

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation  
Control Committee

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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1<sup>st</sup> December 2004

**S/1801/04/F - Hinxton**  
**Conversion of Farm Buildings to 6 Dwellings at Barns at Lordship Farm, Mill Lane, for Wellcome Trust Ltd**

**Recommendation: Approval**

Departure Application

Conservation Area

**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 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.
2. This full application, registered on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2004 and amended by plans date stamped the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2004, proposes to convert all but one of the buildings into 6 dwellings (1no. 3-bedroom, 3no. 4-bedroom and 2no. 5-bedroom). The building not to be converted, an open sided barn, would be demolished as part of the scheme. 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 each are proposed for Units 1-5. Four covered spaces are proposed for Unit 6. Visitor spaces are also shown on the plans.
3. The application was accompanied by a Structural Appraisal of the buildings which details the repair works required to each building. Some of the buildings have corrugated sheeting roofs. These are to be replaced by slates and pantiles which will require strengthening of the roofs to accommodate the additional weight. New openings would be kept to a minimum by utilising existing openings for the new doors and windows. The clunch walls to Unit 1 would need to be repaired or rebuilt where the outward leans are excessive. A copy of a Supporting Planning Statement submitted as part of the application is attached as Appendix A.

**Relevant Planning History**

4. A listed building application for the proposal is currently being considered (**S/2191/04/LB**).
5. Planning and listed building applications to convert the buildings into 7 dwellings were withdrawn earlier this year (**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 permitted.
11. 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.

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.
12. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P7/6** states that Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.
  13. 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.

14. 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.
15. 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.

### **Consultation**

16. **Hinxton Parish Council** recommends refusal. Its detailed comments are attached as Appendix B
17. **Conservation Manager** raises no objections to the scheme as amended and states that he has no concerns about the conversion of the buildings, the layout or the details of the design. In relation to the amended plans he states "Details of the proposed boundary treatment and hard landscaping are acceptable and will retain the character of the former farmyard and the setting of the listed farmhouse. The introduction of the short screen walls to the boundaries between Units 2,3,4 and 5 provides some privacy immediately adjacent to the dwellings.
18. The omission of the plinth to the fenestration on the northwest elevation of Unit 6 has simplified the design.
19. The omission of the visitor parking adjacent to Units 3 and 4 will improve the setting of this curtilage listed building. Finally, the improvement to the access onto High Street will have no significant impact on the setting of the curtilage listed buildings or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area."
20. **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 foundations and requiring an investigation of the site to establish the nature and extent of any contamination and any necessary remedial works should be attached to any approval. He also recommends that an informative relating to bonfires and burning of waste on site is attached to any approval.
21. **Ecology Officer** visited the site in July of this year 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 recommends that an informative is attached to any approval in relation to the protected status of bats.
22. **Local Highway Authority** has considered the existing and resulting levels of use of Mill Lane, and visibility from the existing access onto Mill Lane, and confirms that the existing access onto Mill Lane is adequate to serve the 3 dwellings proposed to be served from this access. It also confirms that, provided the first 10m from the High Street is widened to a minimum of 4.5m to allow two vehicles to pass, the existing access onto High Street is also adequate to serve the remaining 3 dwellings as proposed. The amended plans, a set of which have been forwarded to the Local Highway Authority,

show the access onto High Street widened to 4.5m for the first 10m as requested. An additional comments received will be reported orally.

23. **County Archaeology** states 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.
24. **Cambs Fire & Rescue Service** states that additional water supplies for firefighting are not required.

### **Representations**

25. The occupier of 96 High Street makes the following comments: The barns are currently used. Why should they not be reused by bringing them up to EEC standard rather than have the facility relocated and the erection of a large steel structure on land north of 131 High Street which affects the Conservation Area eg. vermin, late night noise during the harvest time due to the closeness of houses; and the previous permission for the grain store (S/2387/02/PNA) and vehicular access (S/0290/03/F) should perhaps be revisited.
26. The occupier of 8 Mill Lane make the following comments:
  - The site is outside the village framework of what is an in-fill only village;
  - Taken with the recent approval for housing at Hunts Lane, the proposal represents a significant increase in the housing stock of the village and, as such, would have a major impact on the village, particularly in terms of population and vehicle movements;
  - The buildings are not redundant contrary to the statement in the application;
  - The conversion of the buildings would result in the farm's almost certain absorption into a larger holding;
  - No provision appears to have been made of the archaeological interest of the site;
  - The gardens of units 2-5 will take up land currently designated as farmland;
  - Mill Lane is not appropriate or safe as a vehicular access to the development;
  - Impact of construction traffic. Construction traffic should only use the High Street access;
  - Overlooking of Nos. 4, 6 and 8 Mill Lane from the new openings in the north elevation of unit 2;
  - The buildings could possibly be used by owls and/or bats;
  - Should development of some or all of the buildings not proceed, the Council should issue a repairs notice.

