

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee 6th December 2006
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

S/1902/06/F – HINXTON
**Conversion of Farm Buildings into 6 Dwellings and Erection of Garage Block,
Fences and Gates at Barns at Lordship Farm, Mill Lane
for Lordship Farm Developments Ltd**

Recommendation: Delegated approval/refusal

Date for Determination: 27th November 2006

Notes:

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee as approval of a departure application is recommended

Conservation Area

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to a group of agricultural buildings constructed from brick, flint, clunch, render, boarding, corrugated sheeting and pantiles to the east of Lordship Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building. The 0.855 ha site is served by existing accesses onto Mill Lane to the north and High Street to the east. Fields extend to the south. There are residential properties fronting Mill Lane and High Street to the north and east respectively. Work has started on site to convert the buildings to dwellings. The work carried out to date is consistent with the extant permission (S/1801/04/F) and the revised scheme now proposed.
2. This full application, registered on the 2nd October 2006, proposes to convert the existing buildings on the site into 6 dwellings (5no. 5-bedroom and 1no. 6-bedroom). Two buildings that previously stood on the site, an open sided barn and a monopitch roofed flint, clunch and asbestos building, have been demolished. A new building to provide garaging and stores for two of the proposed units in approximately the same position and approximately the same size as the demolished monopitch roofed flint, clunch and asbestos building is proposed. Three of the dwellings would be served from the existing access onto Mill Lane with the remaining three being served by the widening of the existing access onto High Street. Two covered parking spaces are proposed for each unit. The application is accompanied by a Geoenvironmental Assessment Report.

Relevant Planning History

3. A parallel listed building application for the proposed works has been submitted under reference **S/1901/06/LB**.

4. Planning permission and listed building consent for the conversion of farm buildings to 6 dwellings at Barns at Lordship Farm were granted under references **S/1801/04/F** and **S/2191/04/LB**.
5. Earlier planning and listed building applications to convert the buildings into 7 dwellings were withdrawn (**S/0848/04/LB** & **S/0849/04/F**).
6. The District Council confirmed that prior approval for a general purpose agricultural storage building for the Wellcome Trust on land to the north of 131 High Street was not required (**S/2387/02/PNA**).
7. Planning permission was granted for a holiday use of a listed barn adjacent to the site under references **S/0773/93/F** and **S/0774/93/LB** and subsequently renewed in 1998 (**S/1719/98/F** and **S/1836/98/LB**) and 2003 (**S/1952/03/F** and **S/2165/03/LB**).

Planning Policy

8. The site is within the countryside as defined in the Local Plan 2004 and within the Conservation Area. The buildings are curtilage listed.
9. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/2** states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
10. Local Plan 2004 **Policy SE8** states that residential development outside village frameworks will not be permitted.
11. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P7/6** states that Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
12. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN26** relates to the conversion of listed buildings to new uses and 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.
13. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN28** 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.
14. Local Plan 2004 **Policy EN30** states that the District Council will refuse permission for schemes within conservation areas which do not specify local materials and details and which do not fit in comfortably into their context.
15. **Policy HG/8** of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Submission Draft January 2006 relates to the conversion of buildings in the countryside for residential use and states that:

1. Planning permission for conversion of rural buildings for residential use will not generally be permitted. Planning permission will only exceptionally be granted where it can be demonstrated, having regard to market demand or planning considerations: firstly it is inappropriate for any suitable employment use; and secondly it is inappropriate for employment with residential conversion as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.
2. Any conversion must meet the following criteria: The buildings are structurally sound; The buildings are not 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 surrounding countryside; The form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings; Perform well against sustainability issues.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Residential conversion permitted as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use, will be secured by planning condition or agreement to ensure the occupation of the dwelling remains directly related to the operation of the enterprise. The dwelling part of the unit must be interdependently linked with the commercial part. A live-work unit should have a minimum of 40m² of definable functional workspace in addition to the residential element. Internal uses may be horizontally or vertically split. The workspace must be flexible, and capable of accommodating a range of employment uses.

