

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

6 February 2013

**AUTHOR/S:** Planning and New Communities Director

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### **S/2127/12/FL – GIRTON**

**Conversion of existing garage and erection of rear extension to create two self-contained dwellings at Thornton House, Huntingdon Road, for Paul Murray-John**

**Recommendation: Approval**

**Date for Determination: 21 December 2012**

#### **Notes:**

**This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the officer recommendation of approval is contrary to the recommendation of refusal from Girton Parish Council**

**To be presented to the Committee by John Koch**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. Thornton House is a large detached house and garden on the north side of Huntingdon Road. It lies between an actively used petrol filling station (with supermarket) and a further detached home trading as a bed and breakfast establishment at 144 Thornton Road adjacent. The property has an existing gate and entrance to Huntingdon Road.
2. The proposal, which has been amended to take on board concerns raised by neighbours, has a number of elements, most of which are internal alterations. In short, the existing detached home would be reconfigured as two semi-detached houses of one x 2 bedroomed home and one x 4 bedroomed home, on an "asymmetrical" basis. To facilitate that arrangement a two storey extension would be erected at the rear of the home on its eastern side. This would contain a "guest bedroom" on its ground floor and a "dressing room/study" on its first floor.
3. The amended front garden would contain for parking spaces on its eastern side and on its western side a communal cycle store and a refuse store. Prior to seeking planning permission a substantial number of (apparently overgrown) trees were removed from the front and rear gardens.

#### **Relevant Planning History**

4. **S/0932/84/F** - Extensions  
**S/1534/12/FL** - Extension and conversion of dwelling into 5 self-contained flats and associated works - Invalid application

## **Planning Policy**

5. The **National Planning Policy Framework** promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development having regard to the soundness of the development plan and the policies therein.
6. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007**  
ST/6 Group Villages
7. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007**  
DP/1 Sustainable Development  
DP/2 Design of New Development  
DP/3 Development Criteria  
TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards

## **Consultation by South Cambridgeshire District Council as Local Planning Authority**

8. **Girton Parish Council** - The planning application was recommended for refusal on the following grounds:
  1. The drawings submitted are misleading as they do not represent the correct footprint for the neighbouring property and also show many trees which have since been removed.
  2. Concerns regarding overshadowing of neighbouring properties.
  3. Concerns regarding possible change of use - the owners would need to be reminded that they would need a change of use before this could be a dwelling of multiple occupancy.The Clerk has received a letter of objection to the application, which has been forwarded to SCDC".
9. **Local Highway Authority** - No comments received

## **Representations by members of the public**

10. Objections received from nos. 144 and 147 Thornton Road (after re-consultation following amended drawings) and the proprietors of the adjoining garage. The points raised can be summarised as:
  - The proposed rearward extension has been relocated further away but would still over-shadow no. 144 and reduce the light to the flank dining/living room (used by guests).
  - The footprint of number 144 Thornton Road is incorrectly shown on plans.
  - A large number of pre-existing trees have been removed by the developer. That loss of tree cover has increased the disturbance due to light and noise from the adjacent Hayward Garage.
  - The pre-existing road entrance to Thornton House may be unsafe due to conflict with vehicles entering and leaving the adjacent garage. Motorists might be encouraged to park within Thornton Road in preference to using residents' on-site parking.

- The proposal may be to let the house as an HMO or similar multi-occupancy. This would cause disturbance.
- The changed window design might admit more light from the garage to other properties than at present. Will this affect their rights to use existing canopy lights to the garage?

### **Material Planning Considerations**

11. The key issues in this case are the principle of the change of use, the impact on neighbours, impact on the character, appearance or local distinctiveness of the wider area, highway safety and the potential for an intensification of use.

#### **Principle**

12. The site lies within the village framework of a Group Village. There is no policy objection to a change of use from a single to two dwellings in principle.

