

16 DMSE/092530/F - REMOVAL OF 3 LARGE SHEDS AND THEIR REPLACEMENT WITH A SINGLE GROUP HOLIDAY LET AT WOODHOUSE FARM, UPTON BISHOP, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 7UW

For: Mr & Mrs B & P Skerrett per Batterham Matthews Design, 1 Tollbridge Studios, Tollbridge Road, Bath, Somerset, BA1 7DE

Date Received: 2 November 2009

Ward: Old Gore

Grid Ref: 365473,229091

Expiry Date: 28 December 2009

Local Member: Councillor BA Durkin

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Woodhouse Farm sits in a valley bottom amongst undulating, attractive countryside close to the Gloucestershire border. The landscape is described as estate farmlands in the Landscape Character Assessment. The farmhouse is Grade II listed, as is the larger converted barn to the south. The site is accessible via two tracks, one of which is signposted opposite the entrance to Upton Court. The other and superior track, via which most traffic would arrive on site, is taken from the unclassified road to the east.
- 1.2 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a large unit of holiday let accommodation to complement the existing barns, which have been converted into holiday let accommodation and form a courtyard with the farmhouse. A further barn, which stands alone from the courtyard, has been converted into a swimming pool for guest use. To the southwest of the courtyard are 3 further barns. Barn 1 is a timber clad open fronted barn used for functions and parking/storage. Barn 2 is a redundant concrete framed agricultural barn and Barn 3 is a large disused poultry shed.
- 1.3 It is proposed to demolish barns 1 and 2 and remove half of the poultry shed, with the remaining half to be used as guest parking. Upon the vacated land it is proposed to erect a large holiday let unit for occupation by large groups. As part of the Design and Access Statement photographs have been submitted to illustrate the extent of agricultural buildings present prior to the conversion of the barn complex to holiday lets. These included 3 large poultry units to the immediate southeast of the barn complex and a further barn located between what is now the swimming pool and the courtyard. All have been removed and the land restored, incorporating a new pond and native grasses.
- 1.4 The proposed unit would extend to 469m² and cater for a maximum of 14 people. The scale of the buildings to be demolished is as follows:

Barn 1	-	Timber clad concrete framed garaging	324m ²
Barn 2	-	Tin clad concrete framed redundant building	504m ²
Barn 3	-	Disused poultry shed (half to be retained)	630m ²
		Total reduction	989m ²

- 1.5 The documentation submitted with the application describes how the holiday let business has been in operation since 2007, the management of which is the full-time occupation of the applicants. The Business Case describes how the occupation rates have risen from 2007 (52%)

to 78% in 2008 and 84% in 2009 (January to September). Pre-bookings mean that the business is 48% pre-booked for 2010 (as at 10.12.09). The Business Case explains that only 6% of self catered accommodation in Hereford achieves the 5 star 'Visit Britain' rating, which compares poorly to the average across England. In addition, it is apparently clear from bookings taken that there is an unmet demand for larger, group bookings, with only 7 businesses in the County having the ability to cope with groups in excess of 12 people.

- 1.6 The building itself is designed to replace the existing sheds with a highly sustainable contemporary building, assimilating with the landscape through the use of 3 curved sedum roofs over the 3 main internal spaces. The building has a low profile and is 3.1m lower than the present sheds. The main section of the plan contains the entertaining function room on the south, a large dining facility in the centre and bedroom accommodation in the third element. The design ethos incorporates the use of rainwater harvesting, with the internal re-use of grey water. A ground source heat pump is intended for central heating with solar panels for hot water. Materials arising from the demolition will be re-used for hardcore.

2. Policies

2.1 National Guidance

- PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
- PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- PPS9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism : DCLG 2006

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

- S1 - Sustainable Development
- S2 - Development Requirements
- S3 - Housing
- S8 - Recreation, Sport and Tourism
- DR1 - Design
- DR2 - Land Use and Activity
- DR3 - Movement
- DR4 - Environment
- H7 - Housing in the Countryside outside Settlements
- H13 - Sustainable Residential Design
- H14 - Re-using Previously Developed Land and Buildings
- E6 - Expansion of Existing Businesses
- E11 - Employment in the Smaller Settlements and Open Countryside
- LA2 - Landscape Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change
- NC1 - Biodiversity and Development
- NC5 - European and Nationally Protected Species
- NC7 - Compensation for Loss of Biodiversity
- NC8 - Habitat Creation, Restoration and Enhancement
- RST1 - Criteria for Recreation, Restoration and Enhancement
- RST12 - Visitor Accommodation
- RST13 - Rural and Farm Tourism Development

