

10/08/0032

MRS J E GRABHAM

CHANGE OF USE AND CONVERSION OF BARN TO RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION IN Paddock OPPOSITE WESTCROFT, CHURCHSTANTON (RESUBMISSION OF 10/08/0022)

321460.1143

Full Planning Permission

PROPOSAL

The existing building is a small single storey stone barn with a corrugated sheet roof, situated in an agricultural field within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The barn is situated in the southern part of the agricultural field, accessed by a field gate from the adjacent country lane. A boundary surrounding the barn has been planted with trees. Opposite the site is Westcroft, an isolated dwelling, otherwise there are no residential properties in the immediate area.

This application is the resubmission of a similar application, which was withdrawn prior to determination last August. It seeks permission for the change of use and conversion of the barn to a dwelling, which would consist of two bedrooms, a bathroom and kitchen/lounge/dining room. Access would be gained by the existing field access. This application now includes additional landscaping within the site and orchard planting directly to the west.

The previous application was accompanied by a structural engineers survey, which found the barn to be in reasonable structural condition; a wildlife survey; and also a brief report on possible commercial use of the barn.

This application now includes further information including a wildlife mitigation plan; and an addendum to the structural report indicating localised tying and strapping to stabilise the walls.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

Churchstanton (BLK) - Proposal can only be beneficial to Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is in the applicant's best interests to carry out the proposals sympathetically, using vernacular materials, viz wooden doors and window frames, clay tiles, etc. It is also the applicant's intention to create an orchard to the side of the property with a planting scheme based on rare, indigenous species of trees. It is the intention of the applicant that the property will be occupied by herself and her husband in their retirement. The alternative to these proposals is that the existing structure will continue to deteriorate and eventually disintegrate. My council strongly recommends that planning consent is given.

Nature Conservation & Reserves - Acorn Ecology Ltd carried out a wildlife survey in Feb '08 and identified the use of the barn by bats, barn owls and swallows. I support Acorn's submitted Wildlife Mitigation Plan (Sept 08) to maintain the total

loft space as a bat roost, with a boxed off area as an owl nest site (PPS9). The proposal will also be suitable for swallows to nest (TDLP EN4). Appendix 3 of Acorn's plan illustrates the mitigation and I advise that this is conditioned along with the timing of works to ensure the protection of species through the development. Suggests informative note to applicant regarding need for a detailed method statement stating how the species will be protected.

Heritage & Landscape - Subject to implementation of the landscape as proposed, the scheme is acceptable.

Environmental Health - Noise & Pollution - Suggests condition and note to applicant regarding assessing potential ground contamination

Somerset County Council - Transport Development Group - In terms of traffic generation the proposed development may generate a similar level of traffic to that of the agricultural use of the barn, but the nature of the trip patterns connected with a residential use are likely to be very different with a higher level of longer distance trips.

The proposed development site is remote from any urban area and therefore distant from adequate services and facilities, such as, education, employment, health, retail and leisure. In addition, there are no public transport services in close proximity of the site. As a consequence, occupiers of the new development are likely to be dependant on private vehicles for most of their daily needs. Such fostering of growth in the need to travel would be contrary to government advice given in PPG13 and RPG10, and to the provisions of policies STR1 and STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review (adopted policies: April 2000).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned comments, it must be a matter for the Local Planning Authority to decide whether the retention of the building for re-use and/or any other overriding planning need, outweighs the transport policies that seek to reduce reliance on the private car.

In detail, the proposal will utilise an existing vehicular access that derives access from/onto a classified unnumbered highway. Highway verge borders the site frontage and with some cutting back, tidying up, visibility splays based on co-ordinates of 2.0m x 43m either side of the access would be easily achievable with minimal detriment to the hedgerow.

Given the unsustainable location, the maximum parking provision, as set out in the County Council Parking Strategy, would be applicable in this location. The submitted block plan shows parking together with a segregated turning area that can accommodate two vehicles. Suggests conditions and note to applicant.

Drainage Engineer - Soakaways should be constructed in accordance with BRE 365 (September 1991). With reference to foul drainage, a septic tank system is to be installed. Percolation tests should be carried out to ascertain the required lengths of sub-surface irrigation drainage. The Environment Agency consent to discharge to an underground strata is also required.

Natural England - Requests that the recommendations of the Ecological Survey

report and those of Taunton Deane Borough Council's Nature Conservation and Reserves Officer, in terms of protected species mitigation, be used in determining the application and attaching conditions.

Representations

6 letters of support received on the following grounds:

- The barn would be easy to convert into a dwelling, blending in to the landscape with the converted barn at Hunter's Lodge and would ensure preservation of the barn.
- Conversion would be an efficient use of a redundant farm building, which in its current state, is an unsightly blemish on the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Barn is too far from the farmyard and is not suitable for today's farming and if nothing is done with it soon there will be nothing left. A little dwelling could keep much of its character and help preserve this Area of Natural Beauty.
- It will provide another home in the parish, preventing a traditional barn from becoming derelict and lost from the landscape forever.
- The barn is currently in a poor state and could be sympathetically restored.

PLANNING POLICIES

PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas,
STR6 - Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages,
S&ENPP3 - S&ENP - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
S&ENPP5 - S&ENP - Landscape Character,
S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,
S2 - TDBCLP - Design,
S7 - TDBCLP - Outside Settlement,
H7 - TDBCLP - Conversion of Rural Buildings,
EN4 - TDBCLP -Wildlife in Buildings to be Converted or Demolished,
EN10 - TDBCLP - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty,

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The barn lies in a remote countryside location, some distance from any urban area and therefore distant from adequate services and facilities, such as education, employment, health, retail and leisure. There are no public transport services in close proximity to the site and therefore very limited transport opportunities other than the private car. As such, occupiers of a residential unit in this location would be largely dependent on private vehicles, rendering this an unsustainable form of development. The barn is not considered to be of any significant historic or architectural importance or interest, nor does it contribute to the local area significantly to justify a need to preserve it. It is not therefore believed that there are any significant planning merits of this proposal that would outweigh the highway sustainability concerns raised.

Whilst the structural survey states that the barn is in a reasonable condition, it is not considered that the barn can be converted without significant alteration. The permanent stone element of the barn is only up to eaves level and the roof and side gable above eaves level is corrugated sheeting, which is not of permanent and

substantial construction and would require total replacement. A large element of the barn would therefore be removed and totally replaced with different materials.

The proposed conversion to a dwelling utilises mainly the existing openings, with only one new window being proposed in the rear elevation to serve bedroom 2. However, this results in very little natural light being available inside the resulting dwelling. Whilst a window serves each bedroom, the kitchen/lounge/dining room is reliant on one area of glazing on the front elevation. Whilst an internal window/door is proposed to let some light into the kitchen, this door/window is under the main roof which will limit the light availability significantly. It is therefore considered that the proposed dwelling would result in poor living conditions for potential occupiers, who would be highly reliant on artificial light. Alternatively, this could result in significant future pressure for further openings, to the detriment of the traditional character of the barn.

Part 17 of PPS7 refers to the need to take account of the suitability of different types of buildings for re-use. In view of the limited openings available and the resulting problems with natural light availability, it is not considered that the barn in question lends itself to conversion to residential use.

The site lies within the countryside of the Blackdown Hills AONB, where the natural beauty should be preserved and enhanced and development should not adversely affect the landscape character or appearance. The conversion of the barn, provision of associated amenity space and installation of the driveway, would domesticate the appearance in an area that currently forms part of an agricultural field. Whilst it is accepted that the additional planting now proposed would reduce this impact slightly, the introduction of the paraphernalia of domestic living would change materially the rural character of the building and surrounding curtilage to a domestic one, thus eroding the rustic character of the site and failing to preserve and enhance the rural beauty of this part of the AONB.

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Refusal

- 1 The site is remote from any urban area and therefore distant from adequate services and facilities, such as, education, employment, health, retail and leisure and there is no public transport services in close proximity to the site. As a result, occupiers of the proposed dwelling are likely to be dependent on private vehicles for most of their daily needs, which would foster a growth in the need to travel and it is not considered that there are sufficient planning merits of the proposal to outweigh the highway sustainability issues raised. On this basis, the proposal is contrary to advice given in PPG13 and RPG10 and policies STR1 (Sustainable Development) and STR6 (Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages) of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and policy S1(b) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.
- 2 The barn is a single storey stone barn with a corrugated sheet roof and limited openings, within the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Due to the nature of the roof and gable ends above eaves level not

being of permanent and substantial construction, significant alterations would be required to convert the building to residential use and by virtue of the limited openings in the existing barn, the building is not deemed suitable for its intended use. As such it is not considered that the building is of a form suitable for conversion to this use and is therefore contrary to the guidance set out in the relevant sections of PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) and policy H7 (Conversion of Rural Buildings) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

- 3 The site lies within a rural part of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where the natural beauty should be preserved and enhanced and development should not adversely affect the landscape character or appearance. The conversion of the barn, by virtue of the introduction of paraphernalia of domestic living, along with the installation of a driveway, would introduce a residential element, into a rural environment. The rustic nature of the site and the surrounding landscape will be eroded, which will fail to preserve and enhance the character of the landscape and the rural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies P3 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and P5 (Landscape Character) of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and policies S1 (General Requirements), H7 (Conversion of Rural Buildings) and EN10 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

Notes for compliance

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.

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