

**DC/2017/01405**

## **DEMOLITION OF HOUSE AND CONSTRUCTION OF A REPLACEMENT FAMILY HOME**

**RED HOUSE FARM, TAL Y COED, NP25 5HR**

### **RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE**

Case Officer: Jo Draper

Date Registered: 12/01/2018

#### **1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS**

1.1 The application site is a farmhouse within close proximity of the Grade I listed building, Talycoed Court, although the distance and intervening characteristics prevent this from having any impact upon the setting of this Listed Building. The application site is, however, within the grounds of a Registered Historic Park and Garden and there is a public right of way that crosses in front of the site to the east.

1.2 Ty Coch (Red House) is a vacant farmhouse with assorted sheds and farm structures that have fallen into a state of disrepair. It is surrounded by planted woodland that was once acres of fields and orchards. The existing dwelling sits within 60 acres of park and farmland. The house is accessed from the south by a private road that cuts past the Court and several fields which continue to be used as agricultural land with a grazing agreement. The house is not open to any wider viewpoints from neighbouring properties and is only visible from the public footpath that runs to the front of the existing dwelling.

1.3 This application seeks to demolish the existing farmhouse and replace it with a new dwelling of a contemporary style, drawing on the form of the existing building. The frontage is pitched with proportions reflective of an agricultural barn; there is a central lit axis that connects to a flat roofed modern element to the rear and also connects to the rebuild of an existing stone out-building.

1.4 The proposed scheme has reduced the height of the existing building and sought to use materials that are both contemporary and natural. The materials proposed include charred timber cladding to the front pitch, brick (reclaimed / stock pale/ brown brick with detailing) to the back volume, and brick/stone on feature walls and predominantly internally, reclaimed from the demolition where feasible, with stone chimney stacks.

1.5 The proposed rebuild reduces the height of the existing farmhouse which is compensated by a slightly larger footprint. This increases the house volume in the order of 6% taking into account the adjoining outbuilding which is considered part of the total residential built form (the existing volume is 1395 cubic metres, the proposed volume is 1475 cubic metres representing a 6% increase).

1.7 A landscape strategy has been presented with this proposal that aims to return the residential element of the development to a natural and soft landscape. It is proposed to remove the farmyard hardstanding where necessary and grading and planting is proposed in its place. The immediate curtilage will undergo extensive greening and the soft landscaping will include ornamental shrubs and wildflower planting.

1.8 Access will remain as existing and utilise an existing agricultural outbuilding as the parking area for cars.

1.9 Supporting Information has been submitted with this application.

- A fully considered site analysis has been submitted in support of this application, this addresses the options available of either renovating or redeveloping the site, or the demolition and rebuild of the farmhouse.

- A structural feasibility report has been presented this advises upon the viability of repair and upgrading works; the objective is to achieve a building that is structurally sound and building regulations compliant. This provides a detailed assessment of all the work that is required, amongst which it reports of significant building distortion that raises concerns about the residual bearing of the main beams and joints. In summary the building has lacked basic maintenance for a considerable period of time and is in particularly poor order. It appears that little of the current building is part of the original construction and some major interventions display poor quality workmanship. The windows are relatively modern and many have been installed with poorly formed in situ concrete sub cills. In summary the report states that there are significant structural problems with all elements .... Significant expenditure would be required to simply remediate the current defects without giving any consideration to any upgrading of the fabric. Notwithstanding the tender exercise the structural engineer has concluded that they are of the opinion that repair and refurbishment will not be economically viable compared with reconstruction.

- There have been three estimates provided; this provides costings for the renovation of the existing building and for the demolition / new build. In the case of the renovation, out of the three quotes the cheapest price given for renovating the existing building to a modern standard was £450-500k while for the cost of demolition and new build, the lowest price for new build is £300k.

- The brief is to renovate and restore the site as a whole with a view to improving the impact of the manmade interventions on the surrounding landscape whilst retaining the character of the setting and creating a sustainable, low energy, modern family home with associated outbuildings.

