

Epping Forest District Council
Final Committee Agenda
For Committee meeting on: 20/04/2005
Decision Level: Development Committee and Plans Sub-committee

DC.AID
PCR2/1.8

APPLICATION No: EPF/422/05

Report Item No: 5

SITE ADDRESS: STABLES, LIPPITTS HILL, HIGH BEACH, WALTHAM ABBEY
PARISH: Waltham Abbey

APPLICANT: Mr & Mrs H Budd

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

Outline application for the demolition of stables and associated areas; erection of two detached dwellings.

RECOMMENDED DECISION: Refuse

1. The proposed development of two detached dwellings represents new residential development in the Metropolitan Green Belt, where restrictive planning policies apply and there is a presumption against such inappropriate development except in very special circumstances, which are not considered to be applicable in this case. The development is thus contrary to national guidance to policy C2 of the Essex and Southend on Sea replacement Structure Plan and to policy GB2 of the Epping Forest District Adopted Local Plan.

This application is a resubmission of that refused under delegated powers on 21/12/04 (with some additional supporting information) and has been brought to committee at the request of Councillor Syd Stavrou.

Description of Proposal:

This is an outline application, with all matters reserved, for the erection of two detached dwellings. The proposal entails the demolition of existing stables and ancillary buildings totalling about 635sqm floor space and the removal of areas of hardstanding.

Description of Site:

Existing established livery stables, with stabling for 25 horses, located on the western side of Lippitts Hill adjacent to the Metropolitan Police Training Camp. The existing buildings consist of stable blocks of simple wooden design with low pitched felt roof design, together with ancillary buildings, including an open sided storage barn with a higher

roof level. The site is set back from the road, largely hidden behind a thick belt of trees. To the immediate north and not included within the site is a house and training manege within the same ownership.

Relevant History:

EPF/1126 - Hay Barn - Refused but allowed on appeal.
EPF/217/81 - Dwelling - Refused but allowed on appeal.
EPF/217A/81 - Dwelling to be occupied by stable owners - Approved 26/9/83.
EPF/567/84 - Replacement Stables - Approved 23/7/84.
EPF/1312/85 - Retention of 3 stables one quarantine stable and a forge - Approved 12/12/85
EPF/2102/04 - Change of use of stable/tack room to staff rest room including showers and toilets - Approved 6.10.98.
EPF/2102/04 - Demolition of stables and associated areas and erection of 2 detached dwellings - Refused.21.12.04.

Policies Applied:

Structure Plan Policies:

CS4 Sustainable new development.
C2 Green Belt.

Local Plan Policies:

GB2 General restraint in the Green Belt.
DBE4 Development in the Green Belt.
HC5 Development affecting Epping Forest.

Issues and Considerations:

This is a resubmission of an application that was refused under delegated powers at the end of last year, as contrary to Green Belt policy. The application has not changed, however, some additional supporting information has been submitted.

The main issue is whether the proposed development is appropriate within the Metropolitan Green Belt and if not whether there are very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that would result from the development.

The applicants and their agent agree with the planning authority that the proposed development is not appropriate in the Green Belt under current guidance. Their argument is that the particular circumstances of this site amount to very special circumstances that outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that would result from the development.

The applicants' case as set out by their agent comprises the following:

The Applicants' Business.

The applicants family have owned the site since 1958 and have run livery stables from here for 28 years. They are experiencing difficulties with the business which are set out fully in their statement but are summarised as: difficulties at a national level, arising from a slow decline in equestrian pursuits, but more importantly and exclusively in terms of this site, the severe impact which activities at the adjoining Metropolitan Police Training Camp has had on the business. There is a history of noise generating activities including dogs and gunshots at the site, but currently the most serious concern is the activity of the police helicopters. Helicopters take off and land on a regular basis immediately behind the application site and fly low over the site. This causes distress to the horses and makes riding and training at the site very unsafe. This concern is illustrated by a number of letters from current and former users of the site, dressage trainers, a vet who regularly visits the site, and local farriers.

Potential Alternative Uses of the Site.

The applicant has considered alternative use of the existing buildings at the site, in accordance with Government and Council Policy which identify that reuse of redundant buildings in the Green Belt may be appropriate. In the applicants opinion there are shortcomings to these alternative uses in terms of the volume of activity that would be generated by them on site and on the adjoining highway network. They concluded that replacing the buildings would be most beneficial from the Green Belt's point of view.

Green Belt

Although the proposed use is inappropriate in the Green Belt, so is the existing livery use. So the proposal replaces one inappropriate use and buildings with another, but with a smaller number of buildings and less site coverage. This will improve the open character of this part of the Green Belt.

