

Januarys

Consultant Surveyors

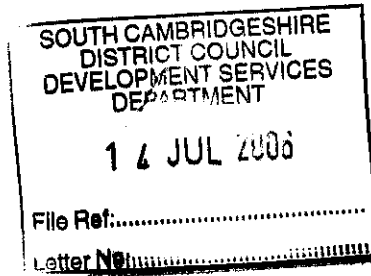
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PLANNING

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Our ref: SF/FMF/104039
Your ref:



11 July 2006

Dear Mr Blazeby

PROPOSED EXTENSIONS AND CONVERSION OF BARN AND CART SHED INTO A DWELLING, ERECTION OF A GARAGE/OUTBUILDING, LAND ADJOINING MANOR FARM, MAIN STREET, CALDECOTE

I write with regard to the above mentioned Planning Application which I understand is to be considered by Committee at its August meeting. I write following an inspection of the representations received on the Application, on which I wish to make the following comments.

Firstly, the support of the Parish Council is welcomed. It will be seen that the benefit is perceived to be the improvement to the visual amenity of the area following the renovation of the buildings. In addition, reference is made to the improvements to car parking of the church and connections to the sewer. In this regard it should be explained that the applicant, Wim Kamper, is aware that the adjoining church has only very limited car parking in the lay-by on Main Street. At the present time, although another house in the vicinity allows cars to park within their property on Sundays, on occasions this too is inadequate. As a consequence, Mr Kamper agreed on an informal basis to permit cars to park within the site in connection with Sunday services. It should be stressed that this is an informal arrangement and that large areas of segregated hard surface areas are not to be created.

The applicant is also aware that at the present time, the church has no services other than electricity. Accordingly, it has been agreed that should Planning Permission be granted for the proposed conversion, essential services would be taken up to the joint boundary with the church so that the facilities would be there should there ever be a need. Again, it should be stressed that this is an informal arrangement for the benefit of the church only.

It would appear that the main objection to that proposed has been raised by Barbara Clarke, Conservation Assistant. It is noted in her first comment that "*The main considerations are the physical impact on the historic fabric and the character of the curtilage Listed buildings and the impact on the setting of the Grade II farmhouse*". In the opinion of the Conservation Assistant, the proposals would neither preserve nor enhance the character of the wider Conservation Area. This obviously is a subjective comment, as can be seen from the support of neighbours and the Parish Council, as from their perspective the proposals are seen to enhance the Conservation Area by the removal of the dilapidated buildings, replacing those demolished and renovating those remaining, so that the complex of farm buildings will have a sustainable future.

Nigel Blazeby, Planning Officer
South Cambridgeshire District Council

1 of 4

Directors: John Callin • Simon Dazeley • Robert Scott • Colin Brown Associates: Sally Fletcher • John Russell • Nicholas Muncey

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Although a Listed Building Application was submitted in respect of the proposed demolition works, this was necessary as the site falls within the designated Conservation Area. It is still queried whether the barns are curtilage listed with the adjoining Manor Farm. At the time of listing in 1962, there was no reference to the barns in the listing description. It is also worthy to note that when Manor Farm House was compulsorily acquired by the District Council in 1989/90, no attempt was made to purchase the barns the subject of this application at the same time, thereby in effect dividing the curtilage.

Notwithstanding this point, it is considered that the comments made by Barbara Clarke on the overall proposal are slightly contradictory. It is considered that, from a historical perspective, the defining character of the now mostly dilapidated farm buildings comes from their group value. It is important to recognise that the buildings would have been developed over a period of time to suit various needs and therefore the buildings are not all contemporary with each other and that as a result the form, scale and construction methods of the buildings all vary. It is essential to acknowledge that the buildings are not contemporaneous with the adjoining Manor Farm House.

The group value of the buildings is clearly illustrated in the aerial photograph attached with the applications (Appendix 2, Photograph 1), which clearly shows the variety of buildings in height, form and materials located around a courtyard. This would appear to be the traditional former arrangement of farm buildings which, over time, is being lost. It is considered to be a significant major feature, worthy of retention, of this collection of farm buildings.

In point 2 of her representations, the Conservation Assistant states that "*The demolition of the sheds would be an enhancement*". However, whilst these buildings that are to be demolished are of poor quality, their removal and non-replacement would leave the chaff barn and the cart shed remaining as isolated buildings. This would not be an enhancement in our opinion as it would leave the two buildings isolated and neither relating well to each other nor to the farmhouse. There would be no historical context in which to place either remaining building.

Barbara Clarke also states that "*flooring over part of the chaff barn and installing a spiral staircase will affect the quality of the interior thereby harming its architectural character and resulting in damage to the historic fabric of this timber framed barn*". However, as shown on the submitted plans, the proposed mezzanine floor in the chaff barn, although it is a new insertion, will be independent of the original structure and so will not involve loss of historic fabric. It should be borne in mind that the building in question is a late 19th Century or early 20th Century building, of machine sawn timber, with concrete floor and plinth-structure which would not normally be listed in its own right. The mezzanine floor would in fact be no different to a hay loft as it would remain open to the rest of the barn, and this is not such an uncommon feature in farm buildings. Any improvement to the floor would not cause any loss of significant historic fabric.

