

46/2007/002

MR & MRS N MOORE

**PROPOSED BARN CONVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL AND SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION TO CREATE AN OFFICE AT HIGHER RUGGIN FARM, WEST BUCKLAND.**

318133/118530

FULL

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**PROPOSAL**

Permission is sought for the conversion of an existing redundant farm outbuilding to residential use, the demolition of an existing Dutch barn and the erection of a single storey extension, within the curtilage of Higher Ruggin Farm, a Grade II listed building. The range of buildings within the farmyard generally form a traditional enclosed courtyard design with a two-storey stone barn forming the south range extending to a single storey building at the west. The proposed conversion would provide a small cottage style development consisting of two bedrooms at first floor level with a kitchen and living area on the ground floor. The agent has indicated that the cottage would accommodate existing staff who help look after horses and stables on site. To the north side of this primary building is a substantial c20th steel-framed Dutch barn, which is currently used for stabling. The proposal involves the removal of this barn to be replaced by the erection of a new extension to provide office accommodation for the applications growing legal business. The proposed building line of the extension would be set back from that of the existing Dutch barn but would continue at right angles to provide additional storage space within the building. The proposed development incorporates traditional materials with a slate roof; natural stone; timber weatherboarding; and the replacement of existing UPVC guttering and downpipes with cast iron.

In addition to the submitted application further information has now been presented by the agent in support of the application. This include a breakdown of existing and proposed traffic movements to and from Higher Ruggin Farm; photographic evidence from the mid-1960s showing the previous intensity of buildings within the site. Furthermore, at the request of the Conservation Officer indicative plans have been produced to indicate the proposed location of the stable block. This would be subject to a further application but it is proposed that the stable block would be positioned to the rear of the site within the existing envelope of the complex and positioned in front of the existing barn on the boundary of the site.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the proposed site lies outside any development boundary limits, and is remote from services and facilities. In addition, there are no public transport services. Given the location it seems likely that most/all staff and visitors will be reliant on their private motor vehicles to reach the site. Such fostering of growth in the need to travel would h contrary to government advice given in PPG1, and RPG10, and to the provision of policy STR1 of the Somerset and Exmoor

National Park Joint Structure Plan Review. Notwithstanding the aforementioned comments, it must be a matter for the Local Planning Authority to decide whether the re-use of the barn and/or any other overriding planning need, outweighs the transport policies that seek to reduce reliance on the private car. A residential use 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 these uses are likely to be very different with a higher level of longer distance trips. The approach roads leading to the site are substandard in terms of width and alignment and it is considered by the Highway Authority, that an office use will result in an increase in traffic in an unsustainable area utilising substandard approach roads. It is therefore considered that a residential use will have less of an impact on the highway network, compared to that of a business/commercial use. Visibility at the point where the bridleway meets the unclassified highway is also restricted by the roadside boundary hedgerows and this should be improved particularly if there were to be an increase in use. The site derives access onto/from a definitive bridleway. I assume the Local Authority have notified the Rights of Way team regarding the proposed increase of vehicular use onto this bridleway. Taking the above points into consideration I would recommend that this application be refused on highway grounds for the following reasons:- (1) The proposed development would be located where it is remote from adequate services, employment, education, public transport etc and will therefore increase the need for journeys to be made by private vehicles which is non-sustainable and in conflict with advice given in PPG13 and Policy STR1 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review. (2) The approach roads by their reason of their restricted width and poor alignment are considered to be unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development. (3) The proposal would set a precedent for development along roads which, by reason of their function in the highway network and its inadequate width and alignment is considered unsuitable to accommodate the increase in traffic likely to be generated. NATURAL ENGLAND there is evidence of swallow nests and bats roosting and as such mitigation strategy must be provided that avoids impact on the population of species. A separate licence must be obtained from Natural England.

CONSERVATION OFFICER pre application discussions re these proposals. Whilst not a strict conversion of extant buildings, uses are for employment and will, in my opinion, represent an overall improvement to the setting of the principal Listed Building and its enhanced function/reuse of existing buildings. One of the obvious advantages is the removal of the modern dutch barn but this is noted as having an existing use associated with the site's equestrian facility – where is this to be relocated? In my opinion, comprehensive design/access/heritage statements, have been submitted and are supported. NATURE CONSERVATION AND RESERVES OFFICER Kestrel Wildlife Consultant's survey December 2006, identified that bats are using the Cart House and there is evidence of swallows and sparrows nesting in the buildings. Natural England's comments identified the need for a mitigation strategy to protect the favourable conservation status of bats and to protect swallows and their nest sites. Conditions and informative regarding protected species to be imposed. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT no comments to make.

