

22/2005/008

MR & MRS B J COLES

CONVERSION OF BARNs TO 3 NO. DWELLINGS, NETHERCOT FARM, COMBE FLOREY AS AMENDED BY LETTER DATED 13TH JUNE, 2005 WITH ACCOMPANYING DRAWING NO. 1200/1A AND CONSERVATION REPORT

14648/32561

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal provides for the conversion of traditional barns to three dwellings. The barns are of natural stone walls with tile, slate and corrugated sheeting roofs. The application was accompanied by a structural report and wildlife survey. The structural report notes that the barns are typical agricultural barns which have been spasmodically maintained and have been altered and adapted over their lifetime. The basic structural condition of the three main barns is reasonable and there is no evidence of long term structural instability provided the recommended structural repairs, strengthening works and localised areas of rebuilding are carried out. The applicant's agents have investigated the commercial reuse potential of the buildings. They note that they are in an isolated location, accessed by narrow lanes, which do not best serve commercial delivery vehicles, etc. They therefore consider this as an unsuitable location for commercial development and not sustainable. Furthermore, any potential conversion of these buildings into commercial use would have a bad-neighbour impact on the existing farmhouse and other residences nearby, particularly given that the farmhouse is attached to the agricultural buildings in question and that vehicles would have to share current access with the residents. The agents have also explored the possibility of converting the barns into holiday units but, given the overall size of the structures and the layout, they regard their conversion as uneconomic given the floor sizes and cost of conversion. Furthermore, it is understood that the market is saturated with holiday homes in this part of Somerset. The agents' general conclusion is that the buildings are not suitable for commercial development and consider them appropriate for residential conversion.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY 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, public transport services are infrequent. 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). In terms of traffic generation the proposed development may generate a similar level of traffic to that of the agricultural use of the barns, but the nature of the trip patterns connected with 8 residential use are likely to be very different with a higher level of longer distance trips. In detail, I am very concerned with regard to the approach roads, which are poor in

width alignment and forward visibility. In addition to this the junction with the A358 which is County Route, is substandard and is a very busy stretch of highway with traffic travelling speeds of up to 50 mph. Therefore, I would recommend that this application be refused on highway grounds for the following reasons:- (1) The proposed development would be located where it was remote from adequate services, public transport, etc, and would therefore increase' the need for journeys to be made by private vehicles, which would be 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 roads providing access to the site, by reason of their function in the highway network and their inadequate width, alignment and forward visibility, are considered unsuitable to accommodate the increase in traffic likely to be generated and as a means of access to the proposed development. Should the Local Planning Authority feel that the re-use of the barns outweighs the transport policies and road safety issues I have raised above and be minded to grant consent; I would welcome the opportunity to be consulted further so that I am able to recommend any conditions that I feel are necessary to impose. SOMERSET ENVIRONMENTAL RECORDS CENTRE no statutory and non-statutory sites and species at the application site. One or more statutory legally protected species found within 1 km. Three County Wildlife Sites and one County Geological Sites within 1 km of the site. Badger data within 1 km of the site. SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST there is record of a bat in the immediate vicinity of the application site. Agree with the recommendations made in the survey report, however if possible would recommend that a summer survey to determine the level of bat activity taking place within barn A be conducted prior to the granting of any planning permission. If minded to grant permission at this stage, would strongly recommend that all the recommendations made within the survey report be secured through the use of appropriate conditions or obligations.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the trees along the western boundary of the stream provide considerable amenity and should be retained. NATURE CONSERVATION OFFICER advise that further survey work for bats is done before September and ideally before any decision is made on the application. The site is important for swallows and would like to see evidence of a scheme for future provision of swallows and bats if permission is granted. To avoid harm to nesting birds advise that a condition to avoid nesting birds is made if application approved. DRAINAGE OFFICER soakaways should be constructed in accordance with Building Research Digest 365 (September 1991). Percolation tests should be carried out to ascertain the required lengths of sub surface irrigation drainage. The Environment Agency's consent to discharge to an underground strata is also required. TOURISM OFFICER happy that the buildings are not put forward for holiday use.

PARISH COUNCIL the development proposes a total of 13 bedrooms, indicating at least 15 persons. This leads to concerns over (i) increased traffic - the site is on a very narrow lane and the junction with the A358 is a poor one and (ii) waste disposal - there is no indication of where a septic tank would be sited and the farm is not far above the level of a nearby stream, with a potential pollution risk. The west elevation has a large area of window glass, which may have a visual impact.

POLICY CONTEXT

County Structure Plan policy STR1 on sustainable development is relevant. Part of this policy requires the development of a pattern of land use and transport which minimises the length of journeys and the need to travel and maximises the potential for the use of public transport, cycling and walking. The County Highway Authority considers that the proposal would clearly foster a growth in the need to travel and is therefore unsustainable in terms of transport policy. They also consider that the road network leading to the site is inadequate. However, I consider that the economic benefits of the development in terms of diversification in the rural economy and the retention of the building outweigh the concerns of the Highway Authority.

Policy S1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan includes general requirements for new developments. One of these requirements is that the accessibility of the development by public transport, cycling and pedestrian networks would be consistent with its likely trip generation and minimising the need to use the car. Policy H7 of the same plan states that outside the defined limits of settlements, the conversion of buildings to residential use will not be permitted unless certain criteria are met. It is considered that the relevant criteria are met with the proposal.

ASSESSMENT

A separate listed building application is being considered delegated powers. The applicant's agents confirm that a further bat survey is to be carried out shortly. The buildings are structurally sound and meet the criteria of the barn conversions policy. Whilst it is accepted that the accesses onto the A358 are not ideal and the County Highway Authority recommends refusal, the current authorised use of the buildings generates traffic which would also exit onto the A358. I consider that the conversion of the buildings, which are listed by virtue of curtilage, will secure their long term future. A condition is recommended requiring the carrying out of percolation tests.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the receipt of amended plans and the consultation response from the Environment Agency and the Tourism Officer, the Development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, percolation tests, materials, rainwater goods, landscaping (hard and soft), retention/protection of trees, no services beneath trees, no felling, boundary treatment, parking, garages to remain available for use by vehicles, meter boxes, underground services, schedule of works, timber doors/windows, removal of GPDO rights for extensions, ancillary buildings, doors/windows and walls/fences, removal of agricultural buildings and adherence to mitigation measures set out in wildlife report. Notes re conversions letter, future extensions unlikely, disabled access, energy/water conservation, meter boxes, CDM regulations, listed building consent, soakaways, consent to discharge from Environment Agency and Hawk and Owl Trust.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The Local Planning Authority consider that the proposal complies with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S1 and the criteria contained in Policy H7.

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

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NOTES: