

Forest Heath District Council

**DEVELOPMENT
CONTROL COMMITTEE**

29 APRIL 2015

DEV/FH/15/016

Report of the Head of Planning and Growth

**PLANNING APPLICATION DC/14/2080/CR4 - HALL FARM BARN, CHURCH
LANE, FRECKENHAM**

Synopsis:

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

Recommendation:

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

CONTACT OFFICER

Case Officer: Gemma Pannell
Tel. No: 01284 757494

Committee Report

Date 22 January **Expiry Date:** 19 March 2015

Registered: 2015

Case Gemma Pannell **Recommendation:** Refuse

Officer:

Parish: Freckenham **Ward:** Manor

Proposal: Planning Application DC/14/2080/CR4 – Conversion of barns to 2 no. residential units and change of use of agricultural land to garden

Site: Hall Farm Barn, Church Lane, Freckenham

Applicant: Suffolk County Council Property Team

Background:

The application is to be considered by the Development Control Committee following discussion by the Delegation Panel.

The Parish Council and Ward Member are in support of the proposal, contrary to officers recommendation of refusal.

Proposal:

1. Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing redundant farm buildings to 2 no. residential units. The scheme has been amended during the consideration of the application to take into account the concerns of the Conservation Officer.

Application Supporting Material:

2. Information submitted with the application as follows:
 - Planning and Heritage Statement
 - Protected Species Survey
 - Enviroscreen and Land Contamination Survey

Site Details:

3. The site is situated within the village of Freckenham which is defined as a secondary village, outside of the housing settlement boundary but within the Freckenham Conservation Area.

4. The barns date from the early/mid 19th Century and have the appearance and layout of a model farm. The buildings adjoining each of the barns are dwellings and a small range of single storey buildings are positioned to form a courtyard at the front of the range which would have been used as a yard for livestock.

Planning History:

5. None.

Consultations:

6. Highway Authority: No objection subject to conditions.
7. Conservation Officer: Original Scheme - The success and acceptability of this proposal is very much dependant on both the treatment of the building's' elevations and that of its setting. The character of this part of the conservation area is defined by both the buildings and its setting and how the two relate. Whilst I have no objections to the principle of the proposal, the subdivision of the courtyard to the front of the property dominated by private drives, parking, turning heads and boundary walls and the dominance of highway in general (the details of finishes of which have not been provided) will cause less than substantial harm to the setting of this non designated heritage asset and the character and appearance of the conservation area which currently benefits from the appearance and form of a largely unspoilt farmstead. However, in the absence of a wider public benefit the harm caused by the proposed development will prove contrary to policies contained in the NPPF.
8. Amended scheme: The amended plans satisfactorily address the concerns raised with regard the impact on the courtyard. No objection to the application as amended.

Representations:

9. Parish Council: Members noted that the barns are in a Conservation Area and are aware that they are redundant to agricultural use. Members agreed that the proposed conversion was sympathetic to the location and have no objections to the proposal.
10. Neighbours: No representations received.
11. Ward Member (Cllr Huggan): *The Parish Council has raised no objections to this proposal and considers it a sympathetic development within the conservation area. Given the need to expand the housing supply organically in secondary villages such as Freckenham I would ask that this development proposal gets a full hearing. I would therefore ask that if the development was going to be recommended for refusal that it should come before the full Development Control Committee to be determined there.*

Policy: The following policies of the Forest Heath Development Plan have been taken into account in the consideration of this application:

12. Forest Heath Core Strategy (2010):

- CS1 Spatial Strategy
- CS5 Design Quality and Local Distinctiveness

13. Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Joint Development Management Policy

- DM1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- DM2 Creating Places
- DM16 Local Heritage Assets and Buildings Protected by an Article 4 Direction
- DM17 Conservation Areas
- DM18 New Uses for Historic Buildings
- DM 28 Residential use of Redundant Buildings in the Countryside

Other Planning Policy:

14. National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Officer Comment:

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

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Conservation Area
- Impact on Highway Safety
- Other Matters

Principle of Development

16. Policy DM28 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document states that proposals for the conversion of redundant or disused barns in the countryside into dwellings will be permitted where; alternative uses have been fully explored and discounted, the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for extension, significant alteration or reconstruction and that the proposal is of a high quality design and the method of conversion retains the character and historic interest of the building.

