained for that purpose.**

(Reason - In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

**8. The visibility splays of 2.4m x 215m as shown upon drawing number 5647/1 shall be maintained free from obstruction exceeding 0.6m above the level of the highway verge/footway.**

(Reason - In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy DP/3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

**9. The visibility splays of 2m x 2m as shown upon drawing number 5647/2 shall be maintained free from obstruction exceeding 0.6m high.**

(Reason - In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy DP/3 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
- Planning Policy 2 (PPG2) 'Green Belts' ;Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'

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