

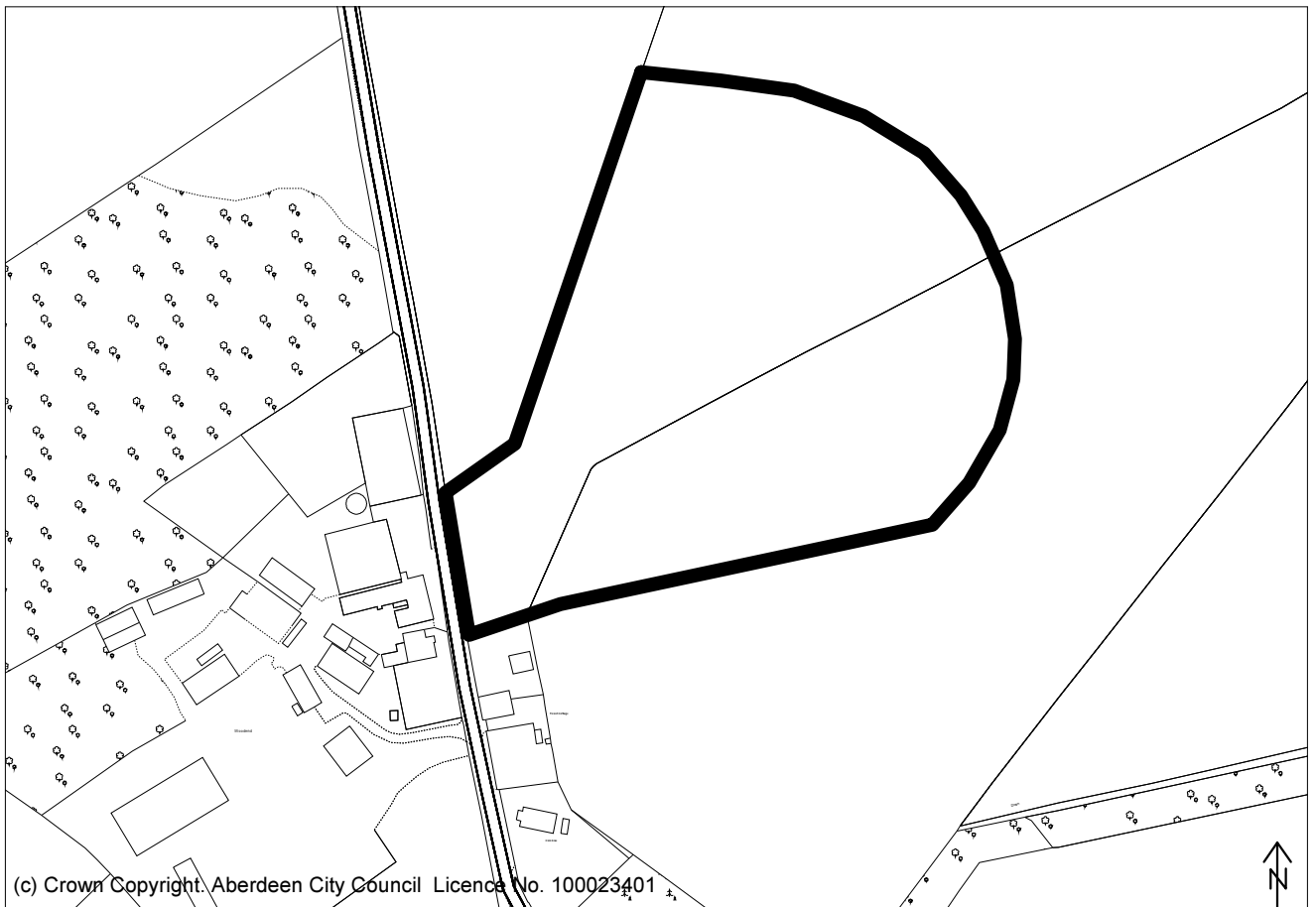
WOODEND FARM, PETERCULTER

CHANGE OF USE OF PROPERTY FROM
AGRICULTURE (CROP ROTATION-
GRAZING ETC.) TO RECREATION
(CRICKET PITCH)

For: Mr Douglas Cruickshank

Application Ref. : P111863
Application Date : 15/12/2011
Officer : Garfield Prentice
Ward: Lower Deeside (M Boulton/A
Malone/A Milne)

Advert : Full Notify not poss.
(neighbours)
Advertised on : 19/01/2012
Committee Date : 22 March 2012
Community Council : Comments



RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

DESCRIPTION

The site located to the north of Peterculter on the east side of Culter House Road some 2.3 km from the junction with North Deeside Road and 1.2 km from Malcolm Road and comprises part of two agricultural fields associated with the adjacent farm known as Woodend Farm. The site, which extends to 1.93 hectares. It is generally flat across most of the site. A low post and wire fence defines the boundary with Culter House Road. To the north is a small area of woodland and to the east and south is agricultural land. There is a house immediately to the south of the site, next to the public road. To the west are the farmhouse and buildings of woodend Farm.