- The supporting information has demonstrated in the design how they have sought to retain links between old and new for example, *“the existing rhythm of the stable façade has been refined and replicated within the proposed brickwork and fenestration”*. Also *“the design plays on the prominence of the setting, offset against the choice of materials that huddle the building into the landscape. The use of movable screens on the façade as flexible solar shading enables a constantly shifting elevation referencing the forest backdrop whilst maintaining the simplicity of the built form. Set against the charred timber, the reclaimed bricks reference the existing agricultural out-buildings and provide a link between old and new, and the solid brick form is a base that acts to offset the lighter timber structure. The combination of Welsh stone, reclaimed bricks, black aluminium framed windows and doors charred timber vertical cladding with sliding screens to serve as solar shading. Where possible both brick and stone will be reclaimed from the demolition for feature walls and chimney stacks, robust materials with weather textures which will serve to settle the development into its setting.*

- Reference is made to some exemplary award winning designs that have inspired aspects of the design that is ‘grounded by a raw material palette.’

- The proposals comprise an opportunity to enhance the surrounding landscape, while protecting the inherent relationships of form across the site and linking the main residence into the landscape context and farmhouse character. By returning to the ideal of reinstating the main residence at its historical and prominent location and enabling the out-buildings to

continue to be available for agricultural activities and stores, the land will continue to prosper under competent stewardship.

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- The farmhouse has been added to and altered over the years.
- The proposed dwelling is highly sustainable in design. "The proposal aims to provide a modern standard of comfortable living while achieving and maintaining a low level of energy consumption and exemplary carbon emissions an aspiration is to exceed Part L of the Building Regulations.
- The sustainability strategies that underpin this proposal works on cyclical operational systems that conserves energy and reduces waste, properties of water harnessed to heat and cool the home through solar energy. The mass of the building will be used to promote cooling, maximising solar gain in winter and minimising it during the summer. (Use of brise soleils integrated into the elevations and recessed glazing will help to prevent over-heating in summer months and solar gain in winter).
- Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system.
- High levels of insulation.
- Passive cooling system with rooflights doubling as vents through the spine of the building with adequate ventilation through the stack.
- Rainwater harvesting system (which will provide a top up for small scale irrigation on the land to help generate locally grown food and promote self-sustainable living.)
- Inclusion of a green roof system promoting flora and fauna and help store levels of rainwater
- There are other environmental credentials proposed to use "warmcell", a cellulose insulation manufactured from recycled newspaper.

This proposal has been subject to an extensive pre-application consultation and is being presented to Planning Committee at the request of the Local Member.

## **2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

None

## **3.0 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES**

### Strategic planning Policies

S10 Rural Enterprise  
S13 Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment  
S16 - Transport  
S17 – Place Making and Design

### Development management Policies

DES1 – General Design Considerations  
EP1 – Amenity and Environmental Protection

H5 & H6 Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside and Extension of Rural Dwellings  
RE2 - Conversion or Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Employment Use  
RE6 - Provision of Recreation, Tourism and Leisure Facilities in the Open Countryside  
NE1 - Nature Conservation and Development  
LC1 - New Built Development in the Open Countryside  
LC5 - Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character  
GI1 – Green Infrastructure

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance

- LDP Policies H5 & H6 Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside and Extension of Rural Dwellings SPG April 2015:  
<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/07/H5-H6-SPG-April-2015.pdf>

## **4.0 REPRESENTATIONS**

### 4.1 Consultations Replies

#### Llantilio Crossenny Community Council:

Members requested that the Clerk forward their concerns regarding this application. It is noted that this is an ultra-modern “Grand Design” that is not in keeping with anything in the area.

Members have concern that this will set a precedent for other unsympathetic dwellings in more visible locations and are uncomfortable with the extreme nature of the design.

Cadw: No response to date, to be reported as Late Correspondence, once received.

#### MCC Planning Policy:

I refer to the above application for the demolition of a farmhouse and erection of a new contemporary family home at Red House Farm, Tal y Coed. The site is located in the open countryside where Policy H5 relating to the replacement of dwellings in the open countryside applies. Policy H5 contains a number of detailed criteria that must be considered.

Policy H5 states at criterion a) i) that the replacement of existing dwellings in the countryside will be permitted provided that the original dwelling is not a traditional farmhouse, cottage or other building that is important to the visual and intrinsic character of the landscape. The dwelling proposed for demolition is a traditional farmhouse but has fallen into a considerable state of disrepair, a structural report has been submitted with the application. The cost of rehabilitating the dwelling and its importance within the landscape will need to be a consideration.

In addition criteria b) and d) state that the design of the new dwelling is of a form, bulk, size and scale that respects its setting and that it shall be of similar size to that replaced. The Replacement Dwellings and Extensions to Rural Dwellings in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) should also be referred to as a key consideration. Section 4 of the SPG is of particular importance. Paragraph 4.2 of the SPG (September 2014) states that ‘...any increase in the volume of the replacement dwelling over the existing will normally be no more than 30% unless it can be clearly demonstrated either that there will be no harmful intrusive impact in the landscape through the increased size of the dwelling or that there is an enhancement in the appearance of the existing dwelling, subject, in any event to the increase in volume being no more than 50%’. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application whilst not giving any size measurements states that

the proposed new dwelling will be on the footprint of the original house and will result in an under 30% increase in the original volume of the building whilst the proposed roofline will be at a lower level. The proposed measurements of the existing and replacement dwelling will need to be established to ensure that there is compliance with Policy H5 and Section 4 of the SPG.

With regard to the design of the dwelling, paragraph 6.4 of the SPG states 'Within the broad size principles set out above, proposals for replacement dwellings will be expected to be of a good standard of design. Proposals should take account of local and traditional elements of design and materials and, where relevant, be in keeping with surrounding buildings of merit. This does not rule out a modern or innovative approach to the design of replacement dwellings provided that the proposal respects its setting and does not introduce a discordant or intrusive feature in the landscape.' Whether or not the current proposal meets these requirements will be a matter for detailed consideration.

Policy LC5 relating to Landscape Character must also be referred to along with Policies EP1 and DES1 relating to general development considerations.

### Natural Resources Wales:

#### Summary of Conditions:

- 1: European Protected Species – to ensure delivery of proposed mitigation measures
- 2: European Protected Species– to ensure licensing matters have been properly dealt with prior to commencement of development

We have reviewed the following documents submitted in support of the application:

- '*Bat Survey - Red House Farm, Taly Coed, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire*' by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd., dated November 2017
- '*Mitigation Strategy – Red House Farm*' by Richard Watkins, dated 07/12/17

We note that the building proposed for development was assessed as being used by day-roosting common and soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared and Natterer's bats, and that lesser horseshoe bats were active on site.

On the basis of the information provided, we are of the view that the proposed development is likely to give rise to the need for a European Protected Species licence application.

However, we do not consider that the development is likely to be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in its natural range, provided that suitable mitigation measures are implemented.

Therefore, we recommend that planning permission should only be granted if the following can be secured through planning conditions (or legal agreement, if necessary) to any permission your Authority is minded to grant:

The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the recommendations in the documents titled '*Bat Survey - Red House Farm, Ta y Coed, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire*' by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd., dated November 2017 and '*Mitigation Strategy – Red House Farm*' by Richard Watkins, dated 07/12/17; and

Inclusion of a planning condition on any planning permission that prevents the commencement of any development works which could affect structures that contain bat roosts until your authority has been provided with a licence that has been issued to the applicant by Natural Resources Wales pursuant to Regulation 55 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 authorising the specified activity/ development to go ahead.

### MCC Ecology:

#### Ecological Considerations (Bats)

The application for the proposal is informed by bat surveys, mitigation strategy and an ecological assessment detailed in the following documents:

*Bat Survey, Red House Farm. Produced by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd., dated November 2017*

*Mitigation Strategy, Red House Farm. Produced by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd. Dated 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017.*

*Ecological Appraisal, Red House Farm. Produced by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd. Dated December 2017.*

I am satisfied that if the report recommendations are implemented, then there should be no negative impacts on biodiversity as a result of the proposed development. Planning conditions are recommended.

#### MCC Landscape/Heritage Team

The site lies within the highly valued landscape of the Trothy Valley (and forms part of the essential setting for Taly Coed Court (GT52). The landscape retains fieldscape patterns and most boundaries are intact. Settlement is sparse in this area, limited to a few scattered (traditional) farmsteads and country estates; most in good condition. The topography, field boundaries and traditional buildings provide (attractive) sequential and glimpsed views, and vistas of the wider Trothy Valley. This landscape has seen relatively little loss to its pre-20th century agricultural character.

The concept of sensitive development (to cloak the new dwelling into the landscape) is to essentially remove a distinctive landmark found in Monmouthshire's rural environment. We're effectively removing a traditional (farmhouse) building and replacing it with something that does not read in this context; we should be able to read the building as it was. Perversely, this approach to the development meets the policy requirements set out in LC1 & LC5: Protecting Landscape Character ((not) causing significant visual intrusion/ (no) significant change). Its impact, whether perceived as beneficial or adverse, is not significant enough to recommend refusal.

