

DC/2017/00444

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF REDUNDANT AGRICULTURAL BARNs TO 2 NO. DWELLINGS

NEW HOUSE FARM, LITTLE MILL, USK

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Case Officer: Kate Bingham

Date Registered: 12/05/2015

1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS

- 1.1 This application was presented to Planning Committee on 4th July 2017 with a recommendation for approval subject to a Section 106 Agreement requiring a financial contribution towards affordable housing in the local area as required under LDP Policy S4. Since this time a viability assessment has been produced to demonstrate that the development will not make a profit and therefore the contribution will not be sought.
- 1.2 The Council's Housing Officer has checked the figures and concludes that the development would be making a loss with a residual value of -£39,000.
- 1.3 Although making a financial loss, the applicant's agent has advised that the development will allow investment in the barns and access track removing the maintenance liability for the applicant. It is currently difficult to release the equity of the barns given their present condition and imposing the requirement for the affordable housing contribution (AHC) on the development would seriously jeopardise the project moving forward as the added liability of an AHC would make it impractical for the applicant to secure finance for the development. In this case therefore it is considered that the requirement of the AHC should be waived.
- 1.4 The application is presented to Committee because the applicant is an officer in the MCC Development Management Team. The previous report and recommendation are below.

PREVIOUS REPORT 4th July 2017

1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS

- 1.1 This application seeks the conversion of two redundant barns to dwellings. The redundant buildings form part of an established group of farm buildings which include the two traditional barns that are subject to this application together with a farm house and more modern agricultural sheds.
- 1.2 The application is presented to Planning Committee only on the basis that the applicant works within the Council's Planning Department.

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

DC/2016/01340 – Barn conversion to dwelling (land adjacent). Approved 2016.

3.0 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Strategic Policies

S1 – Spatial Distribution of New Housing Provision
S4 – Affordable Housing
S13 – Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment
S16 – Transport
S17 – Place Making and Design

Development Management Policies

H4 – Conversion of Redundant Buildings in the Open Countryside
DES1 – General Design Considerations
EP1 – Amenity and Environmental Protection
NE1 – Nature Conservation and Development
MV1 – Development and Highway Considerations
LC5 – Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character

4.0 REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Consultations Replies

4.1.1 Llanbadoc Community Council – Recommends approval.

4.1.2 Natural Resources Wales – Advise that at least one additional bat survey should be undertaken in June or early July to provide information on the possible use of the building as a maternity roost. The bat survey report should then be updated accordingly and include appropriate mitigation proposals as required.

NRW on foul drainage - Further to yesterday's response letter we offer the following advice in relation to the proposed foul drainage:

Foul Drainage Advice

We note that the proposed method of foul drainage is a new package treatment plant (PTP). Therefore, the applicant will need to apply for either a registration or a permit from NRW.

Further information is available on our website <https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-plant/?lang=en>

The proposed soakaway should be at least 10m from any watercourse and 50m from any well, spring or borehole.

4.1.3 MCC Ecology Officer – It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision (TAN5 paragraph 6.2.2).

To confirm, we will require:

- Further Bat activity survey of the granary and adjacent steel barn during the period June/July.
- Dependent on the findings of the survey any avoidance/mitigation/compensation measures will need to be outlined to inform a planning decision
- Amended survey report to take into consideration the outstanding queries from NRW and the Biodiversity and MCC's Ecology Officer.

4.1.4 MCC Highways – No objection;

4.1.5 MCC Housing Officer – Affordable Housing financial contribution of £40,910 required.

4.2 Neighbour Notification

One representation received. Questioned the location of the proposed package sewage treatment plants in relation to bore hole and disputes a boundary.

4.3 Other Representations

SEWBREC Search Results – Various species of bat recorded foraging/commuting within the vicinity of the site.

5.0 EVALUATION

5.1 Principle of Development

5.1.1 The barns that are to be converted are traditional stone and brick built structures that are no longer suitable for agricultural use as farming practices change. The structures have been inspected and are considered to be in fair condition with no obvious signs of significant failure. Timber floor joists and much of the roof were also found to be in good condition except for some fire damage. It is therefore considered that the building will be capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction in accordance with the criterion in Policy H4 of the adopted LDP.

5.1.2 No extensions or outbuildings are proposed as part of the application as all of the accommodation, including storage, can be accommodated within existing structures on the site.

5.1.3 The buildings are not considered suitable for business use due to their proximity to an existing dwelling and the access which is a relatively long private single lane track between the main road and the site itself.

5.1.4 The proposal is therefore considered to meet the criteria of LDP Policy H4 and is acceptable in principle.

5.2. Visual Impact

5.2.1 The two barns are typical traditional brick and stone walled agricultural farm buildings. The proposed fenestration design is simple to reflect the age of the structures and agricultural vernacular. No extensions to the existing footprints are required or proposed although the walls of a former piggery on the smaller barn will be raised to create a useable single storey lean-to. Only limited new openings will be required.