PROPOSAL

A change of use is sought from agricultural land to recreational use (cricket pitch). Although an indicative layout has been provided that shows the site could accommodate the cricket pitch, pavilion and parking for approximately 40 cars and a coach, permission is being sought only for the use of the land for recreational purposes. Access would be taken directly off Culter House Road. It is understood that the land would be donated by one of the joint applicants to Bon Accord Cricket Club.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE

Although the application falls within the Scheme of Delegation, it has been referred to the Development Management Sub-committee because of the direct relationship made by the applicant between this proposal and the planning application (reference P111144) for 14 houses on the farmyard directly opposite the site. It is prudent for both proposals to be considered at the same time.

CONSULTATIONS

ROADS SECTION – Satisfied that adequate parking would be provided within the site. Vehicular visibility at the entrance should be in line with the Council's specifications.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – no response received

COMMUNITY COUNCIL – The applicant advised Culter Community Council that the proposal was linked to the residential proposal at Woodend Farm and that the land would be a donation of land for community use as a cricket ground. The Community Council considers the site to be brownfield and agrees to support in principle to the proposals for housing plus land for a cricket ground provided conditions would be applied so that children, adults, cyclists and horses and riders using Culter House Road would be protected through traffic control measures. The Community Council does not believe green policy would be infringed by the proposed change of use. A short stretch of pavement should be provided on Culter House Road at either side of the entrance. 'Beware' traffic signs should be placed at appropriate locations on Culter House Road. The Community Council is also concerned that the proposed cricket ground has been separated from the residential part of the proposal. If for any reason the cricket ground does not come fruition and cannot be put to community use satisfying green belt policy, then the land should revert to greenfield.

REPRESENTATIONS

A letter of support has been lodged by Bon Accord Cricket Club. It provides a brief commentary on the history of the cricket club and the success of the team in the Aberdeenshire Cricket Association Leagues and the National Small Clubs' Cup. The cricket club is considered to be the most successful in Aberdeen Grades Cricket since 1999. It is stated that to progress to a higher level of competition, the cricket club must have its own ground. The land at Woodend Farm would open that door for the club. It is stated that to progress the club needs to establish roots in the Peterculter community, encouraging the youth in the area to take up the game. The club would also involve schools in Peterculter and Milltimber giving them the opportunity to use the facilities or by visiting schools to coach pupils. The older population in the area would also be included. The club has been promised financial support from local business people and it is intended to approach other local bodies and businesses and funding bodies such as the National Lottery and Cricket Scotland development Trust.

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is the statement of Government policy on land use planning and includes the Government's core principles for the operation of the planning system and concise subject planning policies. The general policy on sustainable development and the subject planning policies relating to green belts and transport are relevant material considerations.

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan

The Structure Plan sets out a number of key objectives including the following -

Quality of the environment: to make sure new development maintains and improves the region's important built, natural and cultural assets.

Accessibility: to make sure that all new developments contribute towards reducing the need to travel and encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport by making these attractive choices.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan

Policy D3 - Sustainable and Active Travel

New development will be designed in order to minimise travel by private car, improve access to services and promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging active travel.

Policy D6 – Landscape

Development will not be acceptable unless it avoids (i) significantly adversely affecting landscape character and elements which contribute to, or provide, a distinct 'sense of place' which point to being either in or around Aberdeen or a particular part of it; (ii) disturbance, loss or damage to important recreational, wildlife or woodland resources or to the physical links between them; and (iii) sprawling onto important or necessary green spaces or buffers between places

or communities with individual identities and those which can provide opportunities for countryside activities.

Policy NE1 – Green Space Network

The City Council will protect, promote and enhance the wildlife, recreational, landscape and access value of the Green Space Network. Proposals for development that are likely to destroy or erode the character or function of the Green Space Network will not be permitted.

Policy NE2 – Green Belt

No development will be permitted in the green belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture, woodland and forestry, recreational uses compatible with an agricultural or natural setting, mineral extraction or restoration or landscape renewal.

