



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEV/SE/16/57

Development Control Committee

4 August 2016

Planning Application DC/16/0340/FUL

Barn, Mount Farm, Upthorpe Road, Stanton

Date	7 March 2016	Expiry Date:	2 May 2016
Registered:			Extension of time agreed until 12 August 2016
Case Officer:	Marianna Christian	Recommendation:	Grant permission
Parish:	Stanton	Ward:	Stanton

Proposal: Planning Application - Conversion of existing barn to residential dwelling and construction of new vehicular access.

Site: Barn, Mount Farm, Upthorpe Road, Stanton, Bury St. Edmunds, IP31 2AP

Applicant: Mr Clack

Synopsis:

Application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Associated matters.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee determine the attached application and associated matters.

CONTACT CASE OFFICER:

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Background:

This application is referred to the Development Control Committee in the public interest as it raises planning policy issues that justify determination by the Committee.

Proposal:

1. Planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing barn to provide a three-bedroom dwelling. The proposed works include replacing the existing roof and increasing the height of the building by approximately 0.5metre, replacing an existing single storey lean-to with a two-storey extension and cladding the building in weatherboarding. The dwelling would be accessed via a new vehicular entrance from Uphorpe Road which would lead to a parking area for two cars. The garden area would be provided to the immediate northwest of the building in an area already laid to grass with established hedging.

Application Supporting Material:

2. Information submitted with the application as follows:
 - Application Form
 - Plans
 - Land Contamination Questionnaire
 - Geo Environmental Desk Study
 - Initial Bat Survey

Site Details:

3. Mount Farm is located to the southeast of the main settlement of Stanton and is within the countryside for planning purposes. The building proposed to be converted comprises a brick built barn with an attached single-storey lean-to and is sited immediately adjacent to Uphorpe Road. Next to the building on its southeast side is a gated vehicular access leading to a concrete yard area with further outbuildings. To the northwest of the building is an area laid to grass with established hedging. Adjacent to the road on this side of the building is a post and rail fence and a field gate, and it is in this location that a new vehicular access is proposed to serve the new dwelling. The area surrounding the application site is rural in character.

Planning History:

4. None relevant to this application.

Consultations:

5. County Highway Authority: Conditions recommended regarding layout and surfacing of access, surface water drainage, manoeuvring and parking and visibility splays.
6. Natural England: No comments.
7. Public Health and Housing: No objections subject to conditions.
8. Environment Team: Contaminated Land: No objection.
9. Suffolk County Council Fire and Rescue Service: Make comments but offer no objection.
10. Forestry Commission: Should not be any direct impacts upon the nearby Ancient Woodland.

Representations:

11. Parish Council: Support application. Proposed development will use an existing access to convert a little used barn to an attractive dwelling in keeping with other dwellings in that area. Design and planning of the conversion is very well suited and sympathetic to the area and the current dwelling and no objections were raised.
12. Neighbours: No representations have been received.

Policy:

The following policies have been taken into account in the consideration of this application:

13. St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (December 2010):
 - Policy CS1 St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy
 - Policy CS2 Sustainable Development
 - Policy CS3 Design and Local Distinctiveness
 - Policy CS4 Settlement Hierarchy and Identity
14. Rural Vision 2013 (September 2014):
 - Policy RV1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
15. Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Local Plan Joint Development Management Policies Document (February 2015):
 - Policy DM1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Policy DM2 Creating Places – Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness
 - Policy DM5 Development in the Countryside
 - Policy DM11 Protected Species
 - Policy DM14 Protecting and Enhancing Natural Resources, Minimising Pollution and Safeguarding from Hazards
 - Policy DM22 Residential Design

- Policy DM28 Residential use of Redundant Buildings in the Countryside
- Policy DM33 Re-Use or Replacement of Buildings in the Countryside
- Policy DM46 Parking Standards

Other Planning Policy/Guidance:

16. National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

17. Planning Practice Guidance

Officer Comment:

18. The issues to be considered in the determination of the application are:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact on the character of the area
- Highway safety
- Biodiversity
- Land contamination
- Residential amenity

Principle of development

19. The NPPF states, in paragraph 55, that to promote sustainable development in rural areas housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances. One of the exceptions cited in paragraph 55 is the re-use of redundant or disused buildings for housing in rural areas where there would be an enhancement to the immediate setting.

20. Joint Development Management Policy DM28 supports the conversion of redundant barns or other buildings in the countryside to dwellings subject to the following criteria:

- a) alternative uses for employment/economic development, tourist accommodation, recreation and community facilities, in accordance with Policy DM33, have been fully explored to the satisfaction of the local planning authority and can be discounted;
- b) the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for extension, significant alteration or reconstruction;
- c) the proposal is a high quality design and the method of conversion retains the character and historic interest of the building. In the case of barns the single open volume should be retained with minimal change to the external appearance;
- d) the proposal would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting of the building, and the creation of a residential curtilage and any associated domestic paraphernalia would not have a harmful effect on the character of the site or setting of the building, any wider group of buildings, or the surrounding area.

21. Part a) of Policy DM28 in effect requires applicants to demonstrate that alternative uses for employment, tourism, recreation and community purposes have been explored prior to a residential change of use being sought. In this case no information has been provided with the application regarding the consideration of alternative uses for the building, and as such there is a considerable element of conflict with Policy DM28 in this respect therefore. This conflict weighs against the scheme in the balance of considerations.
22. Members will be aware however that there are provisions within the General Permitted Development Order that allow the change of use of agricultural buildings to dwellings without the requirement for planning permission (subject to various conditions). Under these provisions the applicant is required to submit an application for prior approval for the change the use, and the Council's assessment of such is limited to the following matters:
- Transport and highway impacts;
 - Noise impacts;
 - Contamination risks;
 - Flooding risks; and
 - Whether the location/siting of the building makes it otherwise impractical or undesirable for the change of use.
23. The permitted development provisions referred to above also cover building operations that are reasonably necessary to convert the building, including the installation or replacement of roofs, exterior walls, windows and doors.
24. Members will note that the proposed works in this case include extending the barn by increasing the height of the main building by 0.5 metres and replacing the existing lean-to with a larger two-storey addition. These extensions could not be carried out as permitted development, however, the applicant could (subject to the prior approval process) convert the building to a dwelling without altering its current footprint and scale, including replacing the existing roofs, cladding the walls in weatherboarding and adding doors and windows. The resultant structure would be smaller in scale but otherwise similar in appearance to that proposed under this application. Following such a conversion as permitted development, it would be open to the applicant to subsequently apply to extend the building in the manner now shown. Such an application would be assessed as a householder development, and officers are of the opinion that this would likely be granted planning permission, noting the conclusions reached below in relation to the design and character impacts.
25. Having regard to the above, and notwithstanding the conflict identified with Policy DM28 therefore, officers consider that the 'fall-back' position provided by permitted development rights for the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings is a material consideration and must be afforded some weight in favour of the proposal. The applicant could feasibly secure the change of use of the application building for residential purposes and carry out significant alterations through the prior approval

process. The applicant could then subsequently apply to extend the building in the manner indicated once converted, and this would be unlikely to be objectionable. This application for full planning permission effectively seeks to secure the conversion and extension of the barn to provide a dwelling through the submission of a single application, negating the two-stage process that would otherwise be necessary to achieve the same result as outlined above. The NPPF encourages local planning authorities to approach decision-taking in a positive way (para. 186), looking for solutions rather than problems and seeking to approve applications for sustainable development where possible (para. 187). In supporting this application officers have sought to adopt a pragmatic approach given the current permitted development rights for changes of use and the nature and scale of the proposal now sought.