Precedent

The location of this site next to the police training centre and the impact that use has on the business is not repeated elsewhere and therefore granting planning permission on this site cannot set a precedent for other sites.

In addition to the above argument set out by the applicants agent the applicants have submitted evidence of the decline of their business, the difficulty of getting staff to work at the site, the need to carry out most work themselves and the impact on their health that this is having. They argue additionally

that this is effectively a "brownfield" site, a much smaller area would be built on, one dwelling would effectively replace the existing residential staff unit that would be removed, potential reuse for B1 or B8 would be removed for all time, the current 100 vehicle movements a day including commercial vehicles, horseboxes, casual visitors etc would be replaced with just the domestic traffic of 2 houses, local amenity would therefore be enhanced, the site is well screened, the site is within a small residential settlement and is an infill plot and there are significant advantages to the Conservators of Epping Forest with the removal of the stables and riding activities.

The Planning Officers response:

All these issues need to be considered to judge whether they amount to very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that would result from the development of two residential units.

It is considered that each of these issues with the exception of the proximity of the police training camp, would equally apply to many other riding establishments in the district. The fact that the business is getting expensive to run and maintain is not unusual nor is the fact that there are a large number of buildings on the site that could be removed. The Green Belt washes over existing buildings throughout the district and Government guidance and local policies allow for the re use of existing buildings in the Green Belt but not the erection of new buildings for inappropriate uses. The suggestion that the proposal simply replaces one inappropriate use with another less damaging inappropriate use is not accepted. Stables have been accepted as one of the few appropriate forms of development that are permitted in the Green Belt, being a small scale facility for open air recreation.

The applicants have argued that the site should not be used for B1 or B8 use as this would increase business traffic in the forest, yet at the same time they argue that the existing use generates up to 100 traffic movements a day including commercial deliveries and horse boxes. It is most unlikely that any business use of the existing low key buildings would result in higher traffic levels or more noise and disturbance. Re use of the existing buildings therefore needs to be properly considered not simply dismissed.

The proximity of the Police Training Camp and Helicopter base is perhaps the main difference between this site and many others in the District, but clearly this is not a recent development, having been there for many years, nor is the use of helicopters, guns and dogs at the site a new development. The applicants have established, consolidated and expanded their business at this site, gaining a house in the 1980s to be close to the horses and staff facilities as recently as 1998 (although this is not a residential unit as has been suggested, but purely a rest room and with a bunk for occasional

overnight use.) They must at each stage have been aware of the potential for noise and disturbance from the adjacent site, and they have managed to continue their business despite this nuisance, until now.

Whilst there is some sympathy with the applicants and for their current predicament with declining health and declining business, and it is accepted that the intense level of noise and disturbance caused by the proximity of the helicopter landing site may not apply to many other sites in the District, it is not considered that other more appropriate development of the site has been fully considered or that therefore the circumstances are sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that would result from the inappropriate development of two residential units.

The existing buildings are mainly single storey and low in profile and unobtrusive and appropriate to this green belt location. The creation of two new dwellings and residential curtilages, whilst reducing the amount of built development would be by definition harmful to the Green Belt. Despite the argument that the situation at this site is unique, there are other stables close to the Police training camp, (although not so close to the landing site). It is considered therefore that the redevelopment of this site would set a dangerous precedent for residential development at equestrian sites, which would cause significant harm to the character of the Green Belt.

The loss of an appropriate Green Belt leisure facility is also to be regretted, as the closing of 25 stables here is likely to result in increased pressure in other Green Belt locations for additional stables for the horses that are displaced. There is no evidence that the applicants have attempted to sell the business.

Other issues

Setting aside the in-principle objection to the development on Green Belt grounds, it is considered that 2 dwellings could be sited within the application site and suitably designed with adequate amenity space and parking provision and without harm to the residential amenity of adjacent residents. There are no objections from Highways or from Land Drainage officers. The site may be contaminated, but a condition requiring a survey and subsequent decontamination would cover this.

Given the problem of the noise disturbance from the adjacent Training Camp it could be argued that this is not really an appropriate location for further housing, as the residents will suffer disturbance. The proposal could be argued to be contrary to Policy RP5 which states that the Council will not grant planning consent for sensitive development such as housing which would be subject to either excessive noise from adjoining land uses or traffic, or other forms of nuisance.

However it is accepted that this could be mitigated by sound insulation measures.

