

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee      5<sup>th</sup> October 2005  
**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/1529/05/F – Great Shelford**  
**Ornamental Display Garden and Erection of Log Cabin at Scotsdales Garden Centre,  
120 Cambridge Road for Scotsdales Garden Centre**

**Recommendation: Approval**  
**Date for Determination: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2005**

### Site and Proposal

1. The application site is part of a grassed area of land sited at the front of Scotsdales and on the north side of the main access to the garden centre. There is a row of trees along the north-eastern edge of the site. The site is located in the countryside and Green Belt.
2. The full application, submitted on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2005, proposes an ornamental display garden and the erection of a log cabin on the land. The garden would be 29.5 metres long x 8.4 metres deep and would have benches along its south-western side with a low evergreen hedge forming the south-western boundary of the site. The log cabin would measure 3.9 metres long x 5.4 metres deep x 2.85 metres high and would be sited within the row of trees on the north-eastern side of the site. The plans show that a 1.8 metre high fence would be erected along the north-eastern edge of the garden and a 0.9 metre high open structure timber fence along the south-eastern boundary. The treatment to the remaining side boundary is unclear.
3. A covering letter submitted with the application states that the land would be used by BBC Radio Cambridgeshire's Trustline Charity and that they wish to create a small garden where members of the public can go to be peaceful and where a wishing well/fountain will be used to collect money for the Charity. The log cabin would be provided to enable members of the public to obtain more information about the Charity and to liaise with Charity representatives and Garden Centre staff.

### Planning History

4. There is no planning history specifically relating to the application site.

### Planning Policy

5. **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.
6. **Policy 9/2a** of the Structure Plan states that within the Green Belt, new development will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

7. **Policy GB2** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Development is defined as inappropriate unless it comprises [in part] buildings providing essential facilities for outdoor sports and recreation or for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with Green Belt purposes.
8. **The Great Shelford Village Design Statement 2004** refers to the importance of preserving glimpses of the countryside from inside the village. Paragraph 4.1 of the Landscape section states: "The sense of enclosure makes the glimpses of countryside from inside the village of great importance. Much of the rural and agricultural landscape is hidden by buildings. So the gaps between them and those places where fields abut the road, are very important. They keep the link between village and surrounding countryside." Additionally, paragraph 8.2 of the Character Areas section states, in describing the character of Cambridge Road, that the generous verges and trees give a valued green aspect to the road, as do the views between development into the rural setting beyond to east and west. The open space at the front of Scotsdales (of which the application site forms part) is identified in the map accompanying the design statement as an important viewpoint.

### **Consultations**

9. **Great Shelford Parish Council** objects to the application stating:

"The frontage has been identified as an important viewpoint into the countryside from Cambridge Road. At present it has an attractive open parkland appearance and the proposed gardens and building would be visually intrusive and out of character. We feel the proposal could be located elsewhere on the site."

The Parish Council has since clarified that it's comments are based on Sections 4.1 and 8.2 of the Village Design Statement as well as the accompanying map together with the main conclusion that 'visual links with the landscape should be preserved'.

10. **The Trees and Landscape Officer** raises no objections stating that the cabin would be placed on raised foundations and therefore the root zone of the trees would be unaffected.

### **Representations**

11. No letters have been received from local residents.

### **Representations by the applicant's agent**

12. Two letters submitted by the applicant's agent during the course of the application have clarified that the intention behind the garden is to raise money for a new scanner for Addenbrooke's Hospital, with the log cabin acting as an information centre for the scanner appeal. The letter submitted with the initial application did refer to the log cabin being manned by garden centre staff. However, it has been made clear in the subsequent letters and in telephone conversations between the case officer and the applicant's agent, that the development would not be linked to the normal commercial operation of the site and that the garden/cabin would only be required for a temporary 5 year period. Officers have queried whether the log cabin could be smaller (eg – the size of an information kiosk) but the agent has explained that the cabin needs to be the size proposed in order to accommodate a table and chairs.

It would be staffed by 1 or 2 representatives of the charity who would be on hand to assist and answer queries from visitors.

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

13. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application relate to:
  - a. The impact of the development upon the character, appearance and openness of the countryside and Green Belt;
  - b. Impact on trees.
14. The site lies within the countryside and Green Belt. The proposed garden and log cabin, whilst sited close to and seen against a backdrop of a row of trees, would be visible from the street and would change the open, parkland character of this area of land at the front of Scotsdales. In normal circumstances, Officers would consider such development to be inappropriate in that it harms the openness and character of the Green Belt and countryside and conflicts with the aims of the Village Design Statement. However, in this instance, Officers consider that the 'very special circumstances' referred to within Policy GB2 of the Local Plan apply as the garden and log cabin are being proposed for charitable purposes, with the aim being to raise money for the Addenbrookes Scanner Appeal. The development would therefore only be required for a temporary period of 5 years, after which time the garden and log cabin would be removed and the land reinstated to its current condition. Such a requirement could be conditioned as part of any planning permission.
15. The letter that initially accompanied the planning application referred to the log cabin being manned by garden centre staff and Officers were concerned that this implied an intention to use the site for retail purposes. It has since been clarified that this is not the case, the site would only be staffed by representatives from the charity and there would be no link whatsoever with the normal commercial operation of the site. It would be essential to prevent, by condition, any retail sales taking place from the application site as such a use would be contrary, in principle to Green Belt and countryside policies.
16. The proposal would not result in any harm to the tree belt on the north-eastern side of the site given that the log cabin would not have permanent foundations.
17. Officers have some reservations about the proposed boundary treatment details, with the 1.8 metre high fence shown along the north-eastern boundary of the garden considered to be inappropriate. The applicant's agents have been asked to replace this with a hedge or low fence and I am awaiting amendments to this effect. The details of the remaining boundaries are unclear and a condition should therefore be added to any consent requiring the agreement of boundary details before development starts.

### **Recommendation**

18. Subject to the 1.8 metre high fence being removed from the north-eastern edge of the garden area, approval, as clarified by letters dated 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> September 2005:
  1. The log cabin and garden use, together with associated boundary hedges/fences hereby permitted, shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition on or before 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

(Reason – Approval of the proposal on a permanent basis would be contrary to Policies P9/2a of the Structure Plan 2003 and GB2 of the Local Plan 2004, which aim to protect the openness of the Green Belt);

2. Sc60 – Boundary treatment details (Rc60);
3. No retail sales shall take place from the garden and log cabin, hereby permitted. (Reason – The use of the site for retail purposes would be contrary to Policies P1/2 and P9/2a of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and Policy GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004).

## **Informatives**

### **Reasons for Approval**

1. 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) and P9/2a (Development in the Green Belt)
  - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:** GB2 (Development in the Green Belt)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
  - Impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and upon the character and appearance of the countryside

**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
- Great Shelford Village Design Statement 2004
- File Ref: S/1529/05/F

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