Design and impact on the character of the area

26. The application building occupies a visually prominent position adjacent to Upton Road. The height of the building is proposed to increase by 0.5 metres, however, the replacement roof would be of a similar form to the existing roof with a comparable pitch and matching tiles. Openings on the most sensitive elevation facing the road have been kept to a minimum with the provision of a single conservation grade rooflight. The scheme utilises traditional materials with the building proposed to be finished in black stained weatherboarding and tiled roofs with timber framed windows and doors. The most significant alteration is the provision of a two-storey extension on the southwest elevation. The extension has a significant footprint but largely follows the existing lean-to that it would replace in this respect. The extension is also in keeping with the existing barn in terms of its design and form.
27. The garden area that would serve the dwelling comprises an existing enclosed parcel of land to the immediate west of the barn which is laid to grass with hedged boundaries. Beyond this lie the garden area for Mount Farm (to the west) and a parking area and outbuildings for Mount Farm (to the south). Given this context the creation of a residential curtilage in this case is not considered to have a harmful effect on the character of the site, the setting of the barn or the wider area.

Highway safety

28. A new access to serve the dwelling is proposed on the northwest side of the barn leading to a driveway and parking area for two cars. No objections have been raised by the County Highway Authority regarding the access and parking arrangements shown, subject to appropriate conditions. The development is not considered to raise any adverse issues in terms of highway safety.

Biodiversity

29. The application is accompanied by an initial bat survey report which concludes that there were no signs of bats using the building and that the site is of low roost suitability for bats. The proposals are not considered

to raise any adverse issues in terms of biodiversity interests.

Land contamination

30. A Geo Environmental Desk Study has been provided which concludes that the site is low risk in terms of land contamination, and the proposal does not therefore raise any adverse issues in this regard.

Residential amenity

31. The nearest neighbouring dwelling to the site is Mount Farmhouse itself. There is considered to be a sufficient degree of separation between the farmhouse and the barn so as to prevent any adverse issues arising in terms of overlooking, overshadowing, or the development being overbearing in appearance when viewed from the existing dwelling.

Conclusion:

32. It is acknowledged that there is an element of conflict between the principle of development in this case and Policy DM28 of the Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Local Plan Joint Development Management Policies. Policy DM28(a) requires alternative uses to have been fully explored and discounted prior to a residential use being permitted, and the application does not provide any information to demonstrate that this criteria has been satisfied. Given however the fall-back position offered by permitted development rights for agricultural to residential conversions together with the modest scale and acceptable detail of the scheme in this case, officers consider that this proposal can be supported. It is also important to note that, subject to the submission of a prior notification application, its potential implementation, and then subject to the submission, consideration and implementation of a householder extension planning application, the landowner could achieve precisely the same result through the submission of two separate but equally unobjectionable applications.
33. The scheme is considered to otherwise satisfy Policy DM28 in terms of the nature and condition of the building to be converted, the design of the scheme and its acceptable impact on the existing building and wider surroundings, and the absence of any harm to the countryside resulting from the creation of a domestic curtilage in this case. The development is not considered to harm the character or appearance of the area, highway safety, biodiversity or residential amenity and does not raise any adverse issues in terms of land contamination. On balance it is considered that a recommendation of approval is appropriate.

Recommendation:

It is **RECOMMENDED** that planning permission be **granted** subject to the following conditions:

- 1) 1A Time Limit Detailed
- 2) 04C Facing and Roofing Samples

- 3) 12B Details of Boundary Treatment
- 4) 18(0)E Access to Accord with Drawing No. DM01 with entrance width of 3 metres
- 5) 18(0)Q Clear Visibility to be Provided
- 6) 18(0)J Existing Access to be Surfaced
- 7) 18(0)N Means to Prevent Discharge of Surface Water
- 8) 18BB Details of Parking/Manoeuvring
- 9) Acoustic insulation condition (as recommended by Public Health & Housing)
- 10) 14FP Approved Plans

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online:

<https://planning.westsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=O2N83LPD03H00>

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