

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

1st June 2005

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0743/05/F - Great Shelford

Extension and Conversion of Agricultural Buildings into Education Tutorial Centre and Erection of Lawnmower Garage at Caius Farm, Shelford Bottom for Beechwood Education Trust

Recommendation: Approval

Date for determination: 14th July 2005 (Major Application)

Departure application

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to a clunch and brick barn with a corrugated sheeting roof and a brick lean-to element to the rear which sits in a 1.1 hectare (2.7 acres) approximately site which currently forms part of the Brethren Gospel Hall site at Shelford Bottom. The building is currently vacant. The Babraham Road Park and Ride site lies beyond the Gospel Hall site to the north and west. Dwellings and farm buildings with Cherry Hinton Road beyond bound the site to the east. Babraham Road is to the south.
2. This full application, registered on the 14th April 2005, proposes to erect a 17m x 4.7m two-storey lean-to extension to replace the existing 10.2m x 4m single storey lean-to extension and to use the resulting building as a school. The existing corrugated sheeting room would be replaced by slates. It is also proposed to erect a 5.4m x 4.4m x 4m high boarding and pitched slate roof lawnmower store. 11 parking spaces are proposed. The remainder of the site would be used as a playground and playing field. The existing access to the Gospel Hall would be moved to the north, requiring works to the belt of planting to the north of the existing access, and a parallel access to serve the school would be provided adjacent and to the south.
3. The school is currently being run from temporary accommodation in Whittlesford. Additional information submitted at the time of application S/2472/04/F stated that the Beechwood School has been established for the secondary education of children of the Exclusive Brethren from Cambridge and Thaxted. The school day would be 0820-1500 Monday to Friday and there would be no after school activities on the site. Physical education would be held two afternoons a week from 1330 to 1500, often using specialised facilities at other venues. A plan shows that the students generally live in clusters in South Cambridge, Cherry Hinton, Fulbourn, Teversham, Great Shelford, Stapleford and Thaxted. A letter explained that The Mowbray Trust holds the land at present to provide a place of worship of God according to the principles held by the Brethren and, whilst it fully supports the School, as a secular concern it holds that it should be kept separate from a place of worship. It thereby requires the Hall and School sites to be wholly separate, including having separate roadways.

Planning History

4. A previous application for extension and conversion of the building into education tutorial centre and erection of lawnmower garage was withdrawn (**S/2472/04/F**).
5. Permission was granted in 1993 for retention and extension of hardstanding around barn (**S/1480/93/F**).
6. Full planning permission was granted in 1992 for a meeting hall for religious purposes including access road, car park, security fence, entrance gates and fence and septic tank (**S/1154/92/F**).
7. An application for full planning permission was refused in 1992 for a meeting hall for religious purposes including access road, car park, meter house, security fence, gates, railings and septic tank/cesspool (**S/0751/92/F**).
8. Outline permission for a religious meeting room and car park was granted in 1992 (**S/1591/91/O**).

Planning Policy

9. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/2** states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
10. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P9/2a** states that within the Green Belt, new development, including change of use, will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.
11. Local Plan 2004 **Policy GB2** states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. It also states that development is 'inappropriate' unless, amongst others, it comprises the re-use of buildings provided the development does not result in a materially greater impact on the openness and purpose of the Green Belt; strict control is exercised over any proposed extensions and associated uses of surrounding land; the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction; and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings.
12. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN3** states that, in those cases where new development is permitted in the countryside, the Council will require that the scale, design and layout of the scheme, the materials used and the landscaping works are all appropriate to the particular Landscape Character Area (the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area in this instance) and reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.

Consultation

13. At the time this report was compiled, the comments of **Great Shelford Parish Council**, the **Conservation Manager** and the **Trees & Landscape Officer** were awaited.