EVALUATION

Section 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the development plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan comprises the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan and the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. The Scottish Planning Policy is relevant material consideration. The proposal constitutes a local development as defined in the 'Hierarchy of Development' Regulations. SPP sets out the Government's core principles that underpin the modernised planning system. It states "*The system should be genuinely **plan-led**....*" and "*There should be a clear focus on the **quality of outcomes**, with due attention given to the sustainable use of land, good design and the protection and enhancement of the built and natural environment*". SPP also states that the purpose of green belts is to direct planned growth to the most appropriate locations, to protect and enhance the quality, character, landscape setting and identity of towns and cities and to protect and give access to open space within and around towns and cities. It states further that the cumulative erosion of the green belt's integrity through the granting on individual permissions should be avoided. In relation to transport, SPP advises that in order to reduce emissions from transport, there requires to be a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, i.e. from car-based travel to walking, cycling and public transport. It states further that "*Development should be supported in locations that are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport....*"

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan was adopted by the Council on 29th February 2012. The site is identified as green belt (Policy NE2), overlain by Green Space Network (Policy NE1). The Reporter's in their examination of the Local Development Plan considered whether Woodend Farm (Development Option 9/26) should be included as a housing site and associated cricket pitch in the Plan. They stated "*the site is isolated and remote from the settlement of Peterculter. Existing community facilities are more than one kilometre from the site. Paragraph 93 of Scottish Planning Policy (2010) states that in rural areas developments which provide employment or community benefits should be*

encouraged, particularly where they involve the imaginative and sensitive re-use of previously used land and buildings. The provision of a cricket pitch would undoubtedly constitute a community benefit.”

Green Belt seeks to generally restrict development to that which is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, woodland and forestry, recreational uses compatible with an agricultural or natural setting, mineral extraction or restoration or landscape renewal. This restriction applies primarily to avoid the proliferation of development in these areas, which would be damaging to the Green Belt and the landscape setting of the City. Certain recreational uses, such as those that are open air and require large areas of land are considered to be acceptable in the green belt, provided such uses would be compatible with the agricultural and rural character of the area. A cricket pitch could potentially be such an acceptable use. In terms of Peterculter, it would be difficult to find land within the settlement boundary that would be of sufficient size for a cricket pitch and thus it is likely that a green belt location would be necessary. Whilst it is acknowledged that a cricket pitch would potentially provide a new recreational facility for the local community to the benefit of the community, the applicant has not provided any evidence or demonstrated a need for the proposed cricket pitch to be located in or around Peterculter. Unless such a need is demonstrated it is questionable whether this green belt site should not be sacrificed. Notwithstanding, it is acknowledged that the cricket club requires its own ground in order to progress as a cricket team and in that regard there is some merit in supporting the proposal. However, that is not in itself sufficient reason to allow development on this particular site. Of significant importance and main determining issue is the accessibility of the site.

SPP advises that new development should be located in places that are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. The structure plan has a key objective to ensure all new developments contribute towards reducing the need to travel and encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport. Given that the site is isolated and remote from the settlement of Peterculter, the proposed cricket pitch would not be easily accessible by walking and cycling and not accessible at all by public transport. The nearest public transport route would be over 800 metres away. Access to the site by cycle would be difficult. In addition, there are no footways on Culter House Road, which is a narrow country lane, thus raising pedestrian safety concerns. The Community Council states that short stretches of footway should be provided at the entrance to the site. However, that would not overcome the lack of pedestrian facilities on Culter House Road. The development would therefore be reliant on the private car, contrary to SPP, the structure plan key objective on accessibility and to Policy D3 of the local development plan. For that reason, the proposed development is not acceptable.

The Aberdeen Green Belt Review states that in Deeside all the settlements are well contained by the 90 to 95 metre contour on the northern side of the Dee valley. It goes on to state that maintaining this as a northern limit to their development will help to prevent urban sprawl northwards where it would be isolated from the main transport corridors along the North Deeside Road and Deeside Line. The proposed cricket pitch would be just beyond the limit of this contour, being located on the 100 metre contour. Given the topography and characteristics of the locality, woodland to the north and Woodend Farm to the west of the site, the visual impact of the proposed development in terms of long distant views would be limited and in that regard the proposal would not conflict with the underlying objective of Policy D6 of the local plan. Notwithstanding, the

local agricultural and rural landscape character would be changed to the detriment of that rural character.

In conclusion, a cricket pitch could be considered as an acceptable use in the green belt. The visual impact on the wider landscape character of the area would not be significant, in particular in relation to distant views of the site. However, the local rural landscape character would be changed significantly. The isolated and remote location of the site would be such that the facility would not be readily accessible by walking and cycling and not accessible at all by public transport and thus would be reliant on the private car. As a result the proposal is contrary to national and local planning policy and thus cannot be supported.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

that the proposal, if approved, would be contrary to Scottish Planning Policy, the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan and Policy D3 of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan by reason of its isolated and remote location and its inaccessibility by sustainable means of transport.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.