

Application Number: DM/2018/01720

Proposal: Alterations and conversion of existing agricultural buildings to form two bedroom dwelling unit with ancillary works.

Address: Worthybrook Farm, Old Hendre Road, Wonastow, Monmouth

Applicant: Mr A Bevan

Plans: Block Plan 2340:BP01 - , All Proposed Plans 2340-P01 - REV B, Elevations - Existing T196.01 - , Ecology Report Clarke Webb Ecology - Preliminary Appraisal, Location Plan 2340-LP01 - ,

RECOMMENDATION:REFUSE

Case Officer: Ms Jo Draper
Date Valid: 07.11.2018

1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS

1.1 This proposal seeks the conversion of disused farm buildings to residential use. The application site is a complex of outbuildings situated in an isolated but prominent position along the highway connecting Wonastow to Dingestow. One building is constructed in stone with a concrete tile roof with a modern blockwork lean-to at the side, whilst the other buildings are made up of modern blockwork and timber boarding construction.

1.2 There is a long planning history in relation to this site with a previous proposal for the conversion of the existing buildings that was refused and then dismissed at appeal. The most recent decision on this site related to the refusal of application DC/2007/01007. That proposal was for 'Alterations, extensions and conversion of existing buildings to form dwelling with ancillary works (amended scheme resubmission)'. The reasons for refusal were as follows:

1. The level of rebuild necessitated by the poor structural condition of these buildings represents substantial reconstruction, and a large part of the scheme proposes the conversion of modern, breeze-block structures. Therefore, the proposed conversion is contrary to criteria c) and e) of Policy H7 of the Monmouthshire Unitary Development Plan.
2. The level of rebuild required to convert the building to a dwelling, combined with the inevitable domestic paraphernalia associated with the residential use would have a detrimental impact upon the surrounding area, which has been designated as a Special Landscape Area. This is contrary to Policy C3 of the Monmouthshire Unitary Development Plan.

1.3 Like the previous proposal, this application is for the conversion of two of the buildings into a single, linked dwelling. In this case, the link is narrower and glazed, the modern lean-to at the side would be a kitchen, with the host building (which is the stone building) to be

underpinned and the floor level dropped to provide a bedroom/living room in the roof space. The building linked to the rear via the glazed extension is constructed in blockwork and has a larger floor area than the host building, it is proposed that this is to accommodate a home office, a double garage and a workshop.

1.4 It is proposed that the finishing materials on the lean-to and the building to the rear would be waney-edge boarding with a natural slate roof proposed throughout and timber fenestration. Existing access arrangements are to be used. A new residential curtilage is proposed to the rear and side defined by stock proof fencing.

1.5 The agent has stated the following in the supporting information:
The application has been submitted having due regard to the reasons for refusal.
The scale of development has been significantly reduced.
Proposals to remove the redundant steel framed structures in lieu of including them as part of the proposed development . The buildings retained for conversion are deemed structurally suitable for conversion without the need for significant reconstruction works, reference made to the structural engineer's appraisal.
Consideration given to design elements and choice of materials to ensure rural character is maintained and building appearance enhanced.
Such buildings will otherwise become dilapidated structures and create a local eye sore.
Central glazed link forms a contemporary link between traditional barn and out-building conversion works
Proposal to reduce ground floor level of the existing stone host building (approximately 500mm) will then facilitate two-storey development to this unit and provide an opportunity to carry out underpinning works in accordance with the structural engineer's recommendations.
The stone barn structure is believed to have dated from late 1800's and subsequent ancillary outbuildings built pre 1950. The ancillary buildings could not be considered modern i.e. post 1971 which is considered as the cut-off point in accordance with planning policy.
The conversion of the host stone barn and adjacent out-building provides a viable opportunity for much needed repairs to these redundant farm buildings.
The application has many similarities to other developments in the area, which have received approval from MCC. Some development having been allowed with significant extensions, reconstruction works and conversion of buildings with more utilitarian modern construction.

1.6 A structural engineer's report has been submitted with this proposal, the conclusion of which is that both barns are in 'serviceable structural condition with no evidence to indicate any progressive lateral vertical or foundation related movement in the main load bearing fabric of the buildings'. Notwithstanding this, the barns exhibit evidence of dilapidation due to an absence of maintenance over the years and also from their original use.