PARISH COUNCIL objects to the proposal as there is concern that this is a majority new build and not a barn conversion.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

RPG10 – South West

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development, PPG3 – Transport. PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, PPS3 – Housing, PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment.

Somerset & Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR1 (Sustainable Development), ST6 (Development Outside Rural Centres & Villages), Policy 5 (Landscape Character), Policy 9 (The Built Historic Environment), Policy 49 (Transport Requirements of new Development).

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 (General Requirements), S2 (Design), S7 (Outside Settlements), H7 (Conversion of Rural Buildings), M4 (Residential Parking Requirements), EN4 (Wildlife in Buildings to be Converted or Demolished), EN5 (Protected Species), EN6 (Protection of Trees), EN12 (Landscape Character Areas), EN16 (Listed Buildings), EN17 (Listed Buildings) and EN18 (Demolition of Listed Buildings).

## **ASSESSMENT**

It is considered the pertinent issues in the assessment of the application relate to; highway safety and sustainability; policy implications and; impact upon the setting of the listed building.

The agent has submitted an in-depth supporting statement and outlines the existing situation in relation to the growth of the business. The applicant established his own specialist law firm in December 2005. The agent indicates that supported by an administrative assistant some of the space within the main farmhouse was used temporarily. As the business expanded an additional solicitor was employed, with a third recruited in April 2007. In addition administrative support took the number to five staff. The agent states that the business model to which the applicant is working involves his legally qualified staff working partly at the office and partly from their homes, with remote access via the internet. It is anticipated that the applicant's professional staff would attend the office every other working day. Further expansion within the farmhouse is not considered a viable option. As such the proposed adaptation of existing redundant barn and the replacement of the Dutch barn with a purpose built extension in a traditional form would allow the requirements of the business to be fulfilled.

The applicants also keep horses. The proposal includes the renovation and conversion of an existing redundant building to form a two bedroom cottage for the accommodation of resident staff.

The application site is situated approximately one mile to the south of the village of West Buckland and two and half miles from Wellington Town centre. The Highway Authority has raised a number of objections to the proposal. However, the agent in response has detailed the level of traffic movements to and from the site. In

conclusion it is anticipated that the expected traffic increase on local roads is expected to be minimal. Moreover, the increase in staff members will, in part, be offset by existing staff being accommodated on site within the proposed conversion. The business plan of affording staff technology to work at home is aimed at reducing travel requirements. Furthermore, the proposed development would lead to a reduction in traffic movements when considered against the historical agricultural usage of the farmstead. Whilst it is accepted that the site is not located in close proximity to a settlement the proposed scheme promotes the use of home working and it is considered that the benefits overall of the scheme to the setting of the listed building would outweigh any concerns regarding its location.

The building is considered of significant character and interest to comply with the provisions of local plan policy relating to the conversion of existing barns. The barn is of a suitable scale for conversion for the use proposed. It is considered the proposed alterations to the building would be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the barn and as such the proposal would comply with the provisions of local plan policy. The concerns and objection raised by the Parish Council in relation to the proposal not being a conversion but the majority being new build are noted. This relates to the single storey office element. Whilst accepting that this would result in a considerable new build extension, in consultation with the Conservation Officer, it is considered that the proposal would represent a considerable improvement to the setting of the listed building with the demolition of the Dutch barn and the construction of a lower more sympathetic and traditional building which would satisfy the requirements of the applicant and provide additional employment opportunities. Furthermore, the single storey office accommodation has been designed to be subordinate to the existing building and keeps within the footprint of the structures currently on site. The principal materials used for the development include local Chert stone to match the existing areas of weatherboarding and corrugated iron cladding and will help to assimilate the development in its context.

To conclude, the proposed development has been thoughtfully designed and would represent a sympathetic scheme which utilises redundant outbuildings, which would otherwise have no economically viable use, helping to secure the site's long term survival. The removal of the existing Dutch barn would help to improve the setting of the listed building and the proposed extension, albeit a new build element would appear sympathetic and integrate its surroundings.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials as per plans, details of specific materials and samples, no bell casts, flat roof of the store shall be lead, schedule of structural works, schedule of repairs, means of compliance with upgrading thermal elements of the structure, landscaping, removal of dutch barn and modern garage to south west corner of the site, drainage, meter boxes, timber windows and doors, details of walls/fences, removal of PD rights for extensions, additions and alterations, wildlife mitigation measures, schedule of works to ensure safety and stability of the building. Notes re informative regarding protected species.

**REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:-** The proposed development is considered to comply with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2, H7, M4, EN4, EN5, EN6, EN12, EN16, EN17 and EN18 and material considerations do not indicate otherwise.

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.**

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356586 MR A PICK**

NOTES: