

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

7 November 2012

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

S/1463/12/FL – GREAT EVERSDEN

**Conversion of agricultural buildings to one live/work unit and one dwelling at
Merrys Farm, Wimpole Road
for Mr David Rolph**

S/1631/12/LB – GREAT EVERSDEN

**Alterations and Extensions to barn and piggery to create dwelling and live-work unit - Conversion of barn including extension to create covered parking area, and addition of first floor, and numerous internal walls and internal and external openings. Conversion of piggery including new internal walls and doors and conversion of store into garage, and internal and external openings. New walls around site. At Merrys Farm, Wimpole Road
For Mr David Rolph**

Recommendations: S/1463/12/FL – Refusal & S/1631/12/LB - Approval

Dates for Determination: 28 September 2012

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination at the request of the Local Member

To be presented to the Committee by Paul Derry

Members will visit the site on 6 November 2012

The application is a Departure from the Local Development Framework

Site and Proposal

1. The application site is located outside of the designated Great Eversden village framework, the boundary to which is located approximately 150m north of the site. The site is located within the Cambridge Green Belt. The application site consists of The Old Black Barn, a timber clad barn with corrugated sheeting on the roof above. This barn is set close to the road, with a grass verge in between. The barn has single storey lean-to buildings to both sides. Extending from the western lean-to is the Pantile Piggery, a single storey element with a blank facing façade to the northeast, but with four timber stable doors to the southwest elevation. Attached to the Pantile Piggery is the Stables, which creates a courtyard around the barn. The Stables is a smaller, timber-framed and weatherboarded barn with corrugated sheeting on the roof above. To the northeast is The Piggeries, a more modern breeze block building, with a monopitch extension to the front.
2. All buildings are considered to be curtilage listed due to the presence of Merrys farmhouse to the south, a grade II L-shaped property. After passing the entrance, Wimpole Road becomes a farm track, and also is a public

footpath that runs southeastwards. A further footpath runs northwards opposite the site. To the north side of Wimpole Road, and rear of The Piggeries are two modern agricultural buildings. The property of 15 Wimpole Road to the northeast of the site is grade II listed.

3. The planning and listed building applications, validated on 3 August 2012, seek the conversion of the curtilage listed Old Black Barn, Pantile Piggery, Stables and Piggeries into a single dwelling and a live/work unit. The live/work element would be located within the Pantile Piggery. The application is accompanied by a Planning Statement, A Design and Access Statement, a Heritage Statement, a Structural Engineering Appraisal, a Transport Statement, a Bat Assessment, and a Protected Species Scoping and Bat Inspection Survey Report.

Site History

4. Application **SC/1364/73/F** granted planning permission for monopitch steel and asbestos store for agricultural use. This would appear to have not been constructed although it may have been spun through 90 degrees to form the monopitch frontage to the piggery.

Planning Policy

5. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (LDF CS), adopted January 2007: ST/7 Infill Villages**
6. **Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (LDF DCP) 2007: DP/1 Sustainable Development, DP/2 Design of New Development, DP/3 Development Criteria, DP/4 Infrastructure and New Development, DP/7 Development Frameworks, GB/1 Development in the Green Belt, GB/2 Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt, HG/1 Housing Density, HG/3 Affordable Housing, HG/8 Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside for Residential Use, SF/10 Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space, and New Developments, SF/11 Open Space Standards, NE/1 Energy Efficiency, NE/6 Biodiversity, NE/15 Noise Pollution, CH/3 Listed Buildings, CH/4 Development Within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building & TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards.**
7. **Open Space in New Developments SPD** – adopted January 2009, **Biodiversity** – adopted July 2009, **Listed Buildings** – adopted July 2009, **Affordable Housing SPD** – adopted March 2010 & **District Design Guide SPD** – adopted March 2010.
8. **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** Advises that planning obligations should only be sought where they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. It adds planning conditions should only be imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other aspects.
9. The NPPF notes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 34 notes developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximized. Paragraph 55 states local planning

authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as where the development would reuse redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting.

10. Paragraph 90 of the NPPF states the reuse of buildings is not inappropriate by definition provided the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.

Consultation by South Cambridgeshire District Council as Local Planning Authority

11. **Great Eversden Parish Council** strongly approves the development and notes it accords with government guidance on the re-use of farm buildings.
12. The **Council's Conservation Officer** objects to the original plans given a lack of justification for the conversions and a lack of information regarding the practicalities of the project, prominence of domestic curtilage and associated paraphernalia within the approach and setting of the listed building, intensification of parking, harm to the original historic fabric, loss of significant open sections and the characteristics of the buildings, overly domestic design, loss of relationships of parts of the site, loss of plinths and fixtures. Members will be updated regarding amended plans when received.
13. The **Joint Enabling and Development Officer** notes the scheme should provide one affordable unit, but no discussions have taken place with the applicant. A contribution in lieu of onsite provision is proposed. This should be justified.
14. The **Council's Scientific Officer (Contaminated Land)** notes the site is currently agricultural and given the change to a more sensitive residential use, a condition is requested regarding investigation and remediation works.
15. The **Council's Environmental Health Officer** has considered the scheme in terms of noise, and recommends a condition regarding use of power operated machinery during conversion. An informative regarding bonfires and burning of waste is also recommended.
16. The **Council's Ecology Officer** accepts the findings that there is no bat roosts present in any building and only a low level of bat activity was recorded. A condition should ensure works take place in accordance with the Bat Assessment.
17. The **Local Highways Authority** requests conditions regarding provision of visibility splays of 2.4m by 43m from the Old Black Barn access, drainage of water from the access, materials to be used for the accesses, a minimum width of 5m for the shared access, retention of parking and turning areas, and layout of the parking area for the live/work unit. An informative regarding works to the public highway is also recommended.
18. The **Council's Building Control Officer** notes no concerns regarding fire, access or drainage. Rain water disposal would need to be addressed but it is likely that as limited increase is expected, no issues would result.

Representations by Members of the Public

19. **Cllr Page** supports the scheme, and would prefer the Piggeries to be removed and a new dwelling erected. He adds it would create employment for the village, reduce the need for commuting into Cambridge, and re-uses a redundant building currently an eyesore
20. 8 letters have been received supporting the scheme, and this includes 15 Wimpole Road to the northeast. The main focus is on the buildings falling into disrepair and the beneficial impact upon the area, along with the long-term future of the listed farmhouse.

Planning Comments

21. The key issues to be considered in the determination of this application are the principle of development, impact upon the curtilage listed buildings and setting of the listed farmhouse, affordable housing and infrastructure contributions, impact upon the amenity of the occupiers of the adjacent properties, impact upon Bats, and highway safety and parking provision.

The Principle of Development

22. The site is located within the Cambridge Green Belt. In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, the development is not considered to be inappropriate by definition as it represents the re-use of buildings that are of permanent and substantial construction. Whilst there is the creation of further walls and a car port, these are not considered to impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.
23. Policy HG/8 of the LDF DCP relates to the conversion of buildings in the countryside for residential use. It states that planning permission for conversion of rural buildings for residential use will not generally be permitted. The policy operates a step system, whereby planning permission for residential conversion will only exceptionally be granted where it can be demonstrated, having regard to market demand or planning considerations that it is inappropriate for any suitable employment use or residential conversion as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use (live/work use).
24. These steps were discussed at pre-application stage. The applicant was able to successfully demonstrate that the site was not suitable for employment use. This centred on two factors, the main factor being the capacity of Wimpole Road in the vicinity. It is a single track when it arrives at Merrys Farm, and the Local Highways Authority have confirmed that given the size of the unit(s), projected traffic generation would potentially compromise safety of Wimpole Road. The second factor relates to the viability of the scheme. The cost for the conversion would be large, and it is unlikely a business use could be run profitably given the conversion costs.
25. With regards to a live/work unit, the proposal to be considered includes one live/work unit and one dwelling. The applicant has provided financial information in their additional information letter dated 18 September 2012. Following discussions with the Council's Section 106 Officer, it is agreed that a scheme for two live/work units is again not viable for the site. The applicant

has successfully shown that the buildings are unsuitable for employment or two live/work units. A scheme or condition ensuring the live/work unit remains as such in the future would be required.

26. The Policy that adds a list of criterion to be met before residential conversion is considered acceptable. Of these, the buildings are considered structurally sound, and are not of a makeshift nature. Criterion 2.g. states conversion must perform well against sustainability issues highlighted within Policy DP/1 of the LDF DCP. Policy DP/1 is an overarching policy regarding sustainable development. One of its principles seeks development to minimise the need to travel and reduce car dependency.
27. Great Eversden is classified as an Infill Village given its lack of services and facilities. Within the village, there is a village hall and a restaurant. The village therefore relies on services of other villages. The addition of two residential units would increase car dependency and the need to travel to gain such services and use such facilities. The site is considered an unsustainable location for further dwellings. It is noted that one dwelling would be a live/work unit. However, despite the ability to work at home, any employment visitors to that site would arrive by car, and occupiers of the unit would require car journeys for activities such as shopping, or visiting the doctor.
28. This conclusion must be balanced against the long-term future of the buildings. The Old Black Barn would not appear to be under any short-term threat. It is considered structurally sound. However, conversion would ensure that this building will have a long term future. It is an important building of Regional/County Importance as noted within the submitted Heritage Statement. The development is considered a moderate positive impact allowing long-term preservation. With regard to Old Black Barn, the conversion is therefore considered, on balance, to be acceptable.
29. The Piggeries again are considered structurally sound and its short-term future is not considered to be in doubt. The Heritage Statement notes it is considered a building of Local Importance, due to its curtilage listed status and its position reflecting the historic form of the courtyard. It is however a breeze block piggery with corrugated metal and asbestos sheeted roof. It also has had a lean-to element added to the front after 1973, which is an unattractive feature to the building. It is an agricultural building that you would expect to see in such a rural location. After assessment, it is not considered a building where its long-term future needs to be secured through residential conversion. In this instance, the long-term use of the building is outweighed by its unsustainable location. Members should be aware that approving the scheme would be a Departure from Policies HG/8 and DP/1 and has been advertised accordingly.

Impact upon the Curtilage Listed Buildings and Setting of the Listed Farmhouse

30. The Conservation Officer has expressed concerns regarding the practicalities of the conversion, and the potential impact upon the curtilage listed buildings. A meeting has been held between officers and the applicant in an attempt to overcome these concerns. Amended plans and further information are expected, and Members will be updated on comments regarding these changes. The changes are likely to prevent loss of historic fabric and be more

suitable for the site. If the plans are considered acceptable, the Listed Building application could be supported.

31. There is local concern regarding the character and appearance of the site as existing. This relates to the Piggeries, which are described as an eyesore. It is not a building of architectural significance, although it is the type of building expected in such a farmyard location. It would not appear to be falling into any disrepair.

Affordable Housing and Infrastructure Contributions

32. Given the site is outside of the designated village framework and seeks a net gain of two residential units, the proposal should provide an affordable dwelling. Given the location of the site, no Registered Provider is likely to be interested in a single plot, and therefore a payment in lieu of on-site provision would be required. Policy HG/3 of the LDF DCP states account will be taken of any particular cost associated with the development and other viability considerations. Again financial information in their additional information letter dated 18 September 2012 shows that the scheme is not viable if affordable housing contributions are required. The applicant has however stated they will submit a Unilateral Undertaking providing a payment of £10,000 towards affordable housing. Members should be aware that at the time of writing, this has not yet been received. The section 106 Officer has confirmed the site would not appear viable for any other payment towards affordable housing, and the Housing Development and Enabling Manager is aware of this conclusion.
33. The application should also trigger contributions towards the provision of open space and community facilities in line with Policies DP/4 and SF/10 of the LDF DCP. The viability information again shows that the scheme would not be viable with these contributions, and therefore no such contributions would be required in this instance. It is therefore the case that approval of the application would place demands on services and facilities that cannot be offset. This further harms the overall sustainability of the proposal.

Impact upon the Amenity of the Occupiers of the Adjacent Properties

34. There is a residential unit (15 Wimpole Road) to the northeast of the site. The proposed live/work unit is a single storey building with no first floor accommodation. There are two openings in the facing side elevation of the proposed conversion serving a bedroom and a utility room. The outlook from these windows would be towards the existing 1.8m high panel fence along the shared boundary. Given the scheme is a conversion, there would be no increase in any loss of light or overbearing impact. The proposal is not therefore considered to harm the amenity of the occupiers of 15 Wimpole Road.
35. Merrys Farmhouse would have a close relationship with the converted barn. Ground floor windows currently do look into what would be the newly created garden area for the barn. However, the proposed boundary treatment should reduce levels of overlooking. There is a first floor window to the in the front facing elevation of the Farmhouse. Whilst this would allow some overlooking of the newly created garden area, the Stables should provide some screening and therefore ensure the overlooking is not sufficient to warrant refusal of the scheme.