Consultation

16. **Hinxton Parish Council** makes no recommendation and has not expressed comments.
17. **Conservation Manager** states that the scheme is similar to the approved scheme S/1801/04/F and in principle there are no objections to the proposals. However there are concerns about the number and style of the additional openings and the changes in some of the external materials. The number of additional windows and rooflights and the regular appearance of the windows would result in a more domestic appearance and detract from the character and appearance of these former agricultural buildings. A number of other details need to be revised including the glazed screens in Units 1, 2, and 6.

18. With regard to the materials, Unit 1 is constructed from clay bat and is in poor condition following a collapse earlier this year. It is unlikely that the existing material can be salvaged and reused but as this unit forms the boundary with Mill Lane, is sited adjacent to the entrance and is in a prominent location, it is important that the appearance of the building (i.e. rendered walls with pantiled roofs) is retained. It is therefore suggested that the weatherboarding is omitted and, if the clay bat cannot be reused, it is replaced with rendered blockwork.
19. No objection to the proposed garage block, which is traditional in scale, form and materials.
20. No objection to the layout of the access, parking and turning areas, the proposed hard landscaping material or the design of the fences and gates.
21. Recommendation - Approval subject to amendments to omit the rooflights, reduce the number of openings, revise the style of fenestration and glazed screens and change the walling materials on Unit 1.
22. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends conditions relating to: the times during the conversion period when power operated machinery shall not be used unless in accordance with agreed noise restrictions; driven pile foundation; and, having regard to the submitted Geoenvironmental Assessment Report, decommissioning and removal of the above and below ground tanks, notification of any areas of discoloured and/or odorous soil found during conversion and sampling of imported topsoil.
23. At the time of application S/1801/04/F, the **Ecology Officer** visited the site and found no strong evidence of bats but, although he did not consider that it was reasonable to insist upon a full bat survey, he recommended that an informative is attached to any approval in relation to the protected status of bats.
24. At the time of application S/1801/04/F, **Local Highway Authority** considered the existing and resulting levels of use of Mill Lane, and visibility from the existing access onto Mill Lane, and confirmed that the existing access onto Mill Lane is adequate to serve the 3 dwellings proposed to be served from this access. It also confirmed that, provided the first 10m from the High Street was widened to a minimum of 4.5m to allow two vehicles to pass, the existing access onto High Street was also adequate to serve the remaining 3 dwellings as proposed.
25. At the time of application S/1801/04/F, **County Archaeology** stated that, following a detailed consideration of the proposal against its records, it considers it unlikely that advancement of the scheme would result in sufficient ground disturbance to warrant any archaeological works.
26. At the time of application S/1801/04/F, **Cambs Fire & Rescue Service** stated that additional water supplies for firefighting were not required

Representations

27. The Cambridge Preservation Society states that the site is in close proximity to its Hinxton Mill and makes the following comments: in the case of unit 2, the Society regrets that provision has not been made for the retention in some

form of the cast-iron windows; and the outer wall of Unit 1 should have its outer wall reconstructed in the original material i.e. sun-dried clay lump with a coating of limewash.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

