

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 13th May 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0402/05/F - Melbourn
Variation of Condition No. 4 of Planning Permission Reference S/1447/03/F to Allow Use of Part of Building for Retail Sale of Baby and Nursery Equipment for M Huffer

Recommendation: Refusal
Determination Date: 27th April 2005

Site and Proposal

1. Phillimore Garden Centre is located on the west side of Cambridge Road, north of Melbourn village.
2. The full planning application, received 2nd March 2005, proposes the variation of a condition that restricts the use of a new building within the Garden Centre site to use in connection with a Garden Centre only, restricting the type of goods sold.
3. Only half of the building is required by a company known as 'Nippers' who would like to relocate here from its current shop in Whaddon. The stated goods sold are baby and nursery equipment, outdoor climbing frames, toys for children, TP outdoor toys, swings, slides and trampolines.
4. The floor area would be split up into approximately 186m² of retail area at the front of the building with approximately 64m² of storage space to the rear. 'Nippers' would be happy for a personal condition to be imposed and require opening hours between 10am to 4pm (days not indicated).

Planning History

5. In July 2003 a planning application was submitted for the "erection of a building for shed and garden building display and sales and camping shop". The application was approved at the November 2003 Development and Conservation Control Committee meeting subject to conditions. Condition 4 limited the use of the building to garden centre use only. The description of the development was amended to remove reference to the camping shop.

Planning Policy

6. **Policy SH12 – Garden Centres** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan")

This policy states (in part):-

"Convenience sales will not be permitted where it would have a significant adverse impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the viability and vitality of the existing Rural and Limited Rural Growth Settlements in South Cambridgeshire, or other village centres.

7. **Paragraph 6.28 of the Local Plan states (in part):-**

"[Garden centres] should not be permitted to sell convenience or other goods where it could undermine the viability of village shops which are better located to serve the entire local population, not just those with ready access to a motor car".

8. **Retailing in the countryside**

Paragraph 6.26 of the Local Plan states:-

"The District Council is concerned about sporadic development for retail uses in the open countryside ...sales could have an adverse effect on the economic viability of existing shopping facilities in nearby villages..."

9. **Policy TP1 of the Local Plan states (in part):-**

"The Council will seek, through its decisions on planning applications, to promote more sustainable transport choices, to improve access to major trip generators by non-car modes, and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

To give effect to these aims, planning permission will not be granted for developments likely to give rise to more than a small-scale increase in travel demands unless the site has (or will attain) a sufficient standard of accessibility to offer an appropriate choice of travel by public transport or other non-car travel mode(s)".

10. **Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 – Town Centres and Retail Developments**

Paragraph 4.9 states (in part):

"The Government is seeking, through the location of development, to influence overall levels of car travel. PPG13 seeks to reduce the need to travel, reduce reliance on the car and facilitate multi-purpose trips...Linked trips are more likely to happen on trips made to existing centres...For retail developments, local planning authorities should assess the likely proportion of customers who would arrive by car and the catchment area which the development seeks to serve. Particular consideration should be given to retail proposals which seek to attract car-borne trade from a wide catchment area.

11. **Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 - Transport**

Paragraph 35 states (in part):-

"Policies for retail and leisure should seek to promote the vitality and viability of existing town centres, which should be the preferred locations for new retail and leisure developments.

12. **Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas**

Paragraph 17 states (in part):-

"The Government's policy is to support the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives".

Consultation

13. **Melbourn Parish Council**

Recommends approval

Representations

14. None

Planning Comments – Key Issues

15. The key issues are whether the use of this part of the building for the sale of baby and nursery equipment etc is sustainable and/or would threaten the viability and vitality of village shops.

Sustainability

16. The site is not readily accessible by public transport. I am not aware of any bus stop near the site and it is not readily accessible on foot or by bicycle. Most customers will therefore arrive by car. The type of goods sold will on occasion necessitate the use of a car but in the main this is not necessary. I consider that this site is not in a sustainable location for retail sales of goods that would be better located within an urban centre or village shop.
17. Coupled with the inevitable arrival by car is the concern that in this isolated location special journeys are required that would not (in all probability) be combined with the garden centre use although there would of course be odd occasions where this occurs. Were this site within Cambridge or within a village there is a greater probability that journeys would be combined with the use of other shops and services. This pattern of use is contrary to the Government objective of encouraging linked trips (see PPG6 above).

Vitality and viability of local shops

18. I do not consider that this proposal will threaten any specific local shops. However, there is no reason why nursery and baby equipment should not be sold from a village location. The Local Plan states that the District Council is concerned about sporadic development for retail uses in the open countryside.
19. Taken cumulatively this proposal will contribute to the increasing pressures upon local village shops and services particularly as countryside shops can benefit from lower overheads which can undermine the viability of village shops. In my view retail sales outside of village frameworks should be limited to the type of goods that cannot reasonably be expected to be sold within villages or urban centres. The District Council has consistently opposed the sale of goods that are not in connection with a garden centre from garden centre sites.

Conclusion

20. I consider the sales of nursery and baby equipment from this site will attract customers by car, making a special journey, for a type of goods that could readily be sold from a village shop. This is unsustainable and contrary to both national and local policies.
21. The use will, as part of a cumulative impact, adversely affect the viability and vitality of village shops.

Recommendation

Refusal

The proposed sale of goods that can readily be sold from an urban centre or village shop premises in this rural location is unsustainable. It will attract and encourage single-purpose car journeys and will further contribute to a cumulative adverse impact on the vitality and viability of village shops. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies TP1 and SH12 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

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

- Planning Files reference S/1447/03/F and S/0402/05/F
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning Policy Guidance Notes Nos. 6 and 13
- Planning Policy Statement No. 7.

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