

Report to District Development Control Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Date of meeting: 21 August 2013

Subject: Planning application EPF/2343/12. Demolition of existing timber construction Use Class B1 units and replacement with new Class B1 units and 6 three bedroom cottages (including 3 affordable) at Stone Hall, Downhall Road, Matching Green, CM170RA

**Officer contact for further information: Jill Shingler
Committee Secretary: S Hill Ext 4249**

Recommendation(s):

That Members consider the recommendation of the Area Planning Subcommittee East to refuse the planning application on the basis that very special circumstances have not been demonstrated sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt from the proposed residential element of the proposal.

Report Detail

1. (Director of Planning and Economic Development) This application was reported to the Area Planning Sub Committee East on 19th June, with an officer recommendation that permission be granted. The Sub Committee voted on that recommendation and this was lost. Subsequently, before a vote could be taken on an alternative recommendation, 5 members of the Sub Committee stood to refer the application to this committee for decision. Members then voted to refer the application with a recommendation to refuse permission as no very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt were apparent.

Planning Issues

2. The main issue for Members was that although it was felt that the redevelopment of the site for business units could be justified, there were no very special circumstances apparent that would justify the addition of the 6 new dwellings at the front of the site. Members in the course of the discussion suggested that additional information was needed with regard to the financial viability of the development without the housing element as it was felt that if the business redevelopment were not viable in its own right then the housing may be justified as enabling development, given the other benefits that would accrue from the redevelopment.

3. In response to this query the applicant has provided figures that demonstrate that the redevelopment of the site solely for the proposed business units would not be a financially viable option and indeed would result in a net loss. The submitted figures for the development, both with and without the proposed houses, are attached as Appendix 1 along with two letters from the applicant in response to the concerns raised by the Sub Committee.

Conclusion

4. The Officer recommendation remains for approval (subject to a legal agreement to secure the affordable housing and to conditions) for the reasons set out in the original sub committee report attached as Appendix 2.