Representations

14. None received at the time this report was compiled. Any comments received will be reported verbally. The statutory consultation period expires 31st May 2005.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

15. The key issues in relation to this application are:
 - Whether the development constitutes ‘inappropriate development’ in the Green Belt and, if so, whether there are any very special circumstances which demonstrate that it should still be approved;
 - The impact of the extension, lawnmower store, resulting building and accesses on the openness and rural character of the countryside and Green Belt;
 - Whether this is a suitable location for the proposed use; and
 - Impact on neighbours.
16. Local Plan Policy GB2 states that the re-use of buildings is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided the development does not result in a materially greater impact on the openness and purpose of the Green Belt and strict control is exercised over any proposed extensions and associated uses of surrounding land. As it involves the erection of a lawnmower store and a larger extension than I might normally want to encourage in the Green Belt, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, it relates to an important traditional building for which I consider it is important to find an appropriate use. I am also satisfied that the scale of development proposed is no more than is necessary to secure the future of this important traditional building. I consider that this constitutes very special circumstances to support the application.
17. I do not consider that the extension, lawnmower store or the resulting building would result in the site having a materially greater impact on the openness or rural character of the countryside and Green Belt. I do however consider that the scheme should reflect any revisions to the fenestration recommended by the Conservation Manager. A separate roadway is proposed to serve the school. Whilst, in terms of minimising the visual impact of the development, it would be desirable for the Gospel Hall and School to share the same roadway, the applicant has explained why a separate access is proposed (see paragraph 3 above). The creation of two accesses would involve works to the belt of planting along the site’s northern boundary. However, subject to no objections being raised by the Trees & Landscape Officer, I consider that separate accesses would be acceptable in this instance. Significant planting has recently been undertaken within the Park and Ride Site to the north. The submitted plans are inconsistent in terms of the position of the accesses. My recommendation is therefore subject to the receipt of consistent plans.
18. Whilst I would not normally consider that a countryside location was an appropriate location for a school in terms of reducing travel distances and dependence on the car, having regard to the importance of finding a new use for the building and the location of student’s homes, this location would seem appropriate. With students’ homes generally being grouped together, there is an opportunity for those who do intend to travel by car to car share.
19. Subject to a condition restricting the times when the playground and playing field can be used, I do not consider the proposed use would seriously harm the amenity of neighbours through noise or disturbance.
20. Visibility from the access on to Cherry Hinton Road is good.
21. Approval of the scheme would not significantly prejudice the implementation of the development plan’s policies and proposals. If Members are minded to approve the application, it would not therefore be necessary to refer it to the Secretary of State.

Recommendation

22. Subject to the receipt of consistent plans of the accesses to which the Trees & Landscape Officer raises no objections and to any amendments to the fenestration recommended by the Conservation Manager, delegated approval subject to the following conditions:
1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 2. SC5 a and f – Details of materials for external walls, roofs and hard surfacing, including roads (RC To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development);
 3. SC51 – Landscaping (RC51);
 4. SC52 – Implementation of landscaping (RC52);
 5. SC40 (an Education Tutorial Centre by the Beechwood Education Trust) (D1) – Restriction on the use of the building (RC This may not be an appropriate location for other uses within Class D1 in terms of reducing the need to travel, travel distances and dependence on the car);
 6. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the playgrounds and playing field shown upon drawing no. (to be inserted when consistent plans received) shall not be used other than between the hours of 0820 – 1500 hours Monday to Friday (RC To protect the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, and the occupiers of Arbor Grange in particular, with respect to noise and disturbance).
 7. No development shall commence until a schedule of proposed works detailing all those elements of the building involved in the conversion to be repaired, replaced, renewed, rebuilt or newly constructed, including below ground features and specifications of materials to be used, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any material variations considered necessary as work progresses shall also be so approved (Reason: To ensure that the scheme extensively involves only the conversion of the building by ensuring that the Local Planning Authority retains control over the extent of any rebuilding)

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the development is not in accordance with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Policy P9/2a and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy GB2, it is considered to be acceptable as a departure from the development plan for the following reason: the proposal represents a suitable new use for this important traditional building and thereby ensure its future.
2. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development);
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: EN3** (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development in the Countryside)

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 file Refs: S/0743/05/F, S/2472/04/F, S/1480/93/F, S/1154/92/F, S/0751/92/F and S/1591/91/O.

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