

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 2nd November 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/1650/05/O - Harston
2 Houses on Land Adjacent to 121 High Street for D Ford

Recommendation: Refusal
Date for determination: 21st October 2005

Members will visit the site on 31st October 2005

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The site, excluding the access, extends to 0.31 hectares/0.78 acres and is occupied by Peytons Paving. There are a range of single storey timber and corrugated sheeting/felt roof buildings on the site used for storage and as a workshop. Pallets and paving products are stored on the site outside the buildings. At the time of the case officer's visit, 9 caravans and 2 camper vans were also being stored on the site. There is a good tree/conifer screen along the southeast, northeast and part of the northwest boundaries. The remainder of the northwest boundary is open. There is a gappy hedge/trees along the southwest boundary with the adjacent field. Access to the site is via a 160m long single width track. This track comes out onto the entrance to the petrol station on High Street. There is no pedestrian visibility splays from this track to the south and vehicle-to-vehicle visibility to the south is also very limited. The bungalow at No.121 has a kitchen and an office window in its side elevation facing the track and the boundary between its rear garden and the track is marked by a 1.2m high wall.
2. This outline application, received on the 26th August 2005, proposes the cessation of the existing commercial business use of the site, the removal of the existing buildings, the cessation of the use of the site for caravan storage and the erection of 2 houses. Means of access, via the existing track off High Street, forms part of the application. All other matters are reserved. The density, excluding the access, equates to 6.5 dwellings to the hectare.

Planning History

3. Permissions for extensions to No.121 have been granted under references **S/0274/99/F**, **S/0516/96/F** and **S/1252/85/F**.

Planning Policy

4. The access and a small part of the site is within the village framework. The remainder of the site is within the countryside and Green Belt.

Development in the Countryside/Green Belt

5. 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.
6. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
7. 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.
8. The proposed two houses constitute 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt and 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.

Development within Village Frameworks

9. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE4** states that residential development up to a maximum scheme size of 8 dwellings (and, exceptionally, up to 15 dwellings if this would make the best use of a brownfield site) will be permitted within the village framework of Harston provided that (a) the retention of the site in its present form is not essential to the character of the village; (b) the development would be sensitive to the character of the village, local features of landscape or ecological importance, and the amenities of neighbours; (c) the village has the necessary infrastructure capacity; and (d) residential development would not conflict with another policy of the Plan, particularly policy EM8 which relates to the loss of employment sites. It also states that all developments should provide an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and affordability.
10. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE9** states that development on the edges of villages should be sympathetically designed and landscaped to minimise the impact of development on the countryside.

Consultations

11. **Harston Parish Council** ticked the no recommendation box but comments that "From the comments of the surrounding neighbours, it appears that there is no particular objections, as long as the business use ceases. Two houses are acceptable with the proviso that the entrance to the lane is redesigned. It is difficult at present with cars going into the BP garage. So the outcome will be "approve" with road improvements and cessation of business."
12. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends conditions and an informative to be attached to any approval.
13. **Local Highway Authority** states the proposal gives it cause for concern as the location of the access road adjacent the garage access has the potential to cause vehicular conflict at the junction with High Street. However, it states that given the business use of the site, it could not sustain an objection to the proposed two dwellings on highway grounds.
14. **Cambs Fire & Rescue Service** states that additional water supplies for firefighting are not required.

Comments of Local District Councillor – Councillor Heap

15. The entrance on to the High Street is not satisfactory. The problem is that there is a risk of collision between a north bound vehicle turning left off the High Street and a vehicle leaving the properties to get onto the High Street. The reason for this is that there is not enough width - by a metre or so - at the top end of the lane to allow vehicles to be clearly encouraged to keep to "their side". The work needed to solve this problem is small although it would, I think, require negotiation with the BP filling station.
16. The relevance of this depends, I suppose, on whether the land presently used for making and storing paving stones etc, could, if not used for those purposes, be classified as a "brownfield site", and whether it could then be possible to reschedule it for residential use.
17. The applicant really does seem to have in mind the concerns of his neighbours who fear that future industrial uses might generate a great deal more traffic than Mr Ford does at present or than two house would in the future. But if Council agreed to residential use of such a large site, would we be able to agree to limit the number of dwellings to a low density?
18. My own feeling is that we should proceed cautiously with this one. I would reschedule the site for residential use on the grounds that although making paving stones is just about OK, there are other uses that would be less OK and which it would be difficult for us to control, and that, given the choice, industrial use of backland seems to me to be less desirable than residential. I would then seek to get the entrance on to the High Street improved, and, if that were done, I would allow the normal residential densities to apply to a future development.

Representations – Local Resident

19. Occupiers of 125C High Street have no objection to the application per se but consider the following matters need to be considered before permission is granted: business use of the site would need to cease; the creation of a precedent for further development accessed off the lane; and the layout of the junction of the access lane with the A10 needs urgent attention.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

20. The key issues in relation to this application are: whether this is an appropriate use of the site; impact on visual amenities of the countryside and rural character/openness of the Green Belt; highway safety; and impact on amenity of neighbours, and impact on amenity of occupiers of 121 High Street in particular.
21. A large part of the site is within the countryside and Green Belt. By virtue of its shape and limited size, the part of the site within the village framework is not capable of satisfactorily accommodating the proposed two dwellings. Residential development outside the framework would constitute inappropriate development in the countryside and Green Belt and no very special circumstances have been demonstrated to justify such development. Furthermore, the erection of two dwellings, at least part of which would be within the countryside and Green Belt, would detract from the visual amenity of the countryside and the rural character and openness of the Green Belt. The existing buildings are relatively unobtrusive and the site currently is relatively open. With regards to concerns that the Local Planning Authority would have no control over an intensification of the existing commercial use, any intensification

which involved any additional building(s) or structures would require planning permission.

22. The junction of the lane with the A10 is of concern, but in view of the comments of the Local Highway Authority, this is not considered to be reason for refusal. With regards to the Parish Council's and Councillor Heap's comments about widening the access, the submitted plan indicates that the applicant does not have control over the necessary land to improve this junction.
23. The site is currently in the same ownership as No.121 High Street. No.121 has windows in its side elevation facing the access to the site and a low wall along the boundary with the access to the site. The erection of two dwellings on the site would result in the occupiers of No.121 suffering an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance resulting from the use of the access by occupiers of the proposed dwellings.

Recommendation

24. Refusal

1. A large part of the site is outside the village framework and within the countryside and Green Belt. By virtue of its shape and limited size, the part of the site within the village framework is not capable of satisfactorily accommodating the proposed two dwellings. The erection of two dwellings, at least part of which would be within the countryside and Green Belt, constitutes inappropriate development in the countryside and Green Belt and no very special circumstances have been demonstrated to justify such development. Furthermore, the erection of two dwellings, at least part of which would be within the countryside and Green Belt, would detract from the visual amenity of the countryside and the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.

The proposal is therefore contrary to: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Policy P1/2 which states that development in the countryside will be restricted unless the proposal can be demonstrated to be essential in the particular rural location and Policy P9/2a which 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 location; and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy SE8 which states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted and Policy GB2 which states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

2. The site is currently in the same ownership as No.121 High Street. No.121 has windows in its side elevation facing the access to the site and a low wall along the boundary with the access to the site. The erection of two dwellings on the site would result in the occupiers of No.121 suffering an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance resulting from the use of the access by occupiers of the proposed dwellings.

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/1650/05/O, S/0274/99/F, S/0516/96/F and S/1252/85/F.

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