3. Planning History

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--|---|----------------------|
| 3.1 | DCSE2003/2231/F | Demolition of storage shed and poultry units. Restoration and conversion of redundant listed farm buildings to form 5 holiday cottages and indoor swimming pool. | - | Approved
14.10.03 |
| | DCSE2003/2233/L | Demolition of storage shed and poultry units. Restoration and conversion of redundant listed farm buildings to form 5 holiday cottages and indoor swimming pool. | - | Approved
14.10.03 |

4. Consultation Summary

- 4.1 None required.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Traffic Manager: The access from the east is better than the original access which is still signposted 'Woodhouse Farm'. This sign should be removed as it encourages people to use the poorer of the two accesses to the site and a travel plan should be sought to ensure that visitors are made aware of the preferred route. Passing places are required along the eastern route and the first five metres of access from the 70004 should be bound to prevent loose gravel spreading on the adopted highway.
- 4.3 Conservation Manager (Building Conservation): No objection: "The proposed scheme is an intelligent, considered response to the demands of creating sustainable residential buildings in rural contexts in the 21st century. Its location re-uses a substantial 'brownfield' site and does not intrude on the setting of the listed farmstead complex, but it is also important that it is separate for operational reasons and to have sufficient architectural presence in its own right."
- 4.4 Conservation Manager (Biodiversity): No objection. As part of the ecosulis Ltd ecological survey, an assessment of the barns was carried out to determine the potential use as bat roosts and the two ponds as habitat that may support Great Crested and other species of newt. The report identifies that the barns to be demolished have negligible suitability to support bat roosts and that the pond immediately adjacent the development site is unlikely to support a newt population, mainly due to the fact that it is stocked with carp. The ecologist is satisfied that the assessments carried out are appropriate subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the implementation of the recommendations set out in the ecological report dated 4 December 2009, which includes the agreement of a full wildlife protection and enhancement scheme prior to the commencement of development.
- 4.5 Conservation Manager (Landscape): It is considered that the proposal would conflict with Policy LA2 in that the pattern of development would not be characteristic of the discrete cluster of dwellings associated with the estate farmlands landscape character. The officer does acknowledge, however, that the removal and replacement of the existing large sheds will enhance the local landscape.
- 4.6 Tourism Manager: No objection: The proposal would help to meet the acknowledged shortfall of 5-star quality graded self catered accommodation in Herefordshire and cater for large groups, which is in accordance with current market trends and demand.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Parish Council: No objection

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Mr E Thomas on 01432 260479

5.2 Two letters of objection have been received from local residents, the content of which is summarised as follows:

- It is queried as to whether the preferred access was originally restricted for solely agricultural use.
- Since opening for holiday use, the site has become quite noisy on occasion until 3am and beyond. Functions are being held and drinking is going on past licensed hours.
- The development would add to the overdevelopment at this rural site and contribute to noise, pollution, traffic and attendant highway maintenance issues.
- The application describes the removal of 3 buildings, but it would appear that 2½ would be a more accurate description.

5.3 The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and supporting business case. The content is summarised as follows:

- The proposed holiday let would complement an established and successful business operating at the top end of the self-catered holiday accommodation market.
- The proposal would secure the long-term future of the business. In particular the building would enable the business to cater for large, single groups. 60% of all bookings are made by groups and the average party size per booking is 12 people.
- The holiday let will occupy an existing brownfield site, replacing a current eyesore with a smaller, well-designed and environmentally friendly unit.
- The proposal would meet an acknowledged shortfall of 5-star self-catered accommodation in Herefordshire.
- The proposal would benefit other local businesses. 900 guests passed through Kempley Barns in the first 9 months of 2009, which has provided an important increase in tourism to Herefordshire and supports a large number of suppliers who are both directly and indirectly utilised by Kempley Barns.

Also enclosed is the Visit Britain quality assessment inspection report (21.5.2009), which confirms the 5-star rating.

5.4 Five letters of support have been received from local businesses who either supply or otherwise benefit from the existing business at Kempley Barns.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The application has been advertised as a departure as at face value it is contrary to Policies RST1 and RST12 (Visitor accommodation) of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that "if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise." In assessing a development proposal, therefore, the decision should accord with the development plan unless there are material considerations that justify setting aside a particular policy or policies.

6.2 Policy RST1 states that new buildings for tourism use in the open countryside will only be permitted where there are no suitable existing buildings capable of conversion; they are of a small scale and are ancillary to the primary proposal. In this particular case the building proposed at 469 square metres could not be described as small scale and as it would provide self-catered accommodation it cannot, in the case officer's view, be ancillary to the primary use.

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Policy RST12 states that outside of identified settlements, the provision of permanent serviced or self-catering accommodation for visitors will only be permitted if it consists of the re-use and adaptation of a rural building. This proposal is predicated upon new build development and is thus contrary to this policy.

- 6.3 As with most proposals, however, there are other Policies beyond those dealing with tourism development that are of relevance to the determination and it is necessary to assess the broad purpose of those relevant policies in making a judgement. Whilst Policy RST12 precludes new build visitor accommodation in the open countryside, Policy E6 (Expansion of existing businesses) supports the expansion of existing businesses providing that the proposal can be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing site and that the proposal is of a scale and character appropriate to the locality. As such, Policy E6 is asking the decision-maker to determine whether a proposal is of a scale and character appropriate to the locality. In addition strategic policy S8 (Recreation, Sport and Tourism) states that the “provision of appropriate new or improved facilities for recreation, sport and tourism will be supported to meet the needs of local communities and visitors and to contribute to local economic development, employment and community regeneration.” Again, however, it is clear that new buildings in the open countryside have to be carefully considered against the objectives of achieving sustainable development, both in terms of the impact upon the character of the countryside and the use of resources.
- 6.4 In this respect the government has recently issued Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth. This document contains specific advice on planning for tourism in rural areas (Policy EC.7). It is a government expectation that local authorities will support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, rather than harm, the character of the countryside.

Significant weight is attached to the need to ensure that proposals relate sensitively to their settings, weighing the need to balance the objectives of enhancing visitors’ enjoyment or improving the financial viability of the facility with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites. Wherever possible the guidance recommends that visitor facilities should be located within existing or *replacement* buildings, as is the case here. Whilst it is stressed that facilities should normally be located within easy reach of settlements, the guidance recognises the instances where more remote locations will be inevitable.

- 6.5 In this particular case, it is the improvements to the local landscape arising from the demolition of the existing redundant buildings and the benefit to the local economy that are the principal material considerations to weigh against the presumption against new permanent tourist accommodation in the open countryside. In mid-distance views from the elevated ground to the east, the buildings to be demolished are clearly visible in the same field of view as the listed buildings. This application proposes the removal of all but half of the one remaining low-profile poultry shed, the roof of which it is intended to clad in order to further soften its appearance. In physical terms the net loss of floor space is 989m². Moreover, the height of the proposed building is 3.1m less than the existing buildings 1 and 2 and the curved sedum roof, which acknowledges the roof as a ‘fifth elevation’, is indicative of the attention to design detail and is acknowledged by the Landscape Officer as enhancing the local landscape. The design also incorporates facets of sustainable construction, utilising concrete arising from demolition for the hardcore requirement and utilising rainwater and grey water harvesting for use internally. A ground source heat pump and solar panels are also proposed. The architect has confirmed that the detailed design will be to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and that the applicant will accept a planning condition to this effect. The Conservation Manager (Building Conservation) is supportive of the design approach, and although the Landscape Officer has some concern at the physical separation of the site from the existing courtyard, the improvement to the landscape arising from the removal of the large sheds is acknowledged.

- 6.6 On balance, and bearing in mind the latest published government advice on planning for tourism in rural areas, the case officer considers that the scheme promotes an acceptable form of development. Although beyond easy reach of a settlement, the site is already an established centre for tourism accommodation and of a scale appropriate to the local area. As per government advice the proposal will ensure the future viability of the business, whilst enhancing the appearance of the local landscape and increasing the accessibility to high quality tourist accommodation within a replacement building.
- 6.7 The Traffic Manager has raised no objection subject to the provision of appropriate passing places on the eastern access track and the provision of a Travel Plan to ensure that visitors are directed to the preferred access. These requirements can be dealt with via appropriate conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 **A01 Time limit for commencement (full permission)**
- 2 **C01 Samples of external materials**
- 3 **G09 Details of boundary treatments**
- 4 **G10 Landscaping scheme**
- 5 **G11 Landscaping scheme - implementation**
- 6 **H06 Vehicular access construction**
- 7 **H13 Access, turning area and parking**
- 8 **H29 Secure covered cycle parking provision**
- 9 **H30 Travel plans**
- 10 **F30 Use as holiday accommodation**
- 11 **The recommendations set out in the ecological report dated 4 December 2009 should be followed, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Prior to commencement of the development, a full wildlife protection and enhancement scheme should be submitted to and be approved in writing by the local planning authority, and the work shall be implemented as approved. An appropriately qualified and experienced ecological clerk of works should be appointed (or consultant engaged in that capacity) to oversee the ecological work.**

Reason: To ensure that all species are protected having regard to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and Policies NC1, NC5, NC6 and NC7 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.006.