17. No evidence has been submitted that the alternative uses have been considered through marketing of the building for; employment/economic development, tourist accommodation, recreation and community facilities. Paragraph 28 of the NPPF makes it clear that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity and this is considered to be a significant factor which advises firmly that priority should be given to economic re-use of buildings ahead of residential conversion schemes. Furthermore, in this regard, Policy DM28 is considered compliant with the aims and intent of the NPPF, noting that it was adopted following the publication of the NPPF.

18. The development is therefore considered contrary to the provisions of policy DM28 and DM33.

Impact on the Conservation Area

19. The site is located within the conservation area and the barns, whilst not listed, are considered a non-designated heritage asset and as such consideration needs to be given to policies DM16, DM17 and DM18. These state that proposals for the alteration and extension of buildings identified as local heritage assets will only be permitted where there is a clear understanding of the significance of the building and its setting and the historic fabric, design and materials of the original building are respected (DM16). In addition proposals that are within, adjacent to or visible from a Conservation Area should be of an appropriate scale, form, height and massing in order to respect the area's character and its setting. Proposals should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or its setting and views into, through and out of the area (DM17). These requirements are echoed in policy DM18 which reiterates the needs for the adaptation of historic buildings to be sensitive to its character and appearance.

20. The scheme has been amended since originally submitted and the proposal seeks to retain the character of the existing elevations with no additional openings. The sliding doors and associated frame will be removed and the opening in-filled with a glazed timber frame. The arrow slit windows are to be retained. The existing doors to the west elevation are to be removed and the opening made good.

21. The glazed frame is to be recessed allowing for natural light into the interior. The existing corrugated asbestos roof is to be replaced with natural slate with a number of conservation rooflights which will be required to compensate for the lack of windows in the external walls. It is considered that the elevational treatment will retain the character and appearance of the flint barns as far as possible whilst allowing for the practicalities of a residential conversion.

22. The proposal originally proposed the sub division of the courtyard to the front of the barns, however the applicant has revised the external works to relocate the parking area, outside of the courtyard, and omit the turning heads so as to retain the character of a farmstead and the setting of the barns. In addition, and to avoid the dominance of the private drives the scheme has been amended to show a route around the existing cart lodge, negating the need for turning heads. The applicant has asked that the materials for the drives are considered by condition.

23. Whilst it is acknowledged that the current proposals will change the appearance and form of the "*largely unspoilt farmstead*", it is considered that the amended plans represent a materially more sympathetic conversion than as originally submitted and one that will protect the buildings for the future. It is not the intention to harm the character and appearance of the conservation area and officers are of the opinion that, the amendments indicated above would be a way of alleviating the

concerns highlighted previously by the Conservation Officer.

Impact on Highway Safety

24. Having regard to paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires decisions to take account of safe and suitable means of access to be achieved for all. The County Highway Authority is satisfied that the use of the access for residential purposes is appropriate and raises no objection to the proposal.

Other Matters

25. The proposed units have a sufficiency of amenity space, and will not lead to any materially adverse impact upon the amenities of existing or future residents. The fact that the conversion of the buildings only needs planning permission by reason of their location in a Conservation Area is not considered to be a sufficiently weighty 'fall back' position such that it overcomes the harm in principle, noting that the conversion of such buildings within Conservation Areas means that a full planning appraisal is necessary.

Conclusion:

26. In conclusion, the principle of the development is considered to be unacceptable and is not in compliance with relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework. This harm in principle is considered significant, noting the recent adoption of Policy DM28, and is not outweighed by the provision of dwellings, by the acceptable design and otherwise acceptable impact upon the Conservation Area, or by the weight that must be attached to the fact that the scheme will have an acceptable amenity impact. Likewise, it is not considered that any 'fall back' argument in relation to the fact that a similar building outside a Conservation Area could benefit without the need for planning permission should be given such determinative weight so as to change this planning balance.

Recommendation:

27. It is recommended that planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reason(s):
1. Policy DM28 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document states that proposals for the conversion of redundant or disused barns in the countryside into dwellings will be permitted where alternative uses have been fully explored and discounted. The proposal fails to comply with Policy DM28 by virtue of the lack of consideration of alternative uses which fails to demonstrate that the site could not support economic growth in the rural area in order to create jobs and prosperity in accordance with paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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=summary&keyVal=NEH2S4PD02G00>

Alternatively, hard copies are also available to view at Planning, Planning and Regulatory Services, Forest Heath District Council, District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, Suffolk, IP28 7EY