36. The relationship between the converted barn and the live/work unit is considered acceptable, although a condition would be required to prevent openings in the Pantile Piggery. Openings here would create serious overlooking to the garden area of the converted barn.
37. The comments from the Council's Environmental Health Officer are noted. A condition regarding use of power operated machinery can be added to ensure such conversion works take place within sociable hours. Details regarding bonfires and the burning of waste can be added as an informative.

Impact upon Bats

38. The application originally included a Protected Species Scoping and Bat Inspection Survey Report. The Council's Ecology Officer requested further information regarding bat activity, and a further document was provided dated 31 July 2012. This document concluded bat activity was relatively low, and there are no roosts present, and the Ecology Officer agrees with these findings. A condition can therefore be added to any approval to ensure the works should take place in line with the recommendations of that report.

Highway Safety and Parking Provision

39. The access to the Old Black Barn seeks to utilise the existing access that serves Merrys Farmhouse. It would therefore change a single access to a shared access. The Local Highways Authority requests various conditions. The access is not 5m in width. However, there is adequate visibility to ensure on-coming can be seen, and the access is a short distance. Widening the access would create more hardstanding in the area, to the detriment of the setting of the listed building, and therefore in this instance it is not considered necessary. The proposal does seek to change the access to gravel, contrary to requirements of the Local Highway Authority who do not wish for such materials to be displaced onto the public highway. Such detail can be agreed through a planning condition. A condition regarding vehicle-to-vehicle visibility splays is also not considered necessary in this instance. There is good visibility from the access due to the grass verge, but the road ends past the access, and any traffic will be travelling very slowly in this area. The shared access should not cause any highway dangers.
40. The live/work unit at the Piggeries seeks to convert the lean-to element to the Old Black Barn to create two parking spaces. There is also a forecourt to the front of the building that would allow adequate turning and some overspill parking. There should be no requirement for parking off the site. Gravel is proposed for the access contrary to requirements of the Local Highway Authority. This detail can again be agreed through a planning condition.

Other Matters

41. The comments from the Council's Scientific Officer are noted. If the scheme were supported, the recommendation condition can be added to ensure the site is free of contaminants.

Conclusion

42. The determination of this application is a balance between the retention and conservation of the buildings against the unsustainable location. With regard

the Old Black Barn, the long-term future of the building is considered to outweigh the location. However, with regard to the Piggeries, the opposite approach is taken.

Recommendation

43. Refuse planning application S/1463/12/FL for the following reason.

The application seeks conversion of the buildings into a dwelling and live/work unit. The application site is considered to be an unsustainable location given the lack of facilities and services within the village of Great Eversden. Future occupiers of the units would therefore rely upon car journeys to neighbouring villages. The dwelling would be within the Old Black Barn. The long-term future of this important heritage asset is considered to outweigh the harm caused by reliance upon the car. The Piggeries would become a live/work unit. Whilst the work element would reduce some trips to and from the site, occupiers would still require journeys to neighbouring villages for services and facilities. The Piggeries is not considered to be a heritage asset of such value that its conversion outweighs the unsustainable site where it is located.

The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policy HG/8 of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007 (LDF DCP), which states conversion of buildings in the countryside for residential use must perform well against sustainability issues; and Policy DP/1 of the LDF DCP, which states development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that it is consistent with the principles of sustainable development and should minimise the need to travel and reduce car dependency.

44. Delegated Approval/Refusal of listed building consent S/1631/12/LB, subject to comments from the Conservation Officer with regard to the amended plans.

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

- **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007**
- **Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007**
- **Open Space in New Developments SPD** – adopted January 2009, **Biodiversity** – adopted July 2009, **Listed Buildings** – adopted July 2009, **Affordable Housing SPD** – adopted March 2010 & **District Design Guide SPD** – adopted March 2010
- **National Planning Policy Framework**
- **Planning Ref Files: S/1463/12/FL and SC/1364/73/F**

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