

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

5th April 2006

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0157/06/F - Great and Little Chishill
Conversion of Barn, Outbuildings and Stables into Dwelling With Carports And Storage Buildings. Erection of Fences and Gates, Rectory Farm, for Mr and Mrs J Barton

Recommendation: Delegated Approval
Date for Determination: 23rd March 2006

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. Rectory Farm, Little Chishill is located to the south of St Nicolas's Church. It comprises a Grade II Listed Farmhouse with a range of agricultural buildings to the south. The buildings are set slightly back from and above the level of the lane. Opposite the site is a pair of cottages. The site is screened from the lane by existing planting.
2. This full application, registered on 31st January 2006, proposes the conversion of a Grade II Listed 18th Century weather boarded barn, and a range of linked stable buildings and cart lodge, to a 4-bedroom dwelling. The single storey stable building and cart lodge are linked to a brick and flint barn adjacent the listed farmhouse. This barn is included within the application site although it does not appear to form part of the conversion scheme. It is however proposed to replace the existing corrugated roof with a slate roof. I have written to the applicant's agent requesting details of the proposed use of this building.
3. Open car parking is provided within the scheme for two cars. New post and rail fencing is proposed to provide an enclosed courtyard on the west side of the buildings and garden land between the buildings and the lane to the east.
4. The application is accompanied by a structural report and a planning statement. The relevant sections of the latter are attached at Appendix 1.

Planning History

5. Listed Building consent was granted for the proposed conversion under delegated powers on 6th March 2006 (**Ref: S/0156/06/LB**).
6. Planning consent was granted for the conversion of the northern barn to residential use in 1991 (**Ref: S/0478/81/F**). That consent included a link to the main barn but was not implemented.

Planning Policy

7. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 (“The County Structure Plan”) restricts development in the countryside to that which can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
8. **Policy EN22** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (“The Local Plan”) states that in granting consent to alter a Listed Building, the District Council will impose such conditions in respect of matters of detail, construction methods, the protection of the building and the timing of works as may be necessary to protect the character of that building, especially insofar as the retention or reinstatement of traditional features or materials are concerned.
9. **Policy EN26** of The Local Plan states that in judging applications for planning permission to change the use of Listed Buildings the Council will consider whether or not the existing use can continue with reasonable utility or life expectancy; whether or not all other options for less damaging uses have been explored, including the outcome of any attempts at disposing of the building at a fair market price; whether or not 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; and whether or not the proposal would harm the setting and amenity of adjacent buildings.
10. **Policy EN28** of The Local Plan seeks to ensure that the curtilage or wider setting of a Listed Building is not harmed.
11. **Policy SE8** of The Local Plan states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
12. **Policy RT10** of The Local Plan states that the District Council will support the conversion of buildings to holiday accommodation subject to specified criteria.
13. There are no policies in the approved Development Plan that specifically support the conversion of rural buildings to a residential use.
14. **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 appropriate 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.
15. 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; The need to preserve, or the desirability of preserving, buildings of historic or architectural importance or interest, or which otherwise contribute to local character.
16. **Policy HG/8** of the Local Development Framework Submission Draft 2006 states that planning permission for conversion of rural buildings for residential use will generally

not be permitted. Planning permission will only exceptionally be granted where it can be demonstrated, having regard to market demand and planning considerations, that it is inappropriate for any suitable employment use and, that it is inappropriate for employment with residential conversion as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.

17. Any conversion must meet the following criteria: The buildings should be structurally sound; should not be of a makeshift nature and have not been allowed to fall into such a state of dereliction and disrepair that any reconstruction would require planning permission as a new building; the buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the countryside; the form bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings and; perform well against sustainability issues highlighted by Policy DP/1.
18. Any increase in floor area will not be permitted except where it is necessary for the benefit of the design, or in order to better integrate the development with its surroundings. Future extensions of such buildings will not be permitted. Incidental uses such as car parking and storage should be accommodated within any group of buildings, or on well related land where landscaping can reduce the visual impact of the new site.
19. Development must be in scale with the rural location. Residential uses must be located close to local services and facilities, and in an accessible location with a choice of means of travel, including non-motorised modes. The cumulative impact of the conversion of a number of buildings on adjoining sites or the local area will also be considered.

Consultation

20. **Great and Little Chishill Parish Council** recommends approval.
21. The **Conservation Manager** comments that the proposed conversion is considered to be able to be achieved without extensive alterations or extensions to the building. The building is not in an economic use and a new use will secure the long-term future of the building.
22. Whilst it is noted that the building has not been marketed, in this location it is accepted that a residential use would be more compatible than a commercial use with the adjacent land uses. The site is also only accessed via a narrow country lane.
23. The proposals are considered to accord with policy EN22/EN26/EN28 and it is therefore recommended that the proposals be supported.
24. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** requests that conditions be attached to any consent restricting the hours of operation of power driven machinery during the period of conversion, and requiring an investigation of the site to establish the nature and extent of any contamination together with any remedial works. An infomative should be attached to any consent regarding bonfires or the burning of waste on site during the period of conversion.
25. I have asked for further comments on the relationship of the proposed dwelling to the existing surrounding agricultural use/buildings.

26. The **Environment Agency** requests conditions requiring the submission of schemes or foul and surface water drainage, and ground contamination investigation. It also requests that various informatives are attached to any consent.
27. The **Building Control Section** comments that the preliminary report submitted with the application suggests that major or complete reconstruction is not required. The report does not clarify the extent of repair and concealed areas and raised external ground levels could increase the repairs required. Substantial roof strengthening to support tiling will be required. An appropriate condition to deter a possible more economic radical repair/demolition approach could be an appropriate safeguard.

Representations

28. None received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

29. The key issues to be considered with this application are whether there are any material considerations that outweigh the general presumption against residential development in the countryside and, if that is the case, whether the proposal complies with Conservation policies in the approved development plan. In addition it is necessary to consider whether the proposed change of use would have an adverse effect on the visual character of the surrounding countryside and neighbour amenity.
30. Although the Local Development Framework will contain a policy concerning the residential use of rural buildings I do not consider that it can be given any significant weight at the present time.
31. The application has been advertised as a departure from the development plan because it proposes residential development in the countryside (Local Plan Policy SE8). The buildings are worthy and capable of retention and have not been used for agricultural purposes for several years. I am content that it is appropriate to try and find an alternative use. I am satisfied that, due to the location and access, the buildings would not lend themselves to a commercial use, although I have asked the applicant whether a conversion to holiday lets has been considered.
32. The Conservation Manager has raised no objection to the proposal and Listed Building consent for the proposed conversion works has already been granted.
33. The application is accompanied by a structural report and the Building Control Section has confirmed that the conversion works can be carried out without requiring major or complete reconstruction, although conditions are suggested.
34. I have asked the Chief Environmental Health Officer to comment further on the compatibility of a residential use of these buildings given the proximity of the on going agricultural use of the site, with particular reference to the relationship to the modern farm building which is sited within 5m of the southern elevation of the listed barn.
35. I am satisfied that the scheme will not have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding countryside provided that existing planting on the east boundary is retained and enhanced where necessary and adequate planting of other boundaries. I am also of the view that the proposal will not have an adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties.

36. I do not consider that approval of the application would significantly prejudice the implementation of the policies and proposals of the approved Development Plan. I do not therefore consider that it would be necessary to refer it to the Secretary of State.

Recommendation

37. Subject to the further comments of the Chief Environmental Health Officer and response of the applicant's agent to the letter querying the proposed use of the brick and flint barn that consent be granted subject to the following conditions.
1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 2. Sc51 – Landscaping (Rc51);
 3. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52);
 4. Sc60 – Details of boundary treatment – all boundaries (Rc60);
 5. Sc5f – Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas
 6. Sc22 – No windows at first floor level in the east elevation of the development (Rc22);
 7. Surface water drainage details;
 8. Foul water drainage details;
 9. Ground Contamination Investigation
 10. Withdrawal of PD rights
 11. SC22 – No Further Openings
 12. Restriction of hours of use of power operated machinery during the construction process
 13. Submission of detailed scheme of conversion works.

+Informatives

Environment Agency and Chief Environmental Health Officer informatives.

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the proposal is not in accordance with Policies P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Plan and SE8 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004, it is considered that the re-use and conversion of the existing traditional buildings would achieve the objectives of Government Guidance in Planning Policy Guidance 7, "The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development."
2. All other material planning considerations have been taken into account. None is of such significance as to outweigh the reason for the decision to approve the planning application.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Refs: S/0156/06/LB and S/0157/06/F

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