1.7 This application is being presented to Planning Committee at the request of the local member.

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (if any)

Reference Number	Description	Decision	Decision Date
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DC/2009/00748	Removal of planning conditions 1-3 of planning permission M/1181 for change of use of barn to holiday accommodation so as to enable use of the converted building as a single dwelling.	Approved	16.09.2009
DC/2007/00173	Alterations, extensions and conversion of existing buildings to form dwelling with ancillary works (amended scheme).	Refused	11.07.2007
DC/2007/01070	Alterations, extensions and conversion of existing buildings to form dwelling with ancillary works (amended scheme) (resubmission).	Refused	05.11.2007

3.0 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Strategic Policies

S13 LDP Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment
S17 LDP Place Making and Design

Development Management Policies

DES1 LDP General Design Considerations
EP1 LDP Amenity and Environmental Protection
H4 LDP Conversion/Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Residential Use
NE1 LDP Nature Conservation and Development
LC4 LDP Wye Valley AONB
GI1 LDP Green Infrastructure

4.0 REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Consultation Replies

Mitchel Troy Community Council: No comment to date

Welsh Water: No comment

MCC Ecology: Despite some deviation from the Bat Survey Guidelines (expiration of survey), I consider that the survey will be sufficient to inform the planning decision. We visited the buildings on 12th November 2018 and agree with the conclusions and recommendations of the survey. The barn adjacent to the gateway is not included in the current application. This was the location of a previously identified lesser horseshoe roost although we were not able to reconfirm this as survey of the floor substrate and piles of timber made searching for droppings very difficult.

Evidence of a previous nesting site for birds was also identified and therefore, a pre-check for nesting birds is also recommended. Conditions are recommended

4.2 Neighbour Notification

No comments received to date

5.0 EVALUATION

5.1 Principle of the proposed development

5.1.1 The relevant planning policy to consider in this case is Policy H4 of the LDP; this relates to the conversion / rehabilitation of a building in the open countryside for residential use, and the relevant criteria in this case are the following:

e) Buildings of modern and /or utilitarian construction and materials such as concrete block work, portal framed buildings clad in metal sheeting or buildings of substandard quality and / or incongruous appearance will not be considered favourably for residential conversion. Other buildings will be expected to have been used for their intended purpose for a significant period of time and particularly close scrutiny will be given to proposals relating to those less than 10 years old, especially where there has been no change in activity on the unit;

f) The building is capable of providing adequate living space (and ancillary space such as garaging) within the structure. Only very modest extensions will be allowed and normal permitted development rights to extend further or to construct ancillary buildings will be withdrawn;

5.1.2 This policy is further supported by the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance, 'Rural Conversions to a Residential or Tourism Use', November 2017. This states in relation to determining the suitability of a conversion (i.e. criterion e) is of relevance), "Modern and utilitarian buildings are designed to be functional and are not generally considered to be aesthetically pleasing. These buildings are often of an industrial character and due to their design and modern construction methods are unlikely to be suitable for residential conversion. Modern construction methods include, but are not limited to: steel frame construction, buildings clad in metal sheeting, corrugated sheets, concrete blockwork and plastic."

5.1.3 In relation to the provision of adequate living space (criterion f) the adopted SPG sets out that buildings proposed for rural conversion should be capable of providing adequate living space within the existing structure (including ancillary space such as garaging, which is discussed in paragraphs 3.18 to 3.20). Buildings that are deemed to be too small to accommodate a permanent residential use would not be considered appropriate for rural conversion. The conversion of an unsuitably sized building would potentially result in additional planning applications for extensions at a later date in order to provide more living space. This approach would be contrary to criterion f) of Policy H4. It is appreciated, however, that small barn conversions could sometimes accommodate one or two people satisfactorily, and in assessing a building's suitability for conversion a minimum standard of 50 sq.m will be adopted. Conversions of buildings below this size will not be approved. This 50 sq.m standard relates to the internal floorspace (including storage space) and conversion of a property of this size will only be allowed on the basis of a one bedroomed property for two people. If a case is made for the conversion of a building of this size at the time of a planning application, it is very unlikely extensions will be permissible in future to allow for additional people to reside at the property.