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

27. The key issues in relation to the proposal are:
  - Whether there are any material considerations to set aside the normal presumption against residential development in the countryside;

- 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;
  - Highway/access matters; and
  - Impact on amenity of neighbours.
28. The buildings are curtilage listed and are of historical interest. The statement submitted as part of the application (attached as Appendix A) demonstrates that they no longer meet current standards and are no longer required for agricultural purposes. I consider that it is important that an alternative use is found to secure their future. Prior to the submission of the application, the Local Highway Authority confirmed that, in view of the number of vehicular movements likely to be generated by a business use, it could not support a commercial use of the site without significant changes to the High Street access, including significant widening 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. The submitted statement also demonstrates that a holiday let use of the site would not be viable. In this regard, a 1993 permission, renewed in 1998 and 2003, for a holiday use of a barn adjacent to the site has not been implemented for this reason. The buildings are also adjacent to the village framework and lend themselves to conversion to dwellings without adversely affecting their historic character and appearance. For these reasons, notwithstanding the normal presumption against residential development in the countryside, I consider that the conversion of these agricultural buildings to 6 dwellings, and the associated access, parking and garden areas are acceptable in terms of countryside and listed building considerations.
29. I am also satisfied that the development would not adversely affect the amenity of neighbours. The occupier of No.8 Mill Lane raises concern in relation to overlooking of Nos. 4, 6 and 8 Mill Lane from the new openings in the north elevation of unit 2. I do not consider that there would be any serious overlooking of these properties as Nos. 4, 6 and 8 are set back from the road and the first floor windows in the north elevation of Unit 2 are high level/minimum 1.6m above floor level.
30. Although the Parish Council is concerned about the inadequacy of parking provision, provision is at the upper end of what would be considered acceptable in terms of current parking standards. The Local Highway Authority is satisfied that the access arrangements are acceptable.
31. The site is outside the Environment Agency's medium and high risk flood zones.
32. 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.

### **Recommendation**

33. Subject to confirmation being received from the Local Highway Authority that the amended plans adequately show the requested widening of the access onto High Street to 4.5m for the first 10m:

Approval (as amended by drawing nos. A.24.397b, 01-54-100E, 01-54-101B, 01-54-102F, 01-54-111D, 01-54-112C, 01-54-201A, 01-54-104F, 01-54-200A and 01-54-202 and certificate date stamped 9.11.04 and facsimile message dated 11.11.04) subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
2. 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; development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details (Reason – To ensure the use of details appropriate to this listed building).
3. The 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).
4. Before work commences on site, precise details of the position and details of soil vent pipes, extractors and flues shall be submitted for the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority; development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details (Reason – To ensure detailing appropriate to this listed building).
5. 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).
6. The roof of Units 3, 4, and 5 shall be covered in natural quarried slate (Reason – To ensure the use of roofing material appropriate to these listed buildings).
7. The roofs to the cartsheds for Units 3, 6, and 7 shall be covered with clay pantiles, a sample of which shall be provided on site for the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority (Reason – To ensure the use of roofing material appropriate to these listed buildings).
8. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the boundary treatments and the hard surfacing shown upon drawing nos. 01-54-102F, 01-54-104F, 01-54-200A, 01-54-201A and 01-54-202 shall be erected/carried out before the dwellings to which they relate are first occupied or the development is completed, whichever is the sooner (Reason – To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development and to safeguard the amenity of the occupiers of the hereby permitted dwellings).
9. Standard Landscaping Condition 51 (Reason 51).
10. Standard Landscaping Condition 52 (Reason 52).
11. Prior to the commencement of development, an investigation of the site shall be undertaken to establish the nature and extent of any contamination and any remedial works to deal with contamination. This shall initially consist of a desktop study, which shall include details

of the site history, development of a site conceptual model and a preliminary qualitative risk assessment. If any likelihood of contamination is indicated by the initial study, a further detailed site assessment shall be carried out which shall include intrusive investigations and which shall fully characterise the nature, extent and severity of contamination. Recommendations for a remediation strategy and post-remediation validation testing shall be included. Remedial work should be carried out in accordance with the approved details. Details of the site investigation and any necessary remediation strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (Reason – To protect future occupiers of the hereby permitted dwellings from possible contamination of the site).

12. Standard Condition 26 – “During the period of conversion...” (0800, 0800, 1800, 1300) (Reason 26).
13. Highway conditions

### **Reasons for Approval**

1. Although the development is not in accordance with South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 Policy SE8, it is considered to be acceptable as a departure from the Development Plan for the following reason: the proposal represents a suitable new use for these curtilage listed buildings and will thereby secure their future.
2. The development is considered to generally accord with the Development Plan in all other respects and particularly the following policies:
  - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: P1/2 (Environmental Restrictions on Development) and P7/6 (Historic Built Environment);
  - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: 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)
3. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise: current and possible future alternative uses of the buildings; countryside planning policies; overdevelopment; residential amenity interests; parking and access matters; increase in village housing stock; archaeology; wildlife; and flood risk.

### **Informatives**

All bats and their places of shelter received full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. As such, if any bats are found during the works, works should cease and advice taken from English Nature (tel: 01733-405850)

The site could provide an opportunity for bats and barn owls, particularly in view of the open countryside surrounding. Artificial bat boxes and/or barn owl

boxes could be erected upon the buildings. The District Council's Ecology Officer can provide details of suppliers and suggest suitable locations of where to erect them.

Should driven pile foundations be proposed, before development commences, a statement of the method for construction of these foundations should be submitted to and agreed by the District Council's Environmental Health Officer so that noise and vibration can be controlled.

During the conversion, there shall be no bonfires or burning of waste on site except with the prior permission of the District Council's Environmental Health Officer in accordance with best practice and existing waste management legislation.

A guidance note on dealing with potential land contamination is available from the Council's Environmental Health Department.

**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 Policy Statement 7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Area' 2004  
Planning file Refs: S/2191/04/LB, S/1801/04/F, S/0849/04/F, S/0848/04/LB,  
S/2165/03/LB, S/1952/03/F, S/0290/03/F, S/2387/02/PNA, S/1836/98/LB,  
S/1719/98/F, S/0774/93/LB and S/0773/93/F

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