

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee

6<sup>th</sup> July 2005

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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### **S/0826/05/F - Little Abington Extension at The Temple for R & S Clayden**

**Recommendation: Refusal  
Determination Date: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

#### **Site and Proposal**

1. The application site is located on the corner of the old A11 and Bourne Bridge Road and is situated in open countryside. The site, known as The Temple, is occupied by a modern substantial two storey property used as a dwelling and conference centre. In the south west corner of the site is a small Listed Building, formerly a lodge to Abington Hall. The site is fairly well screened along its north, west and east boundaries but has an open front aspect to Bourne Bridge Road.
2. The full application, submitted on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005, seeks to erect a conservatory extension on the east side of the dwelling/conference centre. The structure would measure 9.2 metres in length by 6.5 metres deep and would stand 5 metres high. It would link the property to a large marquee that has been erected on the east side of the building and would replace an approximately 2.5 metre high open-sided canvas structure that presently links the main building and marquee.

#### **Planning History**

3. The site has a lengthy planning history. The most relevant applications to the current proposal are:
4. **S/0803/94/F** - Application for replacement house and garage approved subject to a number of conditions, including (a) that the existing dwelling and garage be removed within 3 months of occupation of the new dwelling, (b) the removal of residential permitted development rights and (c) confining the use of The Temple to domestic purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse.
5. **S/1531/98/F** - Application for removal of condition (a) referred to above refused.
6. **S/1420/01/F** - Part change of use of dwelling to conference facility - Approved
7. **S/1245/02/F** - Application for a substantial (20 metre long) single storey extension on the east side of the conference centre refused for the following reasons:
  - Scale and design of extension out of keeping with residential character of existing building and would materially increase impact of the development on the countryside;
  - The extension would adversely affect the rural setting of the Listed lodge building;

- The development, designed as an independent building and required for catering rather than conference use, is tantamount to a building for a new use that is inappropriate development in the countryside.
8. **S/2487/02/F** - Application for part two storey, part single storey extension on the east side of the conference centre approved.

### **Planning Policy**

9. The site lies within the countryside and is occupied by a Listed Building.
10. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
11. **Policy P1/3** of the Structure Plan states that a high standard of design and sustainability will be required for all new development which minimises the need to travel and reduces car dependency. In addition development is expected to provide a sense of place which responds to the local character of the built environment.
12. **Policy P7/6** of the Structure Plan requires development to protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
13. **Policy EN28** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states that the Council will resist and refuse applications which (in part):
- Would dominate the Listed Building or its curtilage buildings in scale, form, massing or appearance;
  - Would damage the setting, well-being or attractiveness of a Listed Building;
  - Would harm the visual relationship between the building and its formal or natural landscape surroundings.

### **Consultation**

14. **Little Abington Parish Council** recommends approval.
15. **The Conservation Manager** objects to the application stating:
- This property has been continually extended over the years to accommodate the conference use. The site actually forms part of the Lodge house group to Abington Hall, although the visual and physical relationship has now been lost;
  - The extension will not have a greater impact on the Listed Building than the existing property. However, the continued expansion of the conference centre does have a significant impact on the countryside setting of the village and the agricultural landscape. I am therefore of the opinion that to extend the centre further would have a detrimental impact on the character of the open countryside;
  - I would furthermore note that the design quality of the proposal is poor. The 'orangery' may be screened by a significant hedge but it will appear far too solid to be convincing as an orangery and will have the appearance of another extension that is badly related to the main house.

## **Representations**

16. None

### **Representations by the applicants**

17. The applicants were asked to clarify in writing the need for the extension. In the first letter submitted, the applicants state that the extension is essential to their business to allow disabled access to be improved by giving even floor levels for conference and weddings to and from the main house to the marquee. It will also allow additional disabled access from the outside and will enable any disabled guest attending a conference or wedding to have the same accessibility to the main house as other guests. The extension will enable delegates and guests to move freely from conference room to dining room without incurring adverse weather. It will also prevent unnecessary loss of heat in the winter and enable air conditioning to work efficiently in the summer. The letter also states that if The Temple becomes a non-smoking building, the extension could provide a smoking area away from the training rooms. Finally, the existing link structure is not commensurate with the high standards achieved on the rest of the site.
18. In the second letter, it is stressed that The Temple is a small rural business employing five part time staff from local villages. At present, it is operating at around 70% of full capacity. Due to unprecedented success, the wedding side of the business is developing and The Temple hope to be in a position to offer full time employment to a number of staff in the future. The Orangery would allow smaller wedding receptions to be held in the future thereby reducing the number of times in the year the temporary marquee is erected. In addition, it would enhance and expand the areas of the centre accessible to all disabled persons so that they have the same opportunities of access and free movement on the ground level as able-bodied clients. The addition of the orangery would also increase the flexibility of the existing space and enable the business to develop to its full potential.

### **Planning Comments - Key Issues**

19. The key issues in the consideration of this application are:
- The need for the development;
  - The impact of the extension upon the countryside;
  - The impact of the extension upon the setting of the Listed Building.
20. The site is located in the countryside. In such locations, Policy P1/2 of the County Structure Plan restricts development to that which is essential for countryside activities or to the operation of local farming, forestry, mineral extraction or public utility services. The proposed development is clearly not required for any of these purposes and there are no development plan policies specifically supporting the expansion of conference centre facilities in countryside locations. The proposal is therefore contrary, in principle, to Policy P1/2 of the Structure Plan and it is necessary to consider whether there are sufficient material considerations, in this instance, to justify the proposed development.
21. The applicants have sought to argue that there is an essential need for the extension in order to provide access for disabled people, to provide a covered link between the main building and the marquee, for energy efficiency reasons, to provide a covered smoking area and to enable the business to operate at full capacity. No evidence has

been submitted to prove that any of these elements are essential to the continued survival of the business nor has it been satisfactorily demonstrated that a structure of the size proposed is necessary. It appears from the evidence submitted to date that the proposed extension is desirable (and I sympathise with the applicants' desire to improve the standard of accommodation at the site) but not essential.

22. In addition, I must stress that the marquee, which is used as a substantial dining area, does not have planning permission (and indeed nor does the existing canvas link). This Authority has taken the view that permission is not required providing the marquee is temporary in form and used on a seasonal basis. At present there is a temporary link between the main building and the marquee. The provision of a sizeable permanent link suggests that the marquee is intended to become a permanent structure and would probably therefore need planning permission which, in view of the countryside policies against which any application would need to be considered, is unlikely to be considered favourably. Arguing that a permanent building is essential as a link to an accepted temporary structure is not a sufficient reason to justify the development.
23. The Council's Conservation Manager has advised that the proposed extension would not harm the setting of the listed building although it would have a detrimental impact upon the character of the open countryside. There is a 2.5 metre high beech hedge on the south side of the proposed structure that would screen the bottom part of the extension. However, given that the extension would be 5 metres high, the main building, link and marquee will form a very long continuous structure that will be a very prominent feature in the countryside.

#### **Recommendation**

24. Refusal:
  1. Insufficient evidence has been submitted to justify that the development is essential rather than desirable in the countryside. The development therefore contravenes Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 which states that development will be restricted in the countryside unless proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
  2. The proposed extension, by virtue of its size, height and siting, would have a detrimental visual impact upon the countryside. The development therefore contravenes Policy P1/3 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 which requires a high standard of design for all new development.

**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 application refs: S/0826/05/F, S/2487/02/F, S/1245/02/F, S/1420/01/F, S/1531/98/F and S/0803/94/F.

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