

44/2006/006

MR W E ROWE

CHANGE OF USE AND CONVERSION OF BARN TO SINGLE DWELLING, BARN OFF LITTLE SILVER LANE, MIDDLE GREEN, WELLINGTON

314017/1188567

FULL

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought for the conversion of a redundant agricultural barn which forms an L shaped arrangement to provide a four bedroom residential dwelling. The existing external walls of the building are constructed of a mixture of red brick and stone walls with some cob. The roof is covered with roman tiles and galvanised sheeting. It is proposed to re-roof the dwelling with tiles to match the existing.

The barn is open fronted and the proposal seeks to provide a high degree of fenestration and new timber supports on the south elevation (facing onto the courtyard). On the outer external walls it is proposed to enlarge an existing high level window within the gable (south elevation). There are two new windows comprising three panes on west elevation, adjacent to the public right of way, and an additional window in the north elevation.

The proposed curtilage has been drawn relatively tightly around the building with a new stock proof fence and native hedge proposed to provide the boundary treatment along the east boundary of the site. The barn is located approximately 160 m along an existing muddy track to the south of the access with Little Silver Lane. The proposed access to the barn would be to the rear (south) and result in the loss of a small section of hedgerow. The existing overgrown court yard area would be cleared to provide an amenity garden area, access/turning and parking for the dwelling.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY Middle Green does not accommodate adequate services and facilities, such as, education, employment, health, retail and leisure, and the public transport services within the area 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 provision of policy STR1 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review (Adopted: April 2000). 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. Access to the barn is via an existing track off of an unclassified road. Visibility at the point of access is very restricted to the west of the access and whilst traffic for the proposed development may generate a similar level of traffic to that of the agricultural use of the barn, 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. Taking this point into consideration and in the interests of highway safety, I would recommend re-positioning the access to a position that would afford improved visibility for the benefit of all road users. ENGLISH NATURE advise that this was not an ideal time of the year to carry out a bat survey as bats are less active during October to April. However, evidence of bats was found in barn 1. English Nature would recommend that a summer emergence bat survey is carried out to determine if it is a breeding roost.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the Oak tree in the south west corner of the site has high amenity value and helps to integrate the barn within the local landscape. The proposed access drive and parking area would detrimentally impact upon the health of the tree and would not meet the requirements of BS5837. However, subject to no construction or surfacing works within the tree canopy it should be possible to find an alternative layout for the drive and parking area. The predominantly Elm hedgerow should be coppiced – it already appears to be dying from ‘Dutch Elm Disease’ – and replanted with a mix of Hazel and Hawthorn with an Oak and Field Maple planted along its length. All the new boundary hedgerows should have a low bank and native species hedgerow to help integrate it into the local landscape. NATURE CONSERVATION & RESERVES OFFICER it is identified that there is a bat roost in Barn 1 and as such a DEFRA license is required. There is also evidence of nesting swallows within Barn 2 and as such should the development be approved provision must be made for swallows to nest within the converted building. Works must be avoided between the periods 1st April – 30th September in any year.

PARISH COUNCIL no comments to make.

1 LETTER OF OBJECTION has been received raising the following issues:- this lane is one of the main public footpaths to the monument which could prove dangerous if vehicle access is increased; the ditch on the applicant’s side of the lane is an open ditch into which water from land drains, it would be impossible to pipe because of the volume of water which comes from the fields during heavy rain, this would aggravate the flooding which occurs frequently further up the road; the owner of Byways has invested in flood prevention and is concerned by any additional run off from surface water as a result of the road being tarmaced; the proposed access would be in close proximity to the ‘Byways’.

POLICY CONTEXT

RPG10 – South West

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, PPG3 – Housing, PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation,

PPG13 – Transport

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

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 (General Requirements) and S2 (Design), H7 Outside the defined limits of settlements, the conversion of buildings to residential use will not be permitted unless; (A) the building proposed to be converted is of permanent and substantial construction and: (1) is in keeping with its surroundings; (2) has a size and structure suitable for conversion without major rebuilding or significant extension and alteration; (3) is unlikely to attract a suitable business re-use; and (4) is sited near a public road; (B) and the proposal: (1) will not harm the architectural or historic qualities of the building; (2) does not involve the creation of a residential curtilage which would harm the rural character of the area; and (3) will not lead to a dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality. S7 (Outside Settlements), M4 (Residential Parking Requirements), EN4 (Wildlife in Buildings to be Converted or Demolished), EN5 (Protected Species), EN6 (Protection of Trees) and EN12 (Landscape Character Areas).