28. The key issues in relation to the proposal are:
- a. Whether there are any material considerations to set aside the presumption set out in Local Plan Policy SE8 against residential development in the countryside;
 - b. The affect of the development on the character and historic interest of these curtilage listed buildings, the setting of listed buildings at Lordship Farm and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
 - c. Impact on amenity of neighbours; and
 - d. Highway/access matters
29. The buildings are curtilage listed and are of historical interest. Members may recall that, at the time of application S/1801/04/F, it was demonstrated that the buildings no longer met current standards and were no longer required for agricultural purposes. The possibility of using the buildings for employment purposes and incorporating studios/work units into each of the units were also explored at that time, but both options were considered inappropriate due to the resulting harm on the character, appearance and setting of the buildings. An employment use would require significant widening of the access onto High Street and the removal of a large section of the important frontage wall along the west side of High Street in order to provide adequate visibility in view of the number of vehicular movements likely to be generated. It was also demonstrated that a holiday let use of the buildings would not be viable. The buildings are adjacent to the village framework and the proposal is considered to comply with LDF Policy HG/8. Notwithstanding the presumption set out in Local Plan Policy SE8 against residential development in the countryside, the principle of converting the buildings to residential purposes was considered appropriate at the time of application S/1804/04/F in order to secure a suitable new use for these curtilage listed buildings and thereby secure their future, and I consider that this remains the case.
30. The scheme subject of this application differs from the one approved under reference S/1801/04/F in two main ways: revisions to the internal layout of the units and their fenestration, including the insertion of additional openings, are proposed; and a new building to provide garaging and stores for two of the proposed units is proposed in approximately the same position and of approximately the same size as the monopitch roofed flint, clunch and asbestos building that previously stood on the site and which was to provide garaging and storage for one of the units as part of the previous scheme. As submitted, due to the number of additional windows and rooflights and the regular appearance of the windows in the converted buildings, the proposal would result in a more domestic appearance and would thereby detract from the character and appearance of these former agricultural buildings. The Conservation Manager also considers that a number of other details also need to be revised, including the glazed screens in Units 1, 2, and 6. He has contacted the agent with a view to obtaining amendments to address his concerns. The erection of a new garage block, which is traditional in scale, form and materials and would complement the buildings to be converted, is considered to be acceptable.

31. Subject to confirmation of the sill height above first floor finished floor level of Unit 2's Bed 4 and Bed 5 windows – which was clarified as being 1600mm at the time of the previous application (S/1801/04/F) in order to avoid overlooking of properties on the opposite side of Mill Lane – I am satisfied that the development would not seriously harm the amenity of neighbours.
32. As is the case for the scheme approved under reference S/1801/04/F, 3 of the units would be served off Mill Lane and 3 off an improved access onto High Street. Two covered parking spaces are proposed for each unit.
33. Application S/1801/04/F was subject to a S.106 Agreement covering the provision of land off Duxford Road for affordable housing or the payment of a commuted sum in lieu of the provision of affordable housing on-site. The provision of the land off Duxford Road was a possibility at that time as the Wellcome Trust, the applicant at that time, also owned the land off Duxford Road. The Wellcome Trust is no longer the applicant or owner of the application site. Any permission should therefore be subject to a S.106 Agreement requiring the payment of a commuted sum.
34. The previous permission was accompanied by a Structural Appraisal of the buildings which detailed the repair works required to each building. No such information has been submitted as part of this application. Given the proposed changes and the collapse of part of the building to be converted into Unit 1 since that appraisal, it is considered that any permission should be subject to a condition requiring the agreement of 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. This would enable the Local Planning Authority to retain control over the extent of rebuilding.
35. If amended along the lines recommended by the Conservation Manager, I do not consider that the proposal would seriously prejudice the implementation of the development plan. I do not therefore consider that it would be necessary to refer the application to the Secretary of State should Members be minded to support it subject to the receipt of amended plans to address the concerns of the Conservation Manager.

Recommendation

36. Delegated approval, subject to the prior signing of a S.106 Agreement requiring the payment of a commuted sum in lieu of the provision of affordable housing on-site, if amended plans addressing the comments of the Conservation Manager are received and subject to clarification of the sill height of Unit 2's Bed 4 and Bed 5 windows / delegated refusal if amended plans addressing the comments of the Conservation Manager are not received on the grounds that the proposed additional openings are unnecessary and unsympathetic to the character and appearance of these curtilage listed buildings.

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
- Local Development Framework Development Control Policies Submission Draft January 2006

- Planning file refs: S/1902/06/F, S/1901/06/LB, S/1801/04/F, S/2191/04/LB, S/0849/04/F, S/0848/04/LB, S/2165/03/LB, S/1952/03/F, S/2387/02/PNA, S/1836/98/LB, S/1719/98/F, S/0774/93/LB and S/0773/93/F

Contact Officer: Andrew Moffat – Area Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713169