

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation
Control Committee

2nd June 2004

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0575/04/F – Castle Camps

Conversion of barn into dwelling. Barn at Westoe Park, Bartlow for Grandchildren's Settlement Brigadier A M Breitmeyer 1987

Recommendation: Approval

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to an L-shaped barn. Part of the barn is constructed of dark stained timber boarding over a black painted brick plinth with a dark corrugated sheeting roof. The other part is constructed of gault brick, boarding and flint with a corrugated sheeting roof. There is a flint wall with buttresses to the northwest which, together with the buildings, encloses a courtyard. The site also includes a strip of the adjacent wooded area beyond the flint wall to the northwest. Access is via an unmade single width estate track from Camps Road. Woodland extends to the north and west. Agricultural fields extend to the east and south.
2. This full application, received on the 19th March 2004, proposes the conversion of the barn to provide a 4-bedroom dwelling. All the accommodation would be provided on the ground floor. Clay tiles are proposed for the roof. With the exception of three windows, all the proposed doors and windows would be inserted into existing openings. A new wall is proposed on the northeastern side of the courtyard. A Structural Condition Survey and Bat Survey have been submitted. A copy of the agent's letter relating to possible alternative uses of the building is attached as an Appendix.

Planning History

3. None.

Planning Policy

4. The site is within the countryside as defined in the Local Plan 2004.
5. **Policy P1/2** of the Approved Structure Plan 2003 restricts development in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location
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7. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
8. Policies in Local Plan 2004 support, in principle, the conversion of rural buildings to employment uses (**Policy EM10**), holiday accommodation (**Policy RT10**) and tourism-related developments (**Policy RT11**).
9. **Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development** states that residential conversion of rural buildings to residential may have a part to play in meeting identified needs for new market or affordable housing. It also states that Local Planning Authorities should apply the following five tests to applications for residential re-use of such buildings:
 - They are of permanent and substantial construction;
 - Conversion does not lead to the dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town or village vitality;
 - Their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings;
 - Imposing reasonable conditions on planning permission overcomes any legitimate planning objections (for example on environmental or traffic grounds) which would otherwise outweigh the advantages of re-use; and
 - If the buildings are in the open countryside, they are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.

Consultation

10. **Castle Camps Parish Council** recommends approval.
11. The **Ecology Officer** is satisfied that the proposal can commence without adversely affecting any bats. He recommends that, as the submitted survey indicates that it is likely that nesting birds use the barn, a condition is attached to any approval stating that no works shall take place between 1st March and 31st August unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority.
12. The **Chief Environmental Health Officer** is concerned that problems could arise from contaminated land and therefore recommends a condition is attached to any approval requiring an investigation of the site to establish the nature and extent of any contamination and the agreement of any necessary remedial works to deal with the contamination before development commences.
13. The **Environment Agency** has no objections provided a foul water drainage condition is attached to any approval. It also makes advisory comments.

Representations

14. None.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

15. The key issue in relation to this application is the principle of converting the building into a dwelling in the light of development plan policies and national planning guidance.

16. The application has been advertised as a departure from the development plan because it proposes residential development in the countryside (Local Plan Policy SE8). However, I am satisfied that, due to its location and access, it would not lend itself to a commercial use and, in view of the information submitted by the applicant, it would not be viable to convert it into holiday accommodation. The proposal would comply with the guidance in PPG7 in relation to the residential re-use of rural buildings in that the building is of permanent and substantial construction; the conversion would not lead to the dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town or village vitality; the form, bulk and general design of the resulting building would be in keeping with its surroundings; and the building is capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction. I therefore consider that the conversion of the barn into a dwelling would be acceptable. The proposed residential curtilage would not detract from the character and appearance of the countryside.
17. Access to the site is via a single width track. The track would be acceptable as an access to serve the proposed dwelling albeit it may need to be surfaced to allow year round access. Appropriate surfacing of the track could be carried out as permitted development rights and would be acceptable in terms of the character and appearance of the countryside.
18. I do not consider that approval of the application would significantly prejudice the implementation of the development plan's policies and proposals. I do not therefore consider that it would be necessary to refer it to the Secretary of State.
19. The comments of the Ecology Officer in respect of breeding birds are more appropriately attached as an informative rather than as a condition to any approval.

Recommendations

20. Approval subject to safeguarding conditions including conditions relating to materials, foul water drainage and requiring a site contamination investigation/agreement of necessary remedial works.

Ecology Officer and Environment Agency comments attached as informatives.

Reason 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 of conversion of the existing traditional building 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;

- Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development;
- Planning file Ref: S/0575/04/F

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