

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 2nd March 2005

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/1164/04/F - Comberton
Erection of Dwelling and Garden/Summer House
at Land to the Rear of 4 and 8 West Street, for Mr B Obank**

**Recommendation: Approval
Date for determination: 30th July 2004**

Members will visit the site on Monday 28th February 2005.

Introduction

1. Members considered this application at the meeting of the D&CC Committee on 6th October 2004. My report is attached at **Appendix 1**. Members resolved to grant delegated powers to officers either to approve or refuse the application, in order to allow me to continue discussions with the applicant concerning means of access to the site.

Subsequent Developments

2. The Highway Authority has indicated that it has concerns about the use of the existing access onto the B1046 West Street by a third dwelling. The HA's concern would be addressed, however, if a visibility splay of 2.4m x 64m were to be provided in the westerly direction.
3. The applicant has provided drawings, received 4th and 31st January, to demonstrate the provision of a 2.4m x 64m visibility splay in a westerly direction from the junction. This will entail the removal of the existing hedgerow along the frontage of the adjoining dwelling at No.8 West Street (a property that is within the applicant's ownership/control) for the full length of 23 metres. The applicant has indicated that he intends to replant the hedge set 1.0m further back, so as to maintain the visibility splay area, and to retain existing trees.

Planning History

4. In respect of the adjoining dwelling at 8 West Street, planning permission for conversion of the former barn to a dwelling was granted 28th August 2001 - **S/0754/01/F**. Condition 6 required details of landscaping to be submitted for approval, and condition 7 required that any plants removed within five years of the completion of the development to be replaced with others of similar size and species. The landscaping scheme approved 31st October 2001, showed the existing frontage hedge to be retained.

Planning Policy

5. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:

P8/1 (Sustainable Transport - Links between Land Use and Transport) - LPA's should ensure that new development provides appropriate access from the highway network that does not compromise safety.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:

Policy EN5 (Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows): the District Council will require trees, hedges and woodland and other natural features to be retained wherever possible in proposals for new development.

Consultations

6. **Comberton Parish Council:** recommends refusal. The PC comments that the hedge is set back from the road and does not affect the driver's visibility if they approach the road with caution and stop to look - higher speed entrance and exit should not be encouraged or facilitated. The PC asks that if this supposed improvement to visibility is genuinely required would it not have been brought up during the first planning applications? The proposed replanting will upset the hedge line for surrounding properties and in any case the same effect can be achieved by simply trimming the hedge over an equivalent distance. This proposal appears to the PC to be yet another step towards the development of a mini-estate on this site by the back door.
7. **Highway Authority:** has commented that the existing access comprises very limited visibility with only approximately 44m to the west. Vehicle speed along West Street is subject to a 30 mph speed limit and may be travelling at around this speed at this point. Unless visibility is improved, the application should be refused. The provision of 64m visibility is acceptable so long that this is provided prior to the commencement of construction on the site.
8. **Council's Landscape Design Officer:** The LDO comments that the hedge is predominately thorn with ivy, with trees set back approximately 1m. Whilst not ideal, the hedge could be replanted along the tree line without long-term detriment to the street scene.

Representations

9. **The applicant:** has responded to the comments of the Parish Council. He disagrees that the proposed improvement to the visibility splay will encourage a higher speed entrance or exit, since this line of argument suggests that the further a driver is able to see along a road the greater is the potential for accidents. The new hedge will not "upset the hedge line". He points out that the revised hedge line is actually at a similar distance from the kerb line as the hedgerow fronting the adjoining dwelling at 2 West Street. Finally, he emphasises that his only reason for seeking to replace the hedge is as a consequence of the Highway Authority's requirements, and not to facilitate further development. The hedge will be planted in accordance with the Council's requirements and will be from stock that is between 1.0m and 1.5m high.
10. The occupier of an adjoining dwelling has indicated concern about the improvement to the visibility splay. Whilst he has no objection in principle to the construction of the proposed dwelling he is very concerned that the improved visibility splay may cause a precedent in allowing future development on the remaining site. He asks whether the Council can offer any assurance that further development will not be allowed.

Planning Comments

Removal of hedgerow

11. The existing hedge fronting 8 West Street is required to be retained by virtue of condition 7 of S/0754/01/F, unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority. The hedge falls within the conservation area and Policy EN5 encourages the retention of such features in new development. Set against the amenity considerations, the Highway Authority's requirements cannot be met without removing this length of hedgerow. The Landscape Design Officer has indicated that in the longer term there will be no loss of amenity to this frontage and for this reason I recommend that the application should be supported as amended by plans showing provision of the improved visibility splay to the west.

Recommendation

1. Approval as amended by drawings received 4th January and 31st January 2005, subject to the conditions, informatives and reasons as set out in my report of 6th October 2004 and the following additional condition:
2. Highway visibility splays to be provided prior to the commencement of development, and thereafter maintained clear of obstruction. (R. In the interests of highway safety)

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning files Ref. S/1164/04/F, S/0754/01/F

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