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Borough Green And
Long Mill

Proposal: New dwelling and new access
Location: The Coach House Long Mill Lane Crouch Borough Green
Sevenoaks Kent TN15 8QB
Applicant: Mr and Mrs A Frost

1. Description:

- 1.1 An application for one dwelling and new access has been submitted in outline for land rear of The Coach House, Long Mill Lane, Crouch. The application has reserved consideration of landscaping and appearance. However details of access, layout and scale have been submitted for consideration.
- 1.2 The floor plans and elevations are shown as a preliminary sketch plan of a two storey house with basement and attached double garage. The external dimensions proposed are 13.9m x 7m for the house with garage and utility measuring 8.1m x 6m. This would result in an overall width of 22m. The height to ridge is shown to be 8.65m with height to eaves at 4.6m.
- 1.3 The accommodation would comprise sitting room, study, kitchen, family room/dining, shower room, utility, and WC at ground floor. The first floor would comprise four bedrooms with two en-suites and a family bathroom. The roof space above the attached garage is shown to be used for storage. The basement is proposed as a laundry room with heating and drainage services.
- 1.4 A new access is proposed off Long Mill Lane and an existing shared access with Navarrica is to be closed off and become solely for the use of Navarrica. The new access would serve The Coach House and the proposed new dwelling.

2. The Site:

- 2.1 The application site is formed from the rear garden area of The Coach House and a strip of land along the southern boundary of The Coach House. The existing access to The Coach House is via a shared access with Navarrica off Long Mill Lane.
- 2.2 The site lies within the built confines of Crouch and a Special Landscape Area. The land directly east is designated as Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB).
- 2.3 The site is well screened from the side and rear by mature hedging, trees and shrub planting. The area proposed for the siting of the new dwelling is currently formal grass lawn which gradually slopes down away from the existing house.

3. Planning History:

TM/01/01713/FL Grant With Conditions 30 August 2001

Construction of conservatory.

TM/62/10765/OLD Refuse 8 March 1962
(MK/4/61/632)

Outline application for demolition of 'Crouch House' and erection of ten dwellings, for St. Clements and St. Lukes Homes.

TM/68/10979/OLD Grant with Conditions 26 March 1968
(MK/4/68/67)

Alterations and conversion to dwelling.

4. Consultees:

4.1 PC: No objection.

4.2 KCC (Highways): No objections in principle. Comments: access road to be widened to 4.8m for the first 6m from the highway boundary to allow two vehicles to wait or pass, with any new gates set back at least 5m from the highway. The proposed new access could marginally improve forward vision to the south.

4.3 DHH: Contaminated Land: Considering the sensitive use of the proposed development, further information is required from the applicant. As a minimum, a desk study and site reconnaissance survey report is required prior to the determination of the application.

4.4 Private Reps (7/0X/0R/0S + Article 8 Notice): No response.

5. Determining Issues:

5.1 The main determining issues are firstly, whether the proposed development is acceptable in principle. Secondly, whether the new access and alterations to the existing access are suitable in highway terms and thirdly it must be considered whether the proposed layout and scale are acceptable in this location. Finally the issue of land contamination must be considered in relation to Planning Policy Statement 23 (Planning and Pollution) published in 2004.

5.2 Minor infilling within the built confines is acceptable within the confines of a rural settlement such as Crouch, in accordance with policy HP5 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 and policy P6/1 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan 1998. In general terms therefore, an infill property in this location is acceptable in principle.