Conclusion

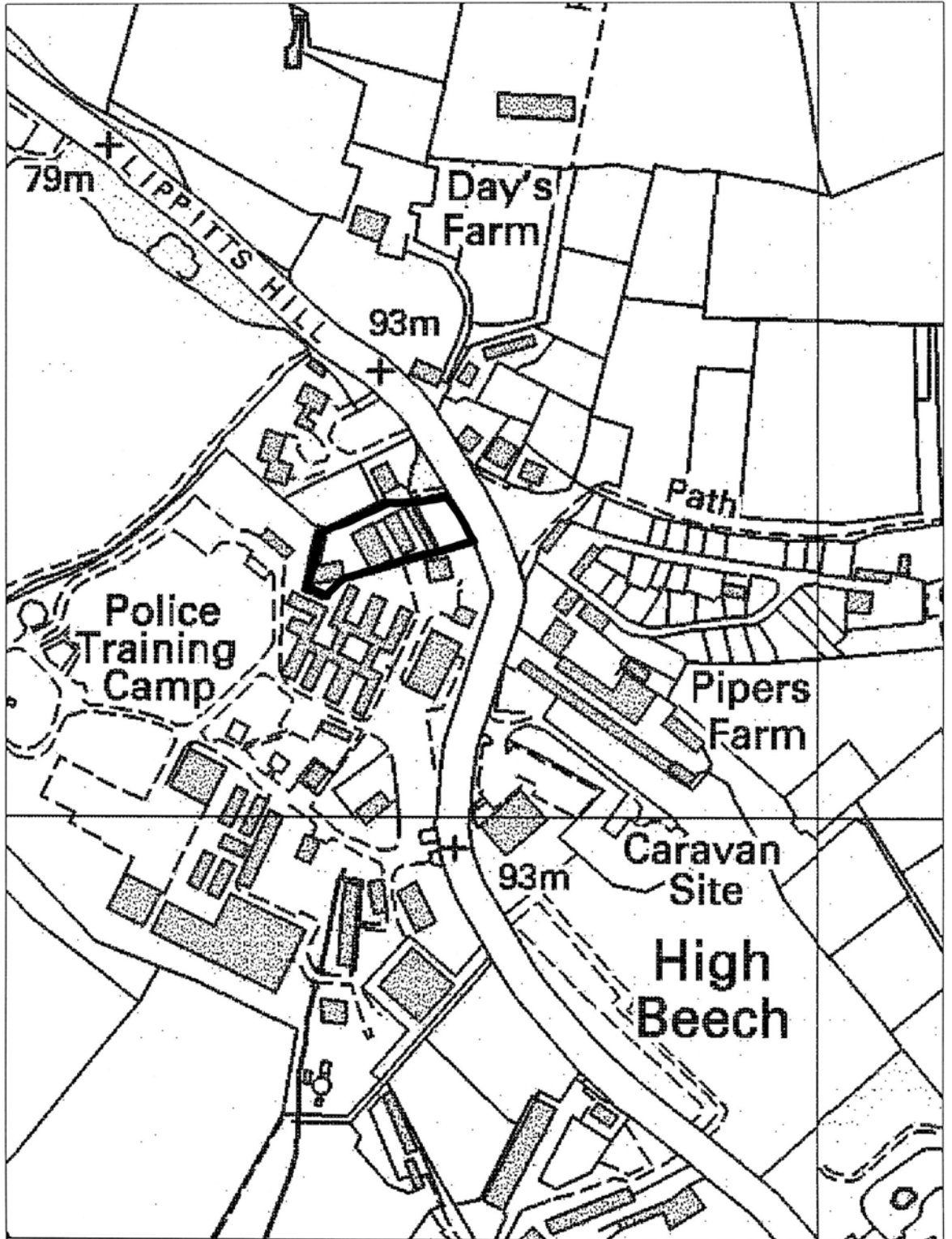
The application is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is not considered that the circumstances put forward are sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that would result from the scheme. The proposal is therefore contrary to the policies of the development plan and is recommended for refusal.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS:

This report was completed prior to the end of the consultation period on this application. Any additional observations received prior to the Committee will be reported orally.

WALTHAM ABBEY TOWN COUNCIL - No objection.

PIN HI, LIPPITTS HILL - Strongly object on the grounds that it will affect not only our property but the surrounding area. Area of outstanding beauty will be transformed into mini housing estate. The reason for this is financial gain, not good enough reason to destroy ambience of the area. Thin end of wedge.



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Centre X: 539836.508
Centre Y: 197048.157
Width : 450.000
Angle : .000

Scale : 1:2500 Date : 8 Apr 2005 Time : 11:53:11 AM

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