5.1.4 In this case, the lion's share of the scheme comprises of utilitarian buildings; these include the lean-to, which is made up of blockwork and accommodates the kitchen. While a home office is accommodated in part of the outbuilding, the remaining part of the building is utilised for ancillary purposes, namely garaging and storage. A glazed link is proposed to connect the host building with the proposed home office/ garage/ storage building. The host building (without the modern lean-to blockwork structure to the side of the building) measures approximately 34 square metres (taken externally) whilst the more modern out-building to the rear measure 51 square metres. The modern lean-to element (for the proposed kitchen) adds a further 16.5 square metres. In total the modern blockwork element accounts for almost double the floor area of the existing host building (34 and 66.5 square metres respectively). This is the reason why such a significant part of this development would be faced with waney-edged timber as this covers up the blockwork on the scheme. It is concluded that the proposal fails to comply with criterion e) of the LDP and the provisions of the SPG.

This criteria needs to be considered alongside criterion f), which states that the building should be capable of providing adequate living space without needing an extension. The host building (including the blockwork lean-to) as measured externally is 50.6 square metres. If the blockwork lean-to is removed, this floor area reduces to 34 square metres (also measured externally). Internally the measurement is less and falls well short of the 50 square metres threshold. It is proposed to provide a first floor by digging down and dropping the ground level thus lowering the wall plate and facilitating a bedroom in the first floor. Like the link, this is an extension and clearly something that has to be undertaken to make the building potentially big enough to provide the living space for an independent residential unit. In this case the existing floor area of the host building accommodates a bathroom and bedroom only, the living room is in the roof space that has been created by increasing the internal volume from expanding downwards into the ground, whilst the modern lean-to on the side accommodates the kitchen. As well as this, an additional extension is proposed through a glazed link to provide further domestic accommodation including a home office within the modern outbuilding to the rear. Given that the host building taken in its existing form measures externally just 34 square metres (the modern lean-to on the side and the first floor provided by altering and extending the buildings downwards is excluded in this calculation) the building fails to comply with criterion f) of Policy H4 and the provisions of the SPG.

The proposal fails to comply with criteria e) and f) of Policy H4 and in principle, the proposal is unacceptable.

5.2 Design

5.2.1 The design of the scheme has sought to improve the visual appearance of the existing out-buildings by cladding them in waney-edge boarding to cover the walls and using natural slate throughout the scheme. The proposed glass link does effectively link the stone host building with the modern building to the rear, but ideally the scheme should keep the buildings separate so that the host building, which is subject to the conversion, is seen as one part and the modern building is a separate element as it forms an ancillary function. The residential curtilage is potentially visually intrusive although subject to an appropriate landscaping scheme (with both hard and soft landscaping controlling the surface and boundary materials) this aspect of the development could be acceptable.

5.3 Economic Development Implications

5.3.1 There is no economic justification proposed as part of this proposal. However, given the scale of the host stone building this is unlikely to be suitable for the purposes of a business.

5.4 Highway Safety

5.4.1 It is proposed to utilise the existing access point. There is ample space on site for turning and parking; there is no highway objection to this proposal.

5.5 Ecology

5.5.1 A relevant survey report was submitted to inform a decision on this proposal. The Council's ecologist has confirmed that the development is acceptable subject to ecological conditions being imposed.

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

5.6.1 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: REFUSE

Reasons for Refusal:

1 The existing host building is too small to accommodate an independent residential use and requires extensions in the form of excavations to lower the floor level together with the use of a modern lean-to and a new link extension to access and utilise part of a modern out-building to provide the level of accommodation necessary for an independent residential unit. The proposal is contrary to criterion f) of Policy H4 of the Monmouthshire Local Development Plan (LDP) and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), 'Rural Conversions to a Residential or Tourism Use', November 2017.

2 The majority of the scheme proposes to utilise modern, utilitarian buildings as part of the conversion and provide the necessary level of accommodation required for an independent dwelling. The proposed conversion is contrary to criterion e) of Policy H4 of the LDP and adopted SPG, 'Rural Conversions to a Residential or Tourism Use', November 2017.