- 5.3 The proposed new access would be accessed directly off a classified road, Long Mill Lane. The KCC Highways Manager has raised no objection to the proposal in principle and has commented that the proposed access arrangements could improve forward vision. However the proposal would need to be amended in terms of the width of the access drive to meet current standards.
- 5.4 The proposed access would result in the partial demolition of a front boundary wall which is neither listed nor located within a Conservation Area. The wall is approx 2m high and is very prominent within the streetscene. However I do not consider that its partial removal would unduly impact upon visual amenity.
- 5.5 The proposed layout is not in my opinion, in keeping with the pattern of development within the locality. Properties located to the east of Long Mill Lane throughout the village of Crouch are sited various distances from the road i.e. there is no uniform "building line". However, there are no instances of 'backland' development on the eastern side of Long Mill Lane, which directly abuts the open countryside which is designated as Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 5.6 The pattern of development elsewhere in Crouch is very different with clusters of development within the village centre and more sporadic development in the periphery. It would, in my opinion be out of character with the historical development of the village to allow a proposal for 'backland' development significantly beyond this eastern string of houses. It could also be argued that any approval for such a layout may lead to similar applications for rear garden areas of properties along this eastern fringe of Crouch although each application would be assessed on its own merits.
- 5.7 However, the properties directly north are set back substantially from the highway, and if the proposal were re-sited centrally within the proposed new plot, a dwelling could be sited just behind the rear building line of Grimble to the north. Accordingly, although there is no 'backland' development within the immediate locality, such a revised siting might well be acceptable in principle, in terms of overall layout.
- 5.8 The proposed scale is that of a two storey dwelling with basement and attached double garage. In comparison to The Coach House and the two properties to the north, the proposal is not in keeping with the area in terms of scale, as all three are bungalows. However, the property to the south, Navarrica is a two storey dwelling, although the design of Navarrica is such that the roof pitch is very low with a low eaves height, resulting in a relatively low level two storey house. The scale proposed is that of a large two storey house with a substantial roof, which is not in keeping with the locality and would therefore result in harm to visual amenity and the character of the area.
- 5.9 The width of the proposed building is 22m which almost fills the width of the plot which is 29m. I consider the width of the proposal to be out of character with the locality and would constitute over development of the site in this respect.

- 5.10 The overall scale and layout proposed would also result in an imposing dwelling located close to the boundary with the MGB (approx 6.5m away). Given that all the other dwellings located along the eastern side of Long Mill Lane have large gardens separating the built form of the village from the open countryside, I would consider the proposed dwelling to cause harm to the openness of the MGB by virtue of its scale and proximity to the confines boundary.
- 5.11 It is my opinion however, that a dwelling of a more modest scale could be accommodated on the site which could be designed to respect the scale and proportions of the neighbouring properties. If such a proposal were put forward it is my view that the back land development should not be the dominant building, and the submitted proposal is significantly more dominant than The Coach House in terms of scale.
- 5.12 Policy P4/12 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan 1998 is accompanied by policy annex PA4/12 which has a section on privacy. It states that principal outlooks of new proposals should avoid looking in to private garden areas of adjoining properties. The proposal, although approx 42m from The Coach House (20m from Grimble and 38m from Navarrica) would directly overlook the rear garden area and the gardens of the adjacent dwellings.
- 5.13 The Director of Health and Housing has requested a desk study and site reconnaissance survey report for potential contamination of the site due to the proposed sensitive site as a dwelling. PPS 23 published in 2004 requires such a report prior to determination. However, given the above policy objections to the proposal, it was considered that it would not be justifiable to require such a costly survey if the other considerations could not be resolved.
- 5.14 In light of the above considerations, it is my opinion that the proposal would, by virtue of its height, scale and siting, be harmful to the character of the area and visual amenity. However, the principle of the development is acceptable and in my opinion an alternative layout and design could be achieved which would accord with policy requirements.

6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 **Refuse Planning Permission**, as detailed in letters dated 27.10.2006 and 10.11.2006, Design and Access Statement dated 26.10.2006, site plan date stamped 13.11.2006 and drawing numbers CH03 and 04 for the following reason:
- 1 The proposal would, by virtue of its scale, height and siting, be out of character with the local area and therefore cause harm to visual amenity and the streetscene. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies P4/11 and P4/12 of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan 1998.

Contact: Lucy Stainton