

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

S/1273/05/F - Gamlingay
Erection of Dwelling to Replace Existing Living Accommodation, 4 and 5 Little Heath, Gamlingay for Mr and Mrs R Halpin

Recommendation: Refusal
Date for Determination: 23rd August 2005

Site and Proposal

1. This full application, registered on 28th June 2005, proposes the replacement of two existing mobile homes in Little Heath with a single dwelling and garage. Outline consent was granted in February of this year.
2. The mobile homes are located on the east side of Little Heath and are immediately to the north of a third unit which is covered by the same planning consent (see History below) but does not form part of this application. There is a large Oak tree towards the front of the site.
3. To the north of the site is a chalet bungalow, beyond which are two single storey dwellings. Directly opposite the site and to the rear is agricultural land.
4. The proposed dwelling is a 4-bedroom property with a two-storey central section with a vaulted barrel roof rising to a height of 6.9m. The width of this section is 13m. Attached to the northern end, at an angle to the central section, is pitched roof double garage, with bedroom above. This element has a ridge height of 5.9m. Attached to the southern end, again at an angle to the central section is a pitched roof single storey wing containing a kitchen. This element has a ridge height of 4.4m. The total floor area of the dwelling is approximately 340m². The walls are to be clad in timber or rendered and the vaulted roof will have a standing seam cladding, clad either in copper with pantiles for the pitched roofs or, in zinc coated aluminium and slates.
5. The dwelling is set back from and angled to the road to avoid the mature Oak Tree at the front of the site.

Planning History

6. In February 2005 outline consent was granted for the replacement of the existing temporary accommodation by a dwelling, following a site visit by Members prior to the February Meeting (Item 31) (**Ref: S/2461/04/O**). A condition attached to the consent restricted the dwelling to single storey only, to ensure that its height respected that of the mobile homes and buildings it was to replace in order to minimise its visual impact in the countryside. Members were advised at the February meeting that the imposition of such a condition would not preclude the submission of a full application that attempted to demonstrate that an element of first floor accommodation could be provided without prejudicing the aforementioned objectives and that such an application would be judged on its merits.

Planning Policy

7. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (“The County Structure Plan”) restricts development in the countryside to that which is essential in a particular rural location.
8. **Policy HG15** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (“The Local Plan”) states that replacement dwellings in the countryside should be in scale and character with the dwelling it is intended to replace and should not materially increase the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.

Consultation

9. **Gamlingay Parish Council** recommends approval although comments that “some Councillors expressed the view that the proposed property was not in keeping with the surroundings.”
10. The **Trees and Landscapes Officer** has no objection but requests a condition requiring protective fencing for the Oak tree during the period of construction.
11. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests a condition restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the construction period. Informatives should be attached to any consent regarding the use of driven pile foundations and the burning of waste or bonfires on the site during the construction period.

Representations

12. None received.

Applicant’s Representations

13. In a letter accompanying the application the applicant points out that the site area has been kept the same as the outline consent and that the dwelling is a significant distance from the mature Oak tree to ensure its protection. The plans demonstrate that whilst the dwelling has been located to increase passive solar gain it is still sympathetic to the existing properties and building line. Through careful design it has been possible to minimise the impact of the dwelling by utilising an attractive vaulted barrel roof with additional pitched roofs either side.
14. Taking into account the current status of the land with the existing living units the proposed dwelling has been designed to be sympathetic to its surroundings. With reference to policies on sustainable development the “whole life” energy consequences have been considered and it is intended that the structure will be timber framed, the vaulted barrel roof material is to be recyclable and a system of rainwater harvesting may be implemented to reduce the burden on water supplies.
15. Reference is made to a recently erected house in Potton Road, The Heath, which replaced a mobile home. The dwelling proposed with this application is felt to be a much more attractive proposition.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

16. The principle of the erection of a dwelling on this site to replace the two existing living units has been accepted with the granting of outline consent.

The key issue that needs to be considered with this application is whether the proposed dwelling is in character with the area and acceptable in terms of its visual impact in the countryside.

17. The outline consent is restricted to a single storey dwelling to ensure that the height of any new building respects the height of the existing accommodation on the site in order to minimise its visual impact in the countryside. Given the nature of the existing accommodation on the site, two mobile homes and associated outbuildings, it is inevitable that any new dwelling will be larger in scale. There is a chalet bungalow to the north of the site that has a ridge height of 7m and other properties in the area are a mixture of single and two-storey. I am therefore of the view that despite the condition attached to the outline consent it may be possible to design a dwelling with an element of first floor accommodation that would not be out of character nor have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding countryside. I am however of the view that the proposal should be judged against the criteria set out in Policy HG15 of the Local Plan.
18. I am concerned that the proposed dwelling, with four bedrooms at first floor, does not achieve the above objectives and will appear out of scale and character with the area. Whilst the height of the central section does not exceed that of the adjacent chalet bungalow, when taken with the height of the attached wings, the overall mass of the dwelling will in my view be out of character with the area and materially change the impact of the site in the countryside.
19. Whilst the design approach adopted by the applicant does not necessarily reflect the style of properties in the locality I am of the view that such an approach may be acceptable on this site if the mass and scale of the building were to be significantly reduced. These views have been passed onto the applicant.
20. I note the applicant's comments in respect of the sustainable elements of the scheme, which are to be encouraged. However, these considerations do not outweigh the above concerns and in its current form I have to recommend refusal of the application.

Recommendation

21. Refuse for the following reason:

The proposed dwelling in terms of its mass and scale is out of character with the area and will materially increase the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside. The proposal is therefore unacceptable as it is contrary to the aims of Policy HG15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.

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/1273/05/F and S/2461/04/O

Contact Officer: Paul Sexton – Area Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713255