- 12 **CCP Code Level 4.**
- 13 **CCK Slab levels.**
- 14 **A scheme for the demolition and re-cladding of the poultry unit shall be submitted**

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to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of development. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and completed prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure the appropriate provision of car parking in accordance with DR1, LA2 and T11 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

INFORMATIVES:

- 1 **N15 Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission**
- 2 **N11A Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - Birds**

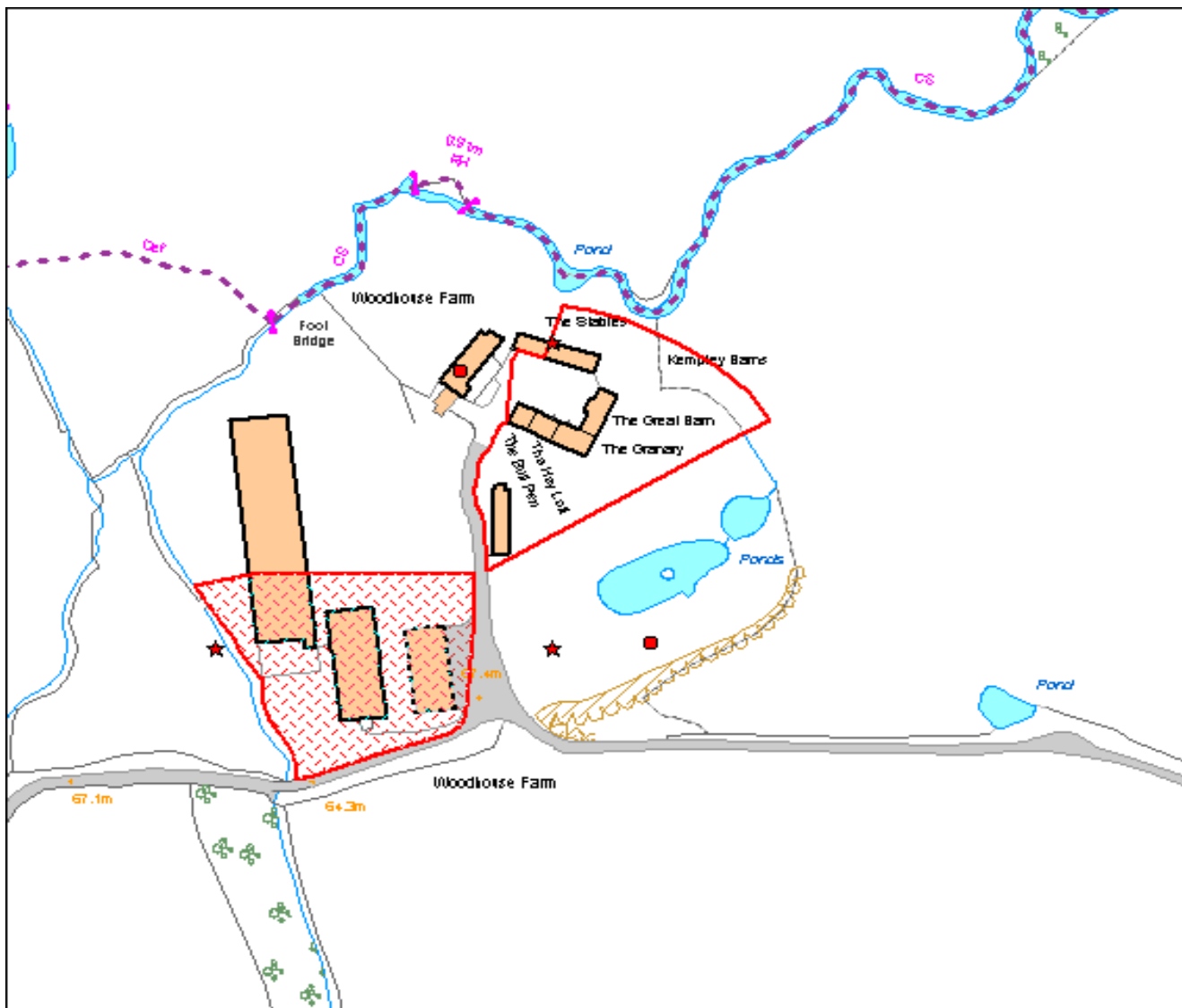
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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