

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Development and Conservation Control Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2005
<b>AUTHOR/S:</b>	Director of Development Services	

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**S/2611/04/F - Madingley  
Erection of Avian Laboratory, at  
University of Cambridge Sub-Department of Animal Behaviour, High Street for  
The Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge.**

**Determination Date: 18<sup>th</sup> February 2005  
Recommendation: Approval**

### **Conservation Area**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. The site lies outside the village framework and in the countryside. The Cambridge Green Belt boundary cuts across the north eastern corner of the site - undefined on the ground.
2. The site is used by the University of Cambridge as a research establishment.
3. Mature trees surround the site on the northern, eastern and southern boundaries apart from a single gap on the northern boundary.
4. A cricket ground lies to the south of the site.
5. The full application, received on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2004, proposes the replacement of an existing primate house with a single storey building approximately 6.7m in height with floor area of approximately 270m<sup>2</sup> with, in addition, a further 350m<sup>2</sup> of attached aviaries.
6. The purpose of the building is to research in the field of avian evolutionary studies and follows the need to replace an existing avian research laboratory which is unsafe.
7. Amended plans have been received revising details of materials.

#### **Planning History**

8. In February 2004 planning permission was granted for the retention of the portakabin.
9. In November 2002 conservation area consent was granted for the total demolition of the existing primate building.
10. In August 2000 planning permission was granted for a controlled environment unit.
11. In July 1998 planning permission was granted for extensions to the research building.
12. In December 1995 planning permission was granted for a changing and shower unit close to the existing primate building.

13. In November 1993 conservation area consent was granted for the total demolition of eleven outbuildings.
14. In January 1990 planning permission was granted for the siting of a portakabin.
15. In January 1981 planning permission was granted for the erection of the primate building.
16. In October 1977 planning permission was granted for the erection of a building for the keeping of animals.

### **Planning Policy**

17. Policy EM4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (the Local Plan) states: Proposals for the development of new research establishments (and for the expansion of existing research establishments) will normally be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:
  - (a) Such development is intended to provide accommodation for organisations whose primary purpose is to research or investigate ideas, theories and concepts and/or to design and develop instruments, processes or products, up to and including production for testing, but excluding manufacture; and
  - (b) That the organisations are required in the national interest to be located close to existing major establishments in related fields (such as the universities, the teaching hospital or private research establishments) in order to share staff, equipment or data, or to undertake joint collaborative working for the purposes specified in (a) above.

Where there is any conflict between such proposals and other policies and proposals in the development plan this must be outweighed by evidence of need in the national interest as referred to above.

Development under this policy will be regulated by way of a condition(s) or, where appropriate, a planning obligation, to restrict the future occupation and use of the premises for the purposes specified.

18. **Policy GB2 of the Local Plan** details the criteria attached to the protection of the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
19. Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 states (in part): "Development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location".
20. Planning Policy Statement No 7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas states (in part): New building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; the Government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all... Priority should be given to the re-use of previously-developed ('brownfield') sites... All development in rural areas should be well-designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness.

## **Consultation**

21. **Madingley Parish Council**

The Parish Council has made no recommendation.

22. **Conservation Manager**

**Observations:**

The building will replace an existing single storey brick structure on the site (for which CAC has already been granted Ref: S/1983/02/CAC). This replacement structure has a significantly larger footprint than the building it replaces. In addition, although it is also single storey, it is significantly higher than the building it replaces.

The site is part of a complex of buildings and is well screened from the village and the adjacent fields by mature trees and hedgerows. However, it is my opinion that the gable of the new building will be visible from the footpath leading to the Cricket Ground to the south of the site.

The new building is a functional box with very little articulation. The exterior is to be clad in untreated sawn Red Cedar, which will weather down to a silver grey. The gables of the new building would appear to be clad in zinc, matching the standing seam roof. It would be preferable for the Cedar cladding to continue up into the gables, to avoid banding on the elevations and keep a clean, uncluttered form. The lower portion of the south gable appears to be clad in brickwork, in contrast to the rest of the building. Again there does not appear to be any functional reason for this change in materials and I would prefer to see the Cedar cladding continued down to the brick plinth as elsewhere on the building.

**Recommendation:**

No objection subject to revisions to the exterior materials outlined above.

23. **Conservation Manager (in response to the amended plan)**

"I now accept that the zinc cladding to the apex of the gables is an integral part of the design that will not impact unduly on the setting of the conservation area (the zinc colour will tend to blend with the roof/sky and help reduce the apparent bulk). However, I am keen to avoid the banding that would result from retaining the brick panel at low level on the south gable. The architect has agreed to revise the elevation to remove this brick panel, and on that basis I have no further objections to this application."

24. **Chief Environmental Health Officer**

No objections subject to a condition requiring details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment.

25. **Environment Agency**

No objections subject to conditions to address surface water and pollution control issues.

26. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Additional water supplies for firefighting are not required.

27. **Representations**

None

## **Planning Comments - Key Issues**

28. The key issues are the impact of the site on its surroundings, impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the justification for new build in the countryside.

***Impact on surroundings and Conservation Area***

29. The site is surrounded by tall mature trees and is not readily visible from the surrounding countryside. However the building would be approximately 6.7m high and views may be gained from the footpath leading to the Cricket Ground to the south of the site.
30. The Conservation Manager has requested changes to the detailing. The University has responded with a revised plan which has satisfied the concern regarding the impact on the Conservation Area. I therefore consider that the proposal will not have a negative impact on the surrounding countryside or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

***Justification***

31. The application, as submitted, contained no information to justify the proposal. On 10<sup>th</sup> February a letter was received that states the following:
- “1. A new building to house various species of birds in conditions that approximate to their natural conditions is proposed for the Department of Zoology’s Sub-Department of Animal Behaviour at Madingley. The existing avian research laboratories were declared unsafe by the University’s Health and Safety Division in 2002, due to land subsidence and structural insecurity of asbestos roofing, and surveys have demonstrated that a replacement building is the most cost-effective option. Research in the field of avian evolutionary studies has expanded in the Departments of Zoology and Experimental Psychology. The laboratory-based research at the Avian Laboratory is carried out under Home Office licence and comprises non-invasive investigations into how conflicts of interest within the family group are resolved. This research enhances the theoretical modelling and fieldwork studies of internationally recognized groups both in the Department of Zoology and in cognate disciplines in the School of Biological Sciences. The new facilities will enable and promote multidisciplinary collaborations between these complementary approaches to evolutionary biology, which is a core theme underlying the Department of Zoology’s research strategy. The integrative biology theme of this research is a strategic priority area of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.
2. The project has been approved by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), for support from the Science Research Investment Fund (SRIF) round 2 funding programme.
3. The scheme is consistent with the needs of the Department’s development plan and will be constructed in one phase, in the location shown in the plan below, after the demolition of a vacant and redundant building of total area 109 sq.m. The proposed new building will provide a total area of 251 sq.m.”
32. In addition to the above, the University has stated that it considers the site to be ‘brown field’ and it was not its intention to encroach into the Green Belt with the building but to construct it on that part of the site outside of the Green Belt.
33. It would appear that a small part of the structure will cross over the Green Belt boundary. However, the boundary is arbitrary here and the extent to which the building falls within the Green Belt is really dependent on the accuracy of the drawing

of the Green Belt boundary. I do not consider that this marginal incursion will affect the openness of the Green Belt or compromise any of the other Green Belt criteria.

34. In my opinion this is a brown field site and although it falls outside of the village framework it is well screened and clearly reads with the rest of this University research establishment and not with the surrounding open countryside. There is a building on site already and although the proposal is for a substantially larger building I do not consider it will harm the surrounding countryside and Green Belt or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

### **Recommendation**

35. Subject to the application being referred to the Secretary of State for consideration approval as amended by letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005 and plan no. F65 03/01 A 015 Rev D subject to the following conditions:
1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 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 would not have been acted upon.)
  2. No development shall commence until details of the materials to be used for the external walls and roof have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.  
(Reason - To ensure that visually the development accords with neighbouring buildings and is not incongruous in accordance with the requirements of Policies EM4 and GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003).
  3. Details of the location and type of any power driven plant or equipment, including equipment for heating, ventilation and for the control or extraction of any odour, dust or fumes from the building but excluding office equipment and vehicles and the location of the outlet from the building of such plant or equipment, shall be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority before such plant or equipment is installed; the said plant or equipment shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and with any agreed noise restrictions.  
(Reason - To protect the amenities of occupiers of nearby residential properties in accordance with the requirements of Policies EM4 and GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003.)
  4. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of surface water drainage shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans/specification at such time(s) as may be specified in the approved scheme.  
(Reason - To prevent the increased risk of flooding and/or pollution of the water environment.)
  5. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of pollution control to the water environment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The

works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans/specification at such time(s) as may be specified in the approved scheme.

(Reason - To prevent the increased risk of pollution to the water environment.)

### **Reasons for Approval**

1. Although the proposal has been considered as a Departure from the Development Plan, and particularly in regard to policies aimed at protecting the countryside, the Local Planning Authority considers very special circumstances exist which outweigh the harm by being located in the countryside:
  - **The replacement building sits within an existing research development site is well screened from the surrounding countryside and not located in an open area rendering it visually acceptable within the countryside;**
  - **The building is required for research which is nationally significant.**
2. All other material planning considerations have been taken into account. None is of such significance as to outweigh the reason for the decision to approve the planning application.

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

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning Policy Statement 7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Planning File Ref. S/2611/04/F

**Contact Officer:** Nigel Blazeby - Senior Planning Assistant  
Telephone: (01954) 713256