#### **Impact on neighbours**

13. The drawings do not accurately show the footprint of the adjacent number 144 Thornton Road. However, the differences are minor and concern the relationship with the adjacent boundary to the application site. After receipt of amended drawings, the proposed rear extension would be some 4.5 metres from the affected flank dining/living room window of number 144 Thornton Road (used by paying guests). The light and outlook available to that room is already affected by a circa 1.8 metre high boundary fence and the material effect of that proposed extension would be visible to the north east, above and beyond the boundary fence in question. An extension of similar configuration to that proposed could be constructed as “permitted development” (under Class A), were its depth from the rear main wall 3 metres or less. As proposed, its depth from the rear main wall is some 4.2 metres.
14. The “material” question in this case is therefore whether the net additional 1.2 metres is sufficiently harmful by reason of loss of light or overshadowing (Policy DP/1 - 2 j) to warrant refusal of planning permission. Having inspected the room concerned, the case officer considers the impact would not be sufficient to warrant refusal. A near identical affect would arise from any slightly shorter rearward extension. The impact of the extension as proposed by amended drawings is already mitigated by its reduced height of eaves below those of the existing house and its hipped roof (which might not arise in a merely shorter extension constructed as permitted development).

#### **Character and appearance**

15. Site inspection reveals that a significant number of former trees have been removed from the site as a whole. (Many of those shown on the drawings are indicative than actually existing). The trees removed were not the subject of any TPO or within a Conservation Area. Their loss from the front garden area in particular appears to enable light “trespass” from the adjacent garage premises to intrude into the private gardens of numbers 142 and 144. However, the proposed development did not require their removal and will make no material difference to the now existing situation.

## **Highway Safety**

16. The pre-existing road entrance and gate to Huntingdon Road is to be re-used. The level of traffic anticipated to make use of the retained entrance would not be materially different from that of the former large detached house, if occupied more intensively than was evidently the case prior to its acquisition by the applicant. It follows that no objection to the proposal on grounds of road safety can be sustained. The need to retain the proposed level of car parking and cycle provision can be conditioned accordingly.

## **Intensification of use**

17. Consultation replies suggest that the applicant's ultimate intention might be to let the restored and extended building for the purposes of "multi-occupation". The proposed two houses (assessed as a single planning unit) include a total of 12 bed spaces in aggregate, and that figure could well be increased by minor internal alterations. Whether the two proposed homes are occupied or not, there is clearly some potential for a more intensive use, rather than two households within Use Class C3.
18. As a large house in substantial grounds that evidently suffers significant disturbance from the adjacent garage premises, the application site is fairly suitable for such use and, if well managed, need not cause significant problems for neighbours. Nonetheless, the application does not propose any such level of use. An informative can be added to any permission confirming the need for planning permission should there be a wish to further sub-divide the property.
19. 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 allowed in this instance.

## **Recommendation**

20. It is recommended that the Planning Committee approves the application as amended subject to the following conditions and informative
  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 - 103 Rev A, 110 Rev A, 1020 Rev A (all date stamped received 10 December 2012) and 105 (date stamped received 4 October 2012).  
(Reason - To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)
  3. The proposed cycle and refuse stores shall be provided before the property is first occupied as two self-contained dwellings and thereafter retained as such.  
(Reason - To ensure adequate cycle and refuse storage provision in accordance with policies DP/3 and TR/2 of the Local Development Framework 2007.)

4. The proposed shared car parking area as shown on drawing 110 Rev A shall be provided before the property is first occupied as two self-contained dwellings and thereafter retained as such.  
(Reason - To ensure adequate car parking provision in accordance with policy TR/2 of the Local Development Framework 2007.)

Informative

1. In view of earlier proposals to sub-divide the property into five (one and two bedroom) flats under a previous planning application S/1534/12/FL, the applicant and other interested parties are reminded that any intention to proceed with a similar proposal simply by internal alterations to the building alone would be unlawful, in the absence of a specific planning permission in that behalf, to permit such means of occupying the building concerned.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (adopted July 2007)
- Planning File Ref: S/2127/12/FL

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