The style is a little confused and the detailing (in part) incongruous, we need to retain an element of control through conditions (for details and materials).

#### 4.2 Neighbour Notification

Three letters of support have been received stating the following:

- Applicant is genuinely interested in doing his best for the property; and if it has been found that the state of the existing building has deteriorated beyond economic recovery, the course proposed is probably the most realistic answer.
- In favour of the proposed rebuilding.
- As one of the nearest neighbours, I believe that the secluded location of the property will mean that the modern aesthetics of the proposal will have no impact on the vernacular of the nearest dwellings and crucially be far more sympathetic to its woodland and rolling hill environment. The new building will improve the view! I am also a firm believer that a new build building should be architecturally honest rather than a faux reconstruction of a not fit for purpose previous footprint.
- As someone who walks past the property daily, there is no doubt that it's currently in a level of disrepair and some of the original architectural merit has already gone from previous occupier's alterations and repairs. The proposed plans are sensitive, been carefully and intuitively considered, of architectural merit, will bring a family home to the village and improve the landscape for neighbouring residents.
- Nice to see some sensitive architecture coming to such a beautiful area.
- The plans show a proposed construction that appears both proportional, refreshing and is sympathetic to the location that it is intended to occupy. The current farmhouse is in a very poor state and a more conservative design mimicking the current building would serve no purpose.

#### 4.3 Local Member Representations

Requests that the application be presented to Planning Committee

#### 5.0 **EVALUATION**

The issues that arise in the consideration of this application are as follows:

1. Principle of a Replacement Dwelling
2. Visual and Landscape Impact
3. Biodiversity

#### 5.1 Principle of replacement dwelling

5.1.1 A fully considered site analysis has been submitted in support of this application. This addresses the options available in either renovating or redeveloping the site. The option of leaving the building as is, and renovating and extending the existing farmhouse has been fully assessed. The supporting information provided with the engineer's report and the subsequent three quotes for undertaking the two options of development (namely renovation, or rebuild and new development), demonstrate clearly that the option of renovation was unviable due to the level and cost of work required to upgrade this dwelling to modern standards.

5.1.2 The only key receptor of this site is from the public right of way that runs across the open land to the front of the dwelling. There is no doubt that the dwelling has a presence in the landscape as it is elevated and has a physical connection with the other agricultural buildings that form part of the farmhouse setting. However closer inspection reveals that this dwelling has been altered significantly over the years, as the structural report identifies there is very little that remains which is original and what is there is of a poor quality and has fallen into a state of disrepair. Notwithstanding the financial viability of renovation, the applicants have looked at this option and concluded that a renovation can devalue the prominence of the existing form with a potentially adverse impact on the farmhouse setting with the introduction of extensions and only a low level of sustainable energy saving would be possible. Given the limited value of the existing dwelling which lacks architectural merit the principle of a replacement dwelling is acceptable in this context. The visual and landscape impact of the proposed development as a minimum should meet the standard of what is there now but ideally should be an improvement in terms of detailing and overall visual impact. If this requirement is met a replacement dwelling is acceptable in this situation. The merits of the design and its impact on the surrounding landscape are addressed below.

#### 5.2 Visual and Landscape Impact

5.2.1 The replacement dwelling has been sited immediately on the footprint of the existing dwelling. It has a frontage with a pitched roof that faces east, and there is a traditional form retained on the frontage which replicates that of an agricultural building rather than that of a traditional dwelling (unlike the existing building, the proposed dwelling does not have a symmetrical frontage including its first floor windows). The proposed replacement does like the existing dwelling having a hierarchy in its built form, with the main part of the dwelling being prevalent while having a step down on either side to ancillary elements of the building. The proposed dwelling is lower in built form than that existing and the materials used on this development darken the overall appearance of the building as the existing white render is replaced with a charred timber. This, coupled with the extensive landscaping scheme that softens the contours, does serve to assimilate this more naturalistic building into the surrounding landscape as it blends into the woodland backdrop. Furthermore, closer inspection of the dwelling reveals high quality design features with the clever use of solar

screening, hit and miss brickwork and a high quality, simple fenestration. The re-contouring of the bank enables the dwelling to sit back softly into the sloping ground. This subtle modern frontage screens a build to the rear that uses harder, traditional materials of brick and reclaimed stone from the existing development but is also the more modern residential element. There are no wider viewpoints of this but within the site this will be visible, although it would not be obtrusive because of the combination of high quality design and natural materials with some occasional nods to its past seen in the form of the out-building and use of reclaimed materials from the existing dwelling. The overall composition presents a dwelling that sits comfortable against this woodland backdrop.

5.2.2 Finally this proposal represents a significantly improved building in terms of environmental credentials; some of these would be internal concerning the natural heat regulation and rainwater harvesting, but there are environmental credentials that are intrinsic to the external design, including the solar shading use of brise soleils, high quality fenestration and green roof and the landscape strategy of wildflower planting has created a development that has responded positively to its environment and would be appropriate to its context and landscape.

5.2.3 This proposed replacement dwelling would have a presence in the landscape, although it would be lower in height than that existing, with a darker palette which makes it less prominent. The proposed dwelling still has a presence that brings together features and materials associated with traditional rural and agricultural buildings. This is considered to be an exemplar design, and a closer look reveals design features that are both interesting and sensitive to its environs. This is an exciting, high quality, sustainably-designed proposal that retains the relationship and presence of the main dwelling while respecting the existing physical and contextual connection with the existing agricultural buildings on site. This development is an improvement in terms of landscape impact, overall design, and environmental credentials than the existing development and complies with relevant planning policy in this case.

### 5.3 Biodiversity

#### 5.3.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)

##### European Protected Species – Three Tests

In consideration of this application, European Protected Species (bats) will be affected by the development and it has been established that a derogation licence from Natural Resources Wales will be required to implement the consent. Monmouthshire County Council as Local Planning Authority is required to have regard to the Conservation of Species & Habitat Regulations 2010 (as amended) and to the fact that derogations are only allowed where the three tests set out in Article 16 of the Habitats Directive are met. The three tests have been considered in consultation with NRW / Council Biodiversity and Ecology Officers as follows:

(i) The derogation is in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.

*The dwelling is no longer viable to retain and to leave it to become ruinous will eventually lead to its demolition and the loss of a residential unit which is not in the public interest.*

(ii) There is no satisfactory alternative

*The evidence has been provided that demonstrates that it not viable to renovate and restore the existing dwelling. The new dwelling is significantly financially more viable and retains a dwelling in this location. The option of retaining the existing building as an empty ruin and redeveloping elsewhere is potentially more intrusive on the landscape and raises concern over an abuse of the planning system. The option of 'do nothing' will*



*result in the development becoming ruinous and eventually being removed totally. There is no satisfactory alternative.*

(iii) The derogation is not detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. *The mitigation that has been submitted and the conditions that are recommended relating to a method statement and lighting ensure that this test has been met.*

*In the light of the circumstances outlined above which demonstrate that the three tests would be met, and having regard for the advice of Natural Resources Wales and the Council's own Biodiversity Officers, it is recommended that planning conditions are used to secure the following:*

1. *Compliance with the submitted mitigation*
2. *Condition for a detailed method statement*
3. *Lighting condition*

#### 5.4 Response to the Representations of the Community Council

This is addressed above

#### 5.5 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales has been considered, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WBFG Act). In reaching this recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been taken into account and it is considered that this recommendation is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives set out in section 8 of the WBFG Act.

### **6.0 RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE**

#### Conditions/Reasons

1. Five years in which to commence development.
2. Development to be undertaken in accordance with plans
3. Permitted Development rights removed for solar panels
4. Works shall be carried out in accordance with the mitigation described in the submitted reports "*Bat Survey, Red House Farm. Produced by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd. dated November 2017*"; "*Mitigation Strategy, Red House Farm. Produced by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd. Dated 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017*"; and "*Ecological Appraisal, Red House Farm. Produced by Dusk to Dawn Ecology Ltd. Dated December 2017.*" And as shown on the plans "*Ecology & Lighting Strategy Plan, Red House Farm. Produced by Westworks. Drawing Number W0282, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018*" and "*Landscape Plan, Red House Farm. Produced by Westworks. Drawing Number 0101, dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Revision 1*"
5. The hereby permitted works shall not in any circumstances commence until the local planning authority has been provided with a copy of the Final Method Statement detailing bat mitigation. The Method Statement shall be implemented in full and any subsequent amendments provided to the Local Planning Authority for record and enforcement purposes.
6. Notwithstanding the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) external lighting fixtures will only installed in accordance with the

submitted plan "*Ecology & Lighting Strategy Plan, Red House Farm. Produced by Westworks. Drawing Number W0282, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018*".