Barbara Clarke also continues to state that "*The intrusive new openings would punctuate the principle components of this agricultural building to the detriment of its appearance*". The submitted plans show that the proposed windows make use of existing openings together with areas where the weatherboarding is missing and needs replacing. It is also noted on the drawings that the stud work is to remain and the windows to be inserted in sections between the studs, which is normal practice for this type of detail.

In her third point Barbara Clarke notes that "*the proposed extensions*" would detract from the character and appearance of the barns and erode their historic plan and form. This point is simply not understood. The "extensions" she refers to are the replacement elements which merely replicate the original layout and form of the complete courtyard, with the exception of

the entrance link which closes the courtyard off. This point can be clearly seen by comparing the layout of that proposed with the aerial photograph previously referred to.

Therefore, rather than eroding the historic plan and form as noted by Barbara Clarke, the proposals aim to restore it. Where the earlier buildings are being replaced, the form, detailing materials proposed largely reflect those that would have been employed – brick, timber weatherboarding, slate and pantiled roofs. The detailing in the proposed scheme has been kept deliberately simple, particularly on outward facing elevations, as this is generally how farm buildings are constructed. Within the courtyard, the proposed form is still traditional with simple openings and detailing. In order to avoid an overly domestic appearance, the number of glazed openings has been kept to a minimum and these are generally larger in size reflecting whole open fronted bays, again typical of this type of building. The glazing detail has been kept simple within hardwood frames.

It should be noted that there are good examples of such large glazed schemes on farm buildings in the vicinity of the site in Caldecote.

The only area where the appearance of the building is particularly modern is the glazed entrance link. It is considered that as this feature is the only one not replicating an earlier building and is therefore a completely new element, no attempt has been made to make this structure look old. It is a clear statement that this element is a new addition, and its visually lightweight construction and simple detailing have been proposed so that it does not draw attention away from the older elements of the grouping structures.

With regard to point 4, in which it is stated that "*the setting of the Listed farmhouse would be compromised by the proposals*", the opposite is considered to be true as restoring the courtyard and farm buildings would reinstate and preserve the nucleic form of the farm buildings that were once used in association with Manor Farm House. Far from eroding the relationship, it would be reinforced by that proposed.

In point 5, it is stated that "*the best use of the building is that for which it was originally designed, and that no compelling evidence has been presented to show that an agricultural or storage use could not be maintained*". As stated in the accompanying letter with the applications, as there is no land now attached to these barns, there is no demand for them to be used for agricultural purposes. In addition, it should be appreciated that as the size and scale of agricultural machinery has evolved, the form of the remaining buildings are unsuitable to accommodate most modern agricultural needs.

It is also stated by Barbara Clarke that "*A non agricultural use would be difficult to accommodate, by reason of the proximity to Manor Farm House*", and this statement is concurred with.

The fact remains that any alternative use, even a low key storage use, would still require extensive repairs and improvements such as a new floor in the cart shed, new external boarding, internal lining, re-roofing including a new roof structure on the cart shed, installation of basic services etc. However, for a low key use that would not impact on Manor Farm, such investment would not show any return so by definition this would not be a sustainable form of development.

Objections are raised by the Conservation Assistant to the proposed garage, both in terms of its location, design and impact on the Listed Farmhouse. Again, these claims are disputed. At the present time, there are very limited views on the farm buildings from Manor Farm as can be seen from the aerial photograph which was attached with the Planning Application (Appendix 2 Photograph 15). The boundary with the application site is well treed along the position of the

proposed garage and stores, and this planting would be retained. In addition, it is considered that location of the garage/store, its siting, scale and design reflect those of the existing buildings within the current curtilage of the Farmhouse. The fact that these buildings all lie at different angles to each other reinforces the piecemeal way in which traditional farm buildings have evolved over the years.

It is noted that objections are raised to the proposed concrete hard standing, and the applicant is willing to amend this to either a loose gravel, shingle driveway with grass margins or reinforced grass. Amended plans will be forwarded shortly for your consideration.

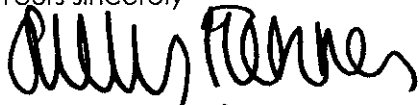
To conclude it has been demonstrated how the comments of the Conservation Assistant are disputed. It is submitted that the proposals will ensure the retention of an historic courtyard form of agricultural buildings, with the renovation of the two structures worthy of preservation. The design is sympathetic to the existing form, with minimal exterior openings. Failure to grant planning permission would result in the inevitable loss of this interesting complex of farm buildings to the detriment of the setting of Manor Farm House and the Conservation Area in general.

It should be noted that the change of use would be in accordance with policies both in the adopted and emerging Plan and with guidance in PPG 15, as detailed in the statement accompanying the Planning Application.

It is, therefore, requested that these points are taken into account when presenting your report to the Planning Committee.

Should you have any concerns about particular details of that proposed, please do not hesitate to contact me. The applicant would be more than willing to consider incorporating minor amendments if so requested.

Yours sincerely



Sally Fletcher BSc (Hons) MA MRTPL
Associate

cc: Mr Wim Kamper
Rod Mepham
All District Councillors