

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee 2 November 2011
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)/
Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities)

S/1562/11 - BASSINGBOURN

Erection of dwelling and garage to replace existing dwelling and garage. - Fen Bridge Farm, 27 Fen Road, Bassingbourn for Mr James and Dr Tanya Paxman

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 27 September 2011

The application has been referred to the Planning Committee at the request of the local District Councillor Cathcart.

Members will visit the site on Tuesday 1 November 2011

Site and Proposal

1. The application site comprises a currently unoccupied residential dwelling set on Fen Road, Bassingbourn. Historically, the dwelling has been the subject of several piecemeal extensions to the front and West side which are still in evidence but are in varying states of disrepair. The road to the front kinks around the existing dwelling meaning the dwelling is prominent on approach from the East. The curtilage of the property extends South along the Eastern boundary from where it curves West and then returns to the front of the site. The wider site extends further to the South and significantly further to the West where it is bounded by Shedbury Lane. There are currently relatively mature trees to the front of the site and there has until recently been a significant amount of scrub and ivy to the rear, although much of this has now been cleared. There is a hardstanding providing parking to the North East side of the house and a public footpath down the Eastern boundary. There is evidence of several outbuildings on the site, to the South of the house, albeit that these are derelict and there is limited upstanding fabric remaining. The external wall of one of those buildings, a long range on the Eastern boundary, remains and forms the boundary with the footpath for part of the depth of the site. The site is not within the Development Framework of the village of Bassingbourn and is considered to be located in the countryside. The site is not located within the Cambridge Green Belt and lies within a Flood Zone 3 of the Environment Agency matrix. The building is neither listed nor within a Conservation Area.
2. The proposed development is the erection of a replacement dwelling and detached garage further to the South of the site, as well as an extension of the garden area associated with the property and alterations to the access and parking and turning areas. The dwelling has been amended by the applicant to show the removal of the two storey element to the North West elevation.

Planning Policies

3. **Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD (LDF DCP)** adopted July 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

HG/7 Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

NE/1 Energy Efficiency

NE/6 Biodiversity

NE/11 Flood Risk

Consultation Responses

4. Bassingbourn Parish Council – has recommended approval.

Environmental Health Officer – does not object to the proposal but requests an informative be added to any permission relating to ground contamination protection.

Local Highways Authority – does not object to the proposed development but requests conditions relating to demolition of the existing property, construction vehicles and details of the access and hard surfaces.

Trees Officer – has no objection to the proposals.

Rights of Way Officer – has no objection to the proposed development and requests informatives be added to any permission detailing points of law relating to public rights of way.

Cambridgeshire Fire Service – does not object to the proposed dwelling.

Environment Agency – has advised the applicant with regard to the treatment of foul sewerage, but has not objected to the proposed development. It notes that the proposed dwelling is not in the Flood Zone 3. It requests a condition relating to details of foul water drainage.

Ecology Officer – does not object to the proposals and requests that conditions be applied to any permission for a bat survey to be carried out and restrictions on the times vegetation clearance is undertaken. The reed bed filtration system is welcomed and constitutes a notable biodiversity enhancement.

Representations

5. No representations have been received in response to the Local Planning Authority's consultation on the application, however the applicants conducted their own consultation of local people prior to the submission of the application. The results of that consultation, submitted with the application, showed unanimous support for the

proposals with the 77 responses all being favourable.

Planning Comments

6. The main planning considerations in this case are the principle of the replacement, the impact on the countryside, sustainability, ecology, parking and highway safety, residential amenity and flood risk.
7. Principle of the development and impact on the Countryside – The application site is not located within a Development Framework and is in the countryside. As defined by policy DP/7, there is a general presumption against the erection of dwellings outside of Development Frameworks in the countryside. As an exception to this general presumption, policy HG/7 allows the replacement of an existing dwelling with a new dwelling, provided the proposed dwelling is in scale with the dwelling it is intended to replace, in character with its surroundings and would not materially increase the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.
8. As regards the scale of the replacement dwelling compared to the existing house, the replacement dwelling proposed in this application is 7.9 metres to its ridge, and increase in overall height of approximately 1.1 metres above the ridge of the existing house which is about 6.8 metres in height. The internal floor area of the proposed dwelling, as amended is approximately 220 sqm as opposed to approximately 130 sqm of existing floor space in the bungalow, an increase of approximately 70%. The volume of the proposed dwelling, discounting the dormers, would be approximately 770 cubic metres as opposed to approximately 385 cubic metres for the existing dwelling; an increase of 100%. The main two storey elements of the replacement dwelling are 12.5 metres wide and 13 metres deep compared to the main two storey bulk of the existing dwelling which is approximately 11 metres wide and less than 5 metres deep. The combination of these increases results in a proposed dwelling which is considerably larger than the dwelling it replaces.
9. Of particular concern in terms of the overall visual impact of the replacement dwelling is the additional height and bulk of the property, particularly in terms of the amount of first floor development proposed in comparison to the existing. Given the increases in height and overall massing, it cannot be considered that the proposed dwelling is in scale with the bungalow it replaces and is therefore contrary to policy HG/7, whose supporting text specifically states that “replacements should be similar in size and height to the original structure”.
10. The application proposes that the replacement dwelling be situated further back into the site which would reduce its prominence from views along the main road from the East. Whilst this would mitigate some of the additional impact of the dwelling in those public views, moving the dwelling further back into the site increases its visual impact when seen from other public viewpoints such as the public footpath to the South East of the site and in views from Shedbury Lane to the West. Although, in the views from Shedbury Lane the proposed dwelling would be seen against other houses to the East of the site, it would be significantly more prominent in the landscape than the existing dwelling which is lower and situated against a backdrop of trees. Overall, resiting the dwelling would lessen its impact in some views and increase it in others and impact of the resiting of a dwelling is considered to be neutral. As such, the resiting is not considered to provide any significant mitigation for the increase in scale of the proposed replacement dwelling.
11. The harm caused to the countryside by the significantly larger replacement dwelling

which would increase the visual impact of the site on its surroundings is considered to be unacceptable.

12. The proposed double garage would be visible in some views of the site and add somewhat to the impact of the proposed development. However given the outbuildings which were, until their recent removal, present on the site, it is not considered that the proposed garage would be out of scale or character with the historic built form of the site, nor significantly change its impact on the surrounding countryside.
13. The application also proposes an extension to the curtilage of the property extending further to the West than at present. There is evidence of a larger curtilage historically, although not quite of the extent proposed in this application. Given that the wider site is visually and historically linked to the residential site, an extension to the residential garden of the size proposed is not considered to cause any significant harm to the character or openness of the countryside, particularly as permitted development rights for further residential development could be controlled by condition. The visual impact would be further screened by the recent and proposed planting detailed in the application.
14. Sustainability – The applicant has proposed several measures to lessen the impact of the dwelling on the environment and to generate energy sustainably. These include a system of high specification insulation, including walls, windows and doors that would greatly exceed the thermal efficiency required by current building regulations. It is also proposed to use a water source heat pump to provide heating and hot water, a septic tank and reed bed filtration system to treat sewage as well as rainwater harvesting and the potential use of solar panels where efficient.
15. The ecological benefit of this approach is significant, and the applicant has asked that it be considered in mitigation of the overall impact of the proposed development on its surroundings. Although planning policy DP/1 requires development to be sustainable and encourages the use of many of the measures proposed as part of this scheme, its direct mitigation of the additional visual impact of the proposed replacement dwelling is minimal. While the approach of an ecological construction of proposed dwellings is welcomed, it is also the case that this approach could still be implemented in the construction of a replacement dwelling of a smaller scale. It is not considered that the benefits of an ecological construction outweigh the harm of the proposed dwelling.
16. Ecology – Subject to the conditions suggested by the Council's Ecology Officer, the proposed demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of the replacement would not cause any significant harm to the ecology of the site or wider area, subject to necessary conditions for a bat survey and controls on vegetation clearance.
17. The proposed reed bed filtration system for the foul water treatment is considered to be a significant enhancement of biodiversity.
18. Parking and Highway Safety – The proposed dwelling would be served by the existing vehicle access at the North East corner of the site. It would lead to a new parking and turning area which would significantly improve upon the existing parking arrangements and would increase the safety of vehicle leaving the site as it would allow them to do so in a forward gear. The proposed parking and turning arrangements are therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of their impact on highway safety.

19. Residential amenity – The proposed dwelling is considered to be far enough from neighbouring properties that it would not cause any significant loss of privacy or residential amenity.
20. Flood Risk – The proposed siting of the dwelling further back on the site removes it from the flood zone 3, meaning that the proposed dwelling would be less susceptible to flooding. Subject to conditions relating to the treatment/disposal of foul water, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on flood risk.

Recommendation

21. Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is recommended that the application be refused Planning Permission, for the following reason(s):
 1. The proposed replacement dwelling, by virtue of its height and mass, which are significantly greater than the existing dwelling, would not be in scale or character with the dwelling it is intended to replace or with its surroundings. The resiting of the dwelling would reduce its impact in some public views but increase its prominence in others. The replacement dwelling would materially increase the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside causing harm to the generally rural and undeveloped character of the wider countryside. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies DP/2, DP/3 and HG/7 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007.

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