

49/09/0046

MR B STEVENS

**CONVERSION OF BARN TO SINGLE STOREY DWELLING AT MAUNDOWN COTTAGE, JEWS LANE, MAUNDOWN, WIVELISCOMBE**

306266.12887

Full Planning Permission

---

**PROPOSAL**

Permission is sought for the conversion of a detached former agricultural building to a dwelling on land to the west of Maundown Cottage, Maundown. The proposed new dwelling would provide two bedrooms, with a family bathroom and an open plan kitchen/diner and lounge area. The application is supported by a design and access statement, together with a range of plans and photographs.

The works will require the eaves height of the original building to be raised by 300mm, which will result in a new ridge height of 4.434 metres. The works will also require some of the existing openings to be increased in size slightly in order to provide for a more acceptable level of natural internal light. Fenestration will be double glazed timber, with a new slate roof being provided for, whilst the external finish of the barn will be pebble dash render. The proposals also provide for 2 no. solar panels to the south east elevation, as well as new uPVC fascias.

**SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY**

Historically the existing building has been used as a piggery and stable in association with Maundown Cottage. The building is constructed from block work walls which have recently been re-rendered. The building also has a new profile metal sheet roof with timber windows and doors.

The site is located approximately 3.5 km outside of Wiveliscombe two centre as stated within the submitted design and access statement. The building is set within a sloping site, which ascends uphill to the south. Access is derived from the main classified highway to the north along Jews Lane which is an unclassified highway and a no through road. Within the site there is an original detached garage that serves Maundown Cottage as well as a greenhouse.

A pre-application meeting took place with the applicants regarding the possibilities of converting the barn subject of this application to a range of uses including an independent dwelling, an annex serving Maundown Cottage and also a holiday let. Feedback clearly indicated that in such a remote location, and for a barn such as this, it is highly unlikely that the council would support an application for conversion and or change of use.

**CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES**

**Consultees**

*SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP* - "The proposed development is

outside of any development limit and is therefore distant from adequate services and facilities, such as, education, employment, health, retail and leisure. In addition, public transport services are infrequent (First 25 Service operates a 2 hourly service) with the bus stop being located at the Three Horse Shoes at Langley Marsh which is approximately 1500m from 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).

It is not clear what purpose the existing barn serves or if its use is one which is ancillary to Maundown Cottage. If the barn is used in connection with agriculture, will the agricultural use continue on the adjoining land and will a replacement building be required in order to continue to serve that agricultural use. The Planning Officer may wish to get this clarified if he feels it is relevant.

In any event, it is considered that the proposal will result in an increase in traffic over and above the existing use and what currently occurs in this location.

In detail access to the site from/onto Jews Lane, is an unclassified highway and a no through road, it is narrow and poorly aligned with limited passing places. In addition the junction where Jews Lane meets the main Maundown Road suffers from substandard visibility for vehicles emerging to see, approaching traffic, which is considered detrimental to highway safety.

There are no footways or street lighting between the site and Wiveliscombe which would make it a hazardous and impracticable route for pedestrian users."

*WIVELISCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL* - Support the proposal subject to it conforming to the adopted barn conversion policy.

*NATURE CONSERVATION & RESERVES OFFICERS* - This application does not require a wildlife survey given the nature and design of the building. Recommends attaching standard advisory note regarding wildlife and the law to any approval.

*DRAINAGE ENGINEER* - Foul drainage to link into septic tank. Percolation tests required as well as the Environment Agency's consent to discharge to an underground strata.

Environmental Health Officer - No objection, recommends attaching the standard contamination condition if minded to recommend approval.

### **Representations**

One letter from applicant in response to Highway Officer comments - cannot remember there having ever been an accident at the junction between Jews Lane and Maundown Road. Visibility is good. People can walk to Wiveliscombe along Jews Lane which has no cars.

Four letters of support, three from members of public and one from the son of the applicants raising the following planning related matters - the building is unobtrusive and sits well into the landscape. Genuine need for bungalows which are eco friendly and designed for the elderly and infirm. Would rather see a slate roof and pebble dashed walls and for it to be used by someone than for the barn to become derelict, and eyesore. Lack of suitable accommodation for the elderly in the area. Conversion would be in keeping with other local dwellings.

### **PLANNING POLICIES**

S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,  
S2 - TDBCLP - Design,  
S7 - TDBCLP - Outside Settlement,  
H7 - TDBCLP - Conversion of Rural Buildings,  
S&ENPP49 - S&ENP - Transport Requirements of New Development,  
STR1 - Sustainable Development,  
STR6 - Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages,  
TRAN1 - RPG 10 TRAN 1 - Reducing the need to Travel,  
RPG10 - Regional Planning Guidance for the South West,  
PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development,  
PPS3 - Housing,  
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas,

## **DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

There are a number of pertinent issues that require consideration in determining the proposed development, with the first being whether the creation of a new dwelling here would result in an unsustainable form of development having regard to local, regional and national planning policy and secondly whether the proposed development would have any adverse impact upon the visual and residential amenity of the surrounding area. Assessment also needs to be undertaken with regards to conformity with the council's barn conversion policy.

The site is located outside of any defined settlement and is therefore considered to be located within open countryside in terms of planning policy. Within open countryside, it is the policy of the Local Planning Authority and that of central government to strictly control new development. With regard to proposals that form new independent residential units, planning policy statement 3 clearly states that housing should only be developed "in suitable locations which offer a range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure." Maundown and the proposed development site is located approximately 3.5km outside of the nearest recognised settlement providing such facilities and services - Wiveliscombe. Similarly planning policy statement 7 also strongly urges for sustainable developments within rural areas, and in particular that any new development should be closely associated to existing rural towns/centres, including proposals for residential conversions.

There have been a number of recent appeal dismissals relating to residential conversion schemes which have given significant weight to sustainability as a material consideration. Therefore I consider that for such proposals there is now an 'in principle' objection to applications for barn conversions where located in remote locations. The proposal is clearly located in an unsustainable location that if permitted, would give rise to increased numbers of journeys by private motor vehicles to and from the site by occupants of the new dwellings, be it now or in the future. As highlighted by the County Highways Officer, the site does not have any pedestrian links to Wiveliscombe nor would it be acceptable for any occupant to walk 3.5km to access essential services. Similarly, Maundown does not benefit from a regular bus service. My concerns are compounded by the contents of the design and access statement which states that all residents of Maundown rely on motor vehicles to access services 3.5 km away, implying that this is therefore acceptable in some way. I consider any additional vehicular trips to be detrimental to the environment and therefore the proposed conversion of the barn is considered unacceptable given the unsustainable nature of its location and contrary to

government advice within planning policy statement 1,3 and 7.

Having regard to the characteristics of the barn subject of this application, I am of the opinion that the building does not comply with the requirements of Local Plan policy H7 (Conversion of Rural Buildings) in that the building is constructed from block work walls which would appear to have been rendered very recently, along with the adjacent garage. The building does not contain any architectural or historic qualities and therefore the retention of the building cannot be justified as it fails to make a positive contribution to the landscape character and appearance. The submitted design and access statement contends that by applying pebble dashing and natural roofing slates to the building, the barn will make a positive contribution to the visual amenity. I disagree with this point in that such alterations would bring about a far more domesticated appearance to the building than existing or that of a traditional agricultural barn, to the detriment of the surrounding landscape character.

The proposed development also conflicts with local plan policy H7 in that the requirement for an application to demonstrate that the building and site has little or no prospect of generating any form of employment or alternative use has not been met. The application has not been supported with any information to suggest that a marketing process has been undertaken for the required twelve month period. However notwithstanding this, by virtue of the remote, unsustainable location of the building, with substandard access roads, it may be considered unreasonable to object to the proposed development on such grounds.

Considering the letters of support, I acknowledge the matter that the building is well screened from wider landscape views and is unobtrusive, and to an extent, the proposed works may improve its appearance above the current state. Nonetheless, as noted above the building is not a traditional one for which conversions are generally sought. Provision of new dwellings in remote locations, as stated above, is contrary to national, regional and local planning policy, even where they are to be provided for elderly or infirm people which may or may not be lacking in the surrounding area, including Wiveliscombe.

Given the above considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

## **RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)**

Recommended Decision: Refusal

- 1 The site is located within open countryside where Development Plan policy provides that development should be strictly controlled and only provided for where consistent with the policies and proposals set out in the Plan. The proposed conversion to a permanent and self contained residential dwelling remote from adequate services, employment, education and the like, would be likely to generate the need for additional travel by private motor vehicles due to its location and lack of accessibility to alternative means of travel. The development is therefore considered to be an unsustainable form of development contrary to Local Plan Policies STR1 and STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 and S7 and Planning Policy Statements 1 and 7.

- 2 Having regard to the form, character and appearance of the building, which this application seeks to convert, it is considered not to constitute a traditional agricultural building in that the building does not contain any features of historic or architectural importance or interest. The merits associated with permitting the conversion of traditional agricultural buildings are therefore not considered applicable in this instance and the proposal would therefore not be in keeping with its surroundings, nor do they outweigh the provisions of sustainable development. Therefore it is considered that the proposal does not accord with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy H7 (Conversion of Rural Buildings) or the provisions of Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas).

**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.**

**CONTACT OFFICER: Mr R Williams Tel: 01823 356469**