5.2.2 Materials will be traditional, with timber joinery and slate roofs on the main elevations. Where the roof pitches are shallower they will be covered using colour coated steel sheeting. These types of materials are typical on rural buildings and are therefore acceptable in this case.

5.2.3 The existing barns are sited around a yard with a hard surface. This will serve as the parking and turning areas for the conversions and the existing dwelling. Private amenity space will be provided to the south of the buildings and enclosed by stock proof fencing and new hedgerows. This additional planting will help to soften the appearance of the area and is welcomed.

5.2.4 Domestic storage for each of the barns has been allocated within the existing steel barn that is on the site. This will also continue to be used by the existing dwelling and therefore it is not anticipated that any other ancillary structures will be required in the foreseeable future.

5.2.5 It is considered that the proposed conversions of the buildings into dwellings will be in keeping with the rural character of the area and will not therefore harm the visual amenity of the wider landscape in accordance with LDP Policies DES1 and LC5.

5.3 Biodiversity Considerations

5.3.1 Bat emergence surveys were carried out in August and September 2015 which identified bats emerging from the roof of the granary building. No bats were observed emerging from the single storey shed but swallows were observed roosting in it at night. Bats were also identified and observed using the large steel framed shed opposite the granary (North) as a roost. This may be a feeding perch or night roost as they arrived towards the end of dusk surveys and were not detected or observed during the dawn survey. However, as the bat activity surveys were undertaken in late August and late September which is late in the season and many maternity colonies of bats have already dispersed, further survey work is being undertaken in June to fully inform the proposed mitigation strategy.

5.3.2 Swallows and sparrows were also observed using both buildings and should be taken into consideration. Timing of works will be essential if bird's' nests are to be protected and mitigation will be required to ensure nesting areas are not lost as a result of the proposed development.

5.3.3 The granary is a confirmed bat roost and as such any development would require a Natural Resources Wales (NRW) mitigation licence.

5.4 Residential Amenity

5.4.1 By virtue of the traditional arrangement of the group of buildings around a central yard area, there will inevitably be some overlooking between them. However, window openings and internal arrangements have been designed where possible to avoid overlooking, window to window, or at close proximity over garden areas. The resulting development will not therefore lead to a significant loss of residential amenity for the existing occupier of the farmhouse or future occupiers of the converted barns and the development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of LDP Policy EP1.

5.4.2 In relation to the concern about the proximity of the proposed private treatment plant to the neighbour's borehole, the outfall from the nearest tank would be located at least 60 metres away from the adjoining owner's indicated borehole extraction point. We understand the NRW Groundwater Source Protection Zone to be a 50 metre radius. The proposed tank and treated effluent outfall drainage location is therefore located well outside the protection zone of the existing borehole. In any case, this matter would be taken into account when NRW assess the application for the foul drainage permit, outside the planning process.

5.5 Access and Parking

5.5.1 The site is well off the public highway and is accessed by an existing track which currently serves the farmhouse and the recent barn conversion on adjacent land. There is no objection on highway safety grounds for this access to serve two additional dwellings.

5.5.2 The application site can provide sufficient parking and turning without detriment to the other occupied buildings on the site.

5.6 Affordable Housing

5.6.1 It is a basic principle of Local Development Plan Policy S4 that all residential developments (including at the scale of a single dwelling) should make a contribution to the provision of affordable housing in the local planning area. As this site falls below the threshold at which affordable housing is required on site, the calculation of the financial contribution that will be required is £40,910 (£16,420 for barn 1 and £24,485 for the larger barn 2). This will be secured via a Section 106 Agreement and is payable on completion or occupation of the buildings (whichever is the sooner).

5.7 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

5.7.1 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 subject to the s106 agreement to secure an affordable housing financial contribution and subject to the further bat survey being carried in June/ July out as recommended by NRW and the MCC Ecologist and provided that survey report is considered acceptable to NRW and subject to wildlife mitigation conditions being added where necessary.

Conditions:

1	This development shall be begun within 5 years from the date of this permission.
2	The development shall be carried out in accordance with the list of approved plans set out in the table below.
3	No part of any wall of the existing building other than shown on the approved plans is to be demolished.
4	Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3, Schedule 2, Part 1 Classes A B C D E F & H of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment)(Wales) Order 2013 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no enlargements, improvements or other alterations to the dwelling houses or any outbuildings shall be erected or constructed.
5	Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3, Schedule 2, Part 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2013 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no fence, wall or other means of enclosure other than any approved under this permission shall be erected or placed without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.
6	All rainwater goods shall be of cast metal and matt painted and remain as such in perpetuity.

7	All windows and door frames shall be of softwood painted and remain as such in perpetuity.
8	Wildlife mitigation condition(s) to be added following additional survey work.

Informatives:

Need for a Bat licence informative.