ASSESSMENT

The pertinent issues in the determination of application are discussed below: -

Sustainability

The agent has indicated that 'the barn is located in a particularly rural area which is accessed via a single track leading from an unclassified lane' and as such 'is unlikely to be suitable for business re-use' or would a prove viable option. No marketing information was therefore submitted with the application.

The site is sufficiently far from public transport and local amenities as to require a car to be used for most trips. In terms of traffic generation the nature of trip patterns connected with a residential use are likely to be very different with a higher level of longer distance trips than the agricultural use. As a consequence, occupiers are likely to be dependant upon private vehicles for most of their daily needs. The proposal would thus run contrary to one of the principal objectives set out in paragraph 4 of Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG13 – Transport, to reduce the need to travel, especially by car. As such the proposed location would be unsustainable.

Visual Impact

The application site is designated as a Landscape Character Area. As such special consideration should be given to preserving the distinct character and appearance of the area. Furthermore national guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' states that the Government's overall aim 'is to protect the countryside for the sake of' inter alia 'its intrinsic character and beauty...and wildlife...so it may be enjoyed by all'. PPS7 continues that all development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness.

The existing access track would need to be resurfaced and it is considered by reason of its distance from a public road the proposal would be contrary to the provision of local plan policy H7. Furthermore, it is considered the resurfacing of the

access track and the proposed access arrangement would detract from the rural character of the area which is open to wide ranging views from the west and east of the site.

It is considered the proposed conversion by reason of its isolated setting and access arrangements would have a detrimental impact upon the wider landscape. In addition the proposed parking area would harm the adjoining Oak tree considered to be of high amenity value.

Design

The existing barns are located in the middle of agricultural fields open to public view along an existing public right of way. The barns are in a rather dilapidated state and a significant amount of rebuilding and alterations would be required. However it is considered on balance that overall the proposed alterations to the barns are considered acceptable.

The proposed curtilage would appear to be commensurate to the size of the proposed residential dwelling. However, the landscape officer expresses a number of concerns to the proposed landscape arrangements. It is imperative that suitable landscaping be agreed such is the isolated and prominent location of the barns in the wider landscape.

Conclusion

To conclude there has been no serious effort made to attract a business use to the premises, likely to support the rural economy. It is clear that the area is predominantly rural, with very limited facilities within easy reach. Therefore, it is considered this is not a sustainable location and the use of the barn as a permanent dwelling would give rise to substantial car usage. Furthermore, the barns are located a considerable distance from a public road.

There are also concerns regarding the lack of information submitted in the wildlife report. The survey was produced outside of the optimum time for bat surveys and the report concludes, page 2, that Barn 1 could be a breeding site. As such further survey work should be carried out in accordance with government circular 06/2005 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.

As such it is recommended the application be refused.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be REFUSED for the reasons of (1) The site lies within open countryside, outside any recognised development boundary limits where it is remote from adequate services, facilities, education and employment opportunities and there is no access to public transport services, any residents of the proposed dwelling are therefore likely to be solely dependant on private vehicles for their daily needs; the proposal will therefore foster a growth in the need to travel and as such the proposal is contrary to the advice contained in PPG13, RPG10, and the provisions of policies STR1 and STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan

Review. (2)The required resurfacing of the access track by reason of its length would appear an incongruous and intrusive form of development detracting from the rural character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, the proposed parking arrangements would have a harmful impact upon the existing Oak tree and as such the proposal would be contrary to Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies H7, EN12 and EN6. (3) The wildlife survey identifies evidence of Bats in Barn 1, a potential breeding site. As such further survey work is required and this must be carried out within the optimum time for bat surveys 1st April – 30th September in accordance with paragraph 99 of government circular 06/2005 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. As such the existing wildlife survey is insufficient to enable a detailed assessment contrary to the provisions of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy EN4 and PPS9 – Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.

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: