

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 7th December 2005
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/1608/05/LB – Great Shelford

Alterations and Conversion of Barn to Dwelling Including Conversion of Garage to Bathroom and Hall, Replacement of Cart Lodge with Enlarged Cart Lodge and Utility, Replacement of Corrugated Roofing Material with Slate on Single Storey Buildings and Plain Tiles on Main Roof and Attached Post and Rail Fences and Gates

S/1609/05/F – Great Shelford

Extension and Conversion of Barn into Dwelling

The Oat Barn, De Freville Farm, High Green for M Funston & Dakin Estates Ltd

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 11th October 2005

Conservation Area, Listed Building and Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. De Freville Farm is located on the west side of High Green and to the south of the railway line. Although in the heart of the village, the farm lies outside the village framework and in the countryside and Green Belt. This application relates to a Grade II Listed 18th century timber framed and weatherboarded three bay barn with a corrugated asbestos roof. The main part of the barn is approximately 8.8 metres high and there are single storey elements attached to its east and west sides which project beyond the northern elevation of the barn to form a small open courtyard area. To the east of the barn is a grassed area enclosed on its north and east sides by a wall whilst to the west is another grassed area partially bounded along its southern side by conifers. To the north of the site is De Freville Farmhouse, also a Grade II Listed Building, whilst to the south is a Listed thatched cottage. Beyond the western boundary of the site is a timber barn that was formerly part of the De Freville Farm complex but has recently been converted to a dwelling.
2. The applications, submitted on 16th August 2005 and amended on 23rd November 2005, seek to extend and convert the barn into a four bedroom dwelling. As part of the proposals, a lean-to open cart lodge attached to the west side of the main barn would be removed and replaced with a larger lean-to extension comprising a cart lodge and utility room. The roof of the main barn would be replaced with plain tiles whilst slate would be used for the single storey elements. In addition, post and rail fences and gates would be introduced on the presently open parts, including the courtyard, of the north and south boundaries of the plot in order to define the garden areas. Vehicular access would be gained from the existing access on the south side of the site and shared with that serving the converted barn to the west.
3. The application has been accompanied by planning and design statements as well as a bat report and structural survey. The planning statement explains that the proposal retains the open nature of the frontage of the site, with the layout enabling all domestic paraphernalia to be located either within the private courtyard or to the rear of the barn. In terms of the design of the scheme, existing openings have been

utilised to form windows and doors and their location prevents significant overlooking and loss of privacy to the adjoining residential units. All parking has been concentrated to the rear of the barn and out of sight, with the replacement cart-lodge being considered crucial to the scheme to ensure that vehicles are properly planned as an integral part of the proposal. The statement also confirms that all works of repair and rebuilding will be undertaken in matching and sympathetic materials, with all joinery in timber.

4. The planning statement stresses that alternative commercial uses have been considered for the barn but, given its relationship and close proximity to nearby residential properties, it is considered that a commercial use would not be appropriate. In this respect, the Local Highways Authority has advised that the access to the site is not suitable for a commercial use. The possibility of retaining the barn for purposes ancillary to the use of the farmhouse has also been explored but both Cheffins and Carter Jonas have advised that this approach has no merit in practical terms as the existing ancillary buildings to the farmhouse are extensive and the liability of retaining the site within the curtilage of the farmhouse is unworkable. As a consequence, the barn has been severed from the farmhouse. Potential purchasers of De Freville Farmhouse were advised of the intended residential use of The Oat Barn and none raised any objections to this. In addition, the barn was offered for sale to prospective purchasers who, in all instances, showed no interest in securing additional outbuildings. The sale of the farmhouse includes an extensive range of barns and, therefore, any additional ancillary accommodation was beyond the needs of potential purchasers. The possibility of converting the barn to holiday accommodation has also been explored, but it is considered that the potential return would not justify the high level of expenditure required, whilst the use of the barn as a nursing/convalescent home would require a far greater floorspace than is available on the site.
5. The statement summarises that the barn has historic merit, is structurally sound and worthy of retention. It is capable of conversion to residential use in such a way as to respect the existing openings and timbers, to avoid any overlooking and to avoid visual harm when viewed from the public domain. It is argued that to allow buildings of this nature to fall into disrepair, therefore precluding their reuse, would harm the environment.

Planning History

6. There is no history specifically relating to the application site. Planning and Listed Building consent for the extension and conversion of the barn to the west to a dwelling was granted under references S/1930/04/LB and S/1931/04/F and, prior to that, by consents issued in 2003.

Planning Policy

7. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 resists development in the countryside unless proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
8. **Policy P9/2a** of the Structure Plan states that development within the Green Belt will be limited to that required for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries or other uses appropriate to a rural area.
9. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.

10. Paragraph 17 of Planning Policy Statement 7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Area' (2004) states that "The Government's policy is to support the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. Re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of building. Planning authorities should therefore set out in LDDs their policy criteria for permitting the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic, residential and any other purposes, including mixed uses.

These criteria should take account of:

- a. The potential impact on the countryside and landscapes and wildlife;
 - b. Specific local economic and social needs and opportunities;
 - c. Settlement patterns and accessibility to service centres, markets and housing;
 - d. The suitability of different types of buildings, and of different scales, of re-use;
 - e. The need to preserve, or the desirability of preserving, buildings of historic or architectural importance or interest, or which otherwise contribute to local character.
11. Local Plan 2004 **Policy GB2** states that that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Development is defined as 'inappropriate' unless it comprises (in part) the re-use of buildings provided that:
- a. The development does not result in a materially greater impact on the openness and purpose of the Green Belt;
 - b. Strict control is exercised over any proposed extensions and associated uses of surrounding land;
 - c. The buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction; and
 - d. The form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings.
12. **Policy P7/6** of the 2003 Structure Plan requires development to protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
13. **Policy EN20** of the 2004 Local Plan states that permission will be refused for extensions to listed buildings which are not necessary to ensure the continuing use of the building, would dominate or detract from the listed building, would imply the loss of building fabric of architectural or historic interest, would damage archaeological remains of importance, or would harm the well being or setting of adjacent listed buildings.
14. **Policy EN26** of the 2004 Local Plan states that, in judging applications for the change of use of listed buildings, the District Council will consider whether or not the existing use can continue with reasonable utility or life expectancy; all other options for less damaging uses have been explored; the proposed use can take place without the necessity of extensive alterations or extensions which would be harmful to the fabric, character or setting of the building; the proposal would harm the setting and amenity of adjacent buildings.
15. **Policy EN28** of the 2004 Local Plan states that the District Council will refuse applications which dominate a listed building; damage the setting, well being or

attractiveness of a listed building; or would harm the visual relationship between a listed building and its formal or natural landscape surroundings.

16. **Policy EN30** of the 2004 Local Plan requires new development in a Conservation Area to either preserve or enhance the character of the area.

Consultations

17. **Great Shelford Parish Council** states:

“No objection to the proposal which does not seem to conflict with green belt policies or conversion of listed buildings policies, but we do have some concern over the setting of the building. We hope the open field to the NE of the barn is retained in its present form as it adds to the agricultural appearance of the surrounding buildings. Should it become a garden it would detract from the open agricultural nature of the site.”

18. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** raises no objections subject to a condition restricting the hours of use of power operated machinery being attached to any consent in order to minimise noise disturbance to neighbours.
19. **The Ecology Officer** raises no objections subject to a condition requiring full details of measures for bat mitigation and conservation being attached to any consent.
20. **The Conservation Manager** initially objected to the application as it was considered that insufficient evidence had been submitted to demonstrate that the barn could not be used for purposes considered to be less harmful to the appearance of the building than a residential use. Following the submission of further supporting information together with amended plans to revise the design of the carport element, the Conservation Manager now recommends approval stating:

“The applicants have submitted further justification and have demonstrated that any form of commercial use including a less intensive “low key employment” use, as previously suggested, would still have an impact on the setting of the barn, may involve alterations to the interior and would provide insufficient revenue to secure the long-term preservation of the barn. They have also provided further information on the marketing exercise and demonstrated that there was little interest from prospective purchasers of the farmhouse in purchasing the barn as additional ancillary accommodation.

An aerial photograph, date unknown, indicates that there was some sub-division of the farmyard. Buildings extended to the southwest of the barn and walls, in the location of the existing brick and flint wall and the proposed fence, formed a stockyard.

The proposed replacement cartshed/utility building has been redesigned as a lean-to which matches the form of the existing structure, is less dominant than the previously proposed gabled extension and is more in keeping with the character of this former agricultural building.

The alterations, both internal and external will have an impact on the character of the barn but these must be balanced against the repair and continued long-term use of the building.

Recommendation Approval - The applicants have submitted further justification and the key issues regarding the impact on the historic fabric and the character of the grade II listed barn and the impact on the setting of the barn and the adjacent listed buildings have been addressed.”

Representations

21. One letter of objection has been received from the occupiers of Top Barn, the converted barn situated to the west of the site. Concern is expressed in respect of the rebuilding and enlargement of the existing cart lodge and the construction of a new driveway. This would result in vehicle use and noise that the occupiers of the above property do not presently have to contend with.

Representation by the applicant's agent

22. The applicant's agent has submitted further representations in respect of the proposal. It is pointed out that The Oat Barn has hardly been used for agricultural operations, being used only on a limited basis for the occasional storage of redundant farm machinery, a purpose that is no longer required as all agricultural operations have ceased on the site. It is clear that an agricultural use of the barn cannot be reinstated given the lack of need for it to be used agriculturally for many years, its location within the village and that no farm holding exists within the vicinity to which it could be related. The marketing undertaken in relation to the sale of the farmhouse has demonstrated that no demand exists for the use of the outbuilding either for commercial purposes or uses linked to the farmhouse. Even a low key employment use would result in noise and disturbance to adjoining properties and highway safety problems. In addition, insufficient revenue would be secured through such uses to ensure the long-term preservation of the barn. It is considered that a residential use is the only way of securing the repair and retention of the barn. To leave it vacant will ensure that its appearance and structure will deteriorate thereby harming its future retention.
23. Policy SE8 seeks to resist any form of residential development outside village frameworks. Whilst the site falls outside the framework, it is within an area dominated by residential uses. The character of this area of countryside would therefore not be altered.
24. An aerial photograph has been submitted with the agent's letter showing that further buildings extended to the rear of Oat Barn and walling formed an enclosed area of courtyard. It cannot therefore be concluded that the introduction of walls and fences is fundamentally wrong as this re-establishes the historic position. The severance of the barn from the listed buildings and farmhouse has already occurred and The Oat Barn is a separate unit surrounded on all sides by residential curtilages. Through appropriate boundary treatments, the relationship of the barn to the farmhouse will still be clear.
25. It is argued that the scheme will enhance the barn's appearance, particularly by replacing existing tin and asbestos roofs with tiles to match those on Top Barn. It is estimated that replacing the existing asbestos roof will cost around £35000 and it will only be possible to generate these funds through a residential conversion.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

26. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- a) The principle of a residential use of the barn in light of settlement policies;

- b) Whether a new use for the barn is necessary and whether a residential use is most appropriate;
 - c) Impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the Listed barn and upon the setting of nearby Listed Buildings;
 - d) Impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
 - e) Impact upon the countryside and Green Belt;
 - f) Residential amenity.
27. Policy SE8 of the Local Plan states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted. The use of the barn as a dwelling is therefore contrary, in principle, to the development plan and the application has consequently been advertised as a Departure. Given that the proposal is a departure from the plan, it is necessary to consider whether there are other material considerations in this instance that outweigh the general presumption against residential development in the countryside.
28. It is clear from the information submitted with the application that an agricultural use of the barn is no longer viable. Given the listed status and historic importance of the barn, it is accepted by this Authority that it is necessary to find a new use for the building in order to ensure its retention. The use of the barn for employment or commercial purposes is not considered to be acceptable for highway safety reasons and due to the harmful impact such a use would have upon the amenities of occupiers of adjoining residential properties. A low key employment use would still generate such problems, albeit to a lesser extent, but would not generate sufficient revenue to secure the renovation of the barn to an acceptable standard. The possibility of using the barn as an ancillary outbuilding to the farmhouse has also been explored. However, as explained by the applicant's agent, there has been virtually no interest from prospective purchasers of De Freville Farmhouse in using the barn for such purposes due to its size and consequent maintenance costs. In addition, there is an extensive range of barns/outbuildings to the rear of the farmhouse meaning that this additional sizeable building is beyond their needs. It is believed that the only person interested in purchasing the barn along with the farmhouse was interested in securing a residential consent for the building rather than requiring it as an ancillary outbuilding.
29. Officers accept that a residential use is the only viable way of securing the retention of the building. It is therefore necessary to consider next whether the conversion can be achieved without resulting in harm to the character of the building or its surroundings. The Conservation Manager has supported the application, as amended, and considers the proposal would not harm the character of the building or the setting of adjacent listed buildings subject to careful consideration of materials, joinery details and boundary treatments. Officers consider that, in order to preserve the setting of the building and the character of the countryside and Green Belt, it is essential that the open nature of the frontage of the site be protected. If this land is approved as part of the residential curtilage, although it would be possible to require, by condition, applications to be submitted for future extensions etc in this area, it would not be possible to prevent domestic paraphernalia (eg – washing lines, play equipment etc) being sited on this land. For this reason, Officers have requested that this land be removed from the proposed domestic curtilage/site edged red.
30. Although the site lies outside the village framework, it is located in the centre of the village and within walking distance of the services and facilities within the village. As such, approving a residential use in this location represents a sustainable form of development.

31. I am satisfied that the conversion scheme would not result in undue harm to the amenities of adjoining residents. The proposed means of access is an existing vehicular access used by 'Top Barn', the converted barn to the west of the site, and the slight intensification in the use of this access would not result in undue noise and disturbance to the occupiers of No.21 High Green. Windows have also been positioned so as to avoid serious overlooking of adjoining properties.

Recommendation

32. Approval, as amended by drawings date stamped 23rd November 2005:

Proposed conditions of the planning permission

1. Standard Condition A (Reason - A)
2. Sc5a – Details and samples of materials to be used for external walls and roof (Reason – To ensure that the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to ensure detailing appropriate to this Grade II Listed Building).
3. Sc5 – Details of the windows and doors, to a scale of 1:20 (Reason – To ensure that the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to ensure detailing appropriate to this Grade II Listed Building).
4. Sc5 – Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas (Reason – To safeguard the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to preserve the appearance of this Grade II Listed Building).
5. Sc21 – Withdrawal of permitted development rights – Part 1 (Development within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse) All Classes; and Part 2 (Minor Operations) Class A (Reason – To safeguard the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to preserve the appearance of this Grade II Listed Building).
6. Sc22 – No further windows – any elevation of the converted barn, hereby permitted (Reason - To preserve the appearance and character of this Grade II Listed Building and to prevent overlooking of adjacent residential properties)
7. Sc51 – Landscaping (Rc51).
8. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52).
9. Sc60 – Boundary treatment (Rc60).
10. During the period of extension and conversion works no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays) unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions. (Reason – To minimise noise disturbance to nearby residents)

11. No development shall commence until full details of measures for bat mitigation and conservation have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These measures should include:
- a) Appropriate surveys to determine the species of bat(s) present and for what purposes they are using the building;
 - b) Inspection of existing buildings on site within one month prior to their demolition or alteration to determine the presence or absence of roosting or hibernating bats;
 - c) Details of measures for safely excluding bats during the demolition and alteration of any building containing bats;
 - d) Provision prior to demolition or alteration of existing buildings and the commencement of development of a new bat roost/hibernacula constructed to a design and in a location previously approved by the Council;
 - e) A statement outlining the advice taken by the applicant from a professional ecologist experienced in working with bats.

The works shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and timing of the works unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. (Reason – To avoid disturbance to protected species as set out within Policy EN13 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004).

12. No development shall commence until a schedule of proposed works detailing all those elements of the buildings involved in the conversion to be repaired, replaced, renewed, rebuilt or newly constructed, including below ground features and specifications of materials to be used, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any material variations considered necessary as work progresses shall also be so approved. (Reason - To ensure that the scheme involves only the conversion of the buildings by ensuring that the Local Planning Authority retains control over the extent of any rebuilding).

Reasons for approval

1. Although the proposal is not in accordance with Policies P1/2 of the Approved Structure Plan 2003 and SE8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004, it is considered that the re-use and conversion of the existing traditional building would achieve the objectives of Government Guidance in Planning Policy Statement 7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Area' (2004) by securing an appropriate new use for a historic building considered worthy of retention.
2. The development is considered to generally accord with the Development Plan in all other respects and particularly the following policies:
 - a) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: **P1/2 (Environmental Restrictions on Development), P7/6 (Historic Built Environment) and P9/2a (Green Belts).**
 - b) South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: **GB2 (Development in Green Belts), EN20 (Extensions to Listed Buildings), EN26 (Conversion of Listed Buildings to New Uses), EN28 (Development within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building) and EN30 (Development in Conservation Areas).**

Proposed conditions of the Listed Building consent

1. The works to which this consent relates shall be started not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this decision notice. (Reason - To ensure the consideration of any future application for works will not be prejudiced by planning and listed building consents that have not been acted upon).
2. The proposed works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans and specification of works noted thereon, except where modified by the conditions of this consent. (Reason – To ensure compliance with the approved plans).
3. Before work commences, arrangements shall be made by the applicant to enable the Local Planning Authority (normally the Council's Conservation Officer) to meet the owner or agent and the contractor on site to discuss the conditions of this Consent and the manner of works. (Reason - For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the proper control of works).
4. Precise details of the proposed windows and doors to a scale not less than 1:20 shall be submitted for the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. (Reason – To ensure the use of details appropriate to this listed building).
5. The proposed weatherboarding and all external joinery shall be stained black to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. (Reason – To ensure a traditional finish to the external joinery and weatherboards).
6. Any works of repair and replacement, which are agreed on site with the Local Planning Authority, shall precisely match the original to the Local Planning Authority's satisfaction. (Reason – To ensure that such works are in keeping with the character and appearance of this listed building).
7. Before work commences on site, precise details of the following items shall be submitted for the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority:
 - a. The position and details of soil vent pipes, mechanical extracts and flues.
 - b. Details of the proposed staircases.
 - c. Details of floor finishes.
 - d. Details of replacement and new rainwater goods.
 - e. Details of the type and size of rooflights.
 - f. Details of the material and method of insulation for the walls and roof.(Reason – To ensure detailing appropriate to this listed building).
8. A sample of the proposed roof tiles shall be provided on site for the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority. (Reason – To ensure the use of roofing material appropriate to this listed building).
9. The single storey roofs shall be covered in natural quarried slate to the approval of the Local Planning Authority. (Reason – For the avoidance of doubt).
10. All mortars, plasters and render shall be lime rich to specifications submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. (Reason – To ensure the use of the appropriate mix of traditional lime plasters and mortars).
11. No member nor part member of the timber frame, weatherboards nor roof timbers shall be removed without the prior consent of the Local Planning Authority. (Reason – To protect the fabric of this listed building).

12. A sample panel of brickwork shall be constructed on site to enable the Local Planning Authority to agree the type of brick, the bond, the joint detail and the mortar mix. (Reason – To ensure detailing and materials appropriate to this listed building).

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
Planning applications refs S/1609/05/F and S/1931/04/F
Listed Building applications refs S/1608/05/LB and S/1930/04/LB

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