

DCNE2004/1250/L - CONVERSION OF REDUNDANT FARM BUILDINGS INTO 6 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS AND ALTERATIONS TO MAIN FARM HOUSE AT BROOK FARM, LITTLE MARCLE ROAD, LEDBURY, HEREFORD.

DCNE2004/1249/F – AS ABOVE.

**For: Ballingham Hall Ltd & Astley Towne Estates Ltd
per Free Associates, Astley Towne, Astley, Stourport-on-Severn, Worcs, DY13 0RH**

Date Received:

5th April 2004

Expiry Date:

31st May 2004

Local Member: Councillor Rob Manning

Ward:

Frome

Grid Ref:

67119, 36767

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Brook Farm is located on the northern side of the class III 1306 road approximately 250 metres from its junction with the A417 Hereford to Gloucester road at Little Marcle.
- 1.2 The proposal is to renovate the existing farmhouse together with the conversion of the traditional stone brick barns to six residential units.
- 1.3 The plans have been amended since submission to remove one access road through the western orchard and alter detailing on the barns.
- 1.4 This former 'model farm' would be converted retaining the traditional stone and brick buildings and remaining the steel framed buildings. The courtyard would be retained and used as the main parking area. A mainstream access would be provided through the orchard/paddock to the east. This would provide rear access to units 2 - 6. A new access to the farmhouse off the class III road is proposed from the orchard to the east.
- 1.5 An ecological report has been submitted with the application and mitigation works are proposed in line with the recommendations of that report.

2. Policies

PPG1 – General Policy and Principles

PPG3 – Housing

PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment

Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

Policy H20 – Housing in Rural Areas
Policy CTC7 – Listed Building
Policy CTC9 – Development Requirement
CTC13 – Conversion of Buildings
CTC14 – Conversion of Buildings

Malvern Hills District Local Plan

Housing Policy 4 – Development in the Countryside
Conservation Policy 6 – Protection of Listed Building
Conservation Policy 9 – Alteration of Extensions to Listed Buildings
Conservation Policy 10 – Alternative use for Listed Buildings
Conservation Policy 11 – The Setting of Listed Buildings
Conservation Policy 12 – Residential Conversion of Agricultural and Other Rural Buildings
Conservation Policy 13 – Removal of PD Rights

3. Planning History

None.

4. Consultation SummaryStatutory Consultations

- 4.1 The Head of Engineering & Transportation's initial raised concerns regarding visibility plays to the new western access but its usage has now been reduced and accordingly conditions are recommended.
- 4.2 The Chief Conservation Officer supports the proposal in principle subject to appropriate conditions.
- 4.3 The Environment Agency recommends conditions.
- 4.4 The Ancient Monument Society are concerned at the lack of historical data, uniformity of conversion, significance of a model form.
- 4.5 Council for British Archaeology state: "We requested the information because the list descriptions for the site highlighted the fact that the site houses an early 19th century model farmstead complex and that each of the varied buildings or range of buildings is described as a complete example. Listed farm buildings are relatively rare and so to find a complex that includes two hop kilns, hop rooms, cow shelter shed and barn: stables, cow house etc. listed in their own right, is important. The descriptions are also very detailed, and mention many internal features, fixtures and fittings such as troughs, hay racks, hop drying floors, louvred ventilators, large brick ventilation panel, threshing floor, etc as well as designed window treatment, ventilation patterns and joinery. The farmhouse is mentioned as early 19th century possibly with earlier origins and is said to retain a wing with complete (cider) mill and press.

Although numerous plans and elevations (existing and proposed) were sent to use, we were surprised to see no Historic Buildings Report, Conservation Plan, written justification or overall explanation of what was happening to buildings on the site. Structures are labelled with their future unit number without any cross reference to which listed building they are or what is extant.

It is well known that residential conversions can be the most harmful type of new use for agricultural buildings so that with such a fine site it is even more important than the full significance of existing fabric, structures and site is understood and recorded before proposals are drawn up and considered. Here occasionally a trough is outlined on plan but beyond this none of the features mentioned above are indicated (and the list is not exhaustive) on existing drawings and certainly not on proposed drawings.

I have tried to be brief in order to make a response within the allotted time span. There is much more I could have said. I am however happy to discuss the application further with you or the Conservation Officer. The current application, on the whole, is fairly sympathetic to the exteriors of the buildings though we do have concerns about some aspects that include the number of glazed openings and loss of doors specifically mentioned in list descriptions. However, it shows no sign of safeguarding interior fixtures and fittings, layout or of being sympathetic to internal spaces. It lacks the information needed to assess the impact of proposals on the special significance of the buildings (para 3.4 PPG15). It is destructive of historic fabric features and plan. Therefore on the details I have, I cannot support the application and must make a firm objection.

An evaluation of the model farmstead by a buildings archaeologist is imperative to inform proposals, as is further information on the origins of the farmhouse".

5. Representations

- 5.1 Little Marcle Parish Council state: Councillors have no objections and recommend approval to this proposed development, but would like to draw attention to the extra vehicles that would access the A4172 at Little Marcle, which is already a dangerous junction. Cllrs hope that highways will look to improve the situation.
- 5.2 CPRE comment: We are concerned about several aspects of this application. There are two main issues:
 1. We think the farm, a model farm and part of Herefordshire's heritage - should continue to be run as before: there is no need for the buildings to be redundant. We understand there were farmers willing to buy and operate it as a unit. The Council may like to consider its policy on preserving such historic farms.
 2. We do not think it has been made clear how the land would be farmed without any buildings. There is an obvious risk of future applications for a farmhouse and agricultural buildings. What assurance can there be that this will not happen?

The proposed driveway round the orchard and into Little Marcle Road is a matter of concern: both for its visual impact and from the road safety aspect.

Finally, it is difficult to envisage what overall visual impact the proposals will have on the farmstead as it is now. It seems to use that the proposals need to be more closely worked through and presented before any conclusions can be drawn.

5.3 Two letters of objection have been received from:

Penelope Farquhar-Oliver, Lower House Farm, Little Marcle, Ledbury.
Ian Jones, Court Farm, Aylton, Ledbury.

The main points raised are:

1. Brook Farm is a complete example of a model farm, of which very few remain in the county. The split in ownership and development of a number of residential units would irreparably damage this valuable part of our farming history.
 2. The change to residential use, particularly at the proposed densities, will harm the character of the barns by the introduction of new fenestration and doorways.
 3. The setting of the Brook Farm farmhouse itself will be harmed by the density and proximity of the residential development.
 4. The density of the proposed residential development is out of keeping with the scale and nature of the surroundings.
 5. It should be possible to find an employment use for the barns, facilitating their repair and conversion in a manner more sympathetic to the environment.
 6. Should an employment use be proven infeasible, a lower density residential development, retaining more of the intrinsic character of the barns, could be explored.
- 5.4 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Appraisal

The main issues in consideration of this proposal are:

1. The principle of conversion.
2. Protection of the Listed Buildings and Model Farm.
3. Landscape impact.
4. Highway safety.
5. Ecological matters.

6.1 The Principle of Conversion

These traditional stone and brick buildings are worthy of preservation and comply with the main thrust of Conservation Policy 10 and 12 of the Malvern Hills District Plan and PPS7. This proposal will preserve the traditional buildings and remove the modern steel framed buildings. Furthermore, the buildings have been marketed for appropriate business re-use without success. Finally, the buildings are also structurally sound.

6.2 Protection of the Listed Buildings and Model Farm

The Conservation Officer has been extensively involved in discussion with the applicant and amendments to the layout have been agreed essentially the buildings now retain their special elements and new openings have been kept to a minimum. Some concern is still raised over the sub-division of units 5 and 6.

In addition the applicants have recently submitted a Building Recording and Assessment of Buildings document for this complex of buildings. This now provides a comprehensive description and commentary of the buildings, and was utilised to change the arrangements within the buildings to keep the features identified.

It is therefore considered that the proposal protects the Listed Buildings.

Finally, the issues relating to the retention of these group of buildings as an example of a model farm are noted however the scheme submitted compliments the quality of the buildings and there are no policies that support the retention of these buildings as a 'Model Farm'. It is therefore considered that the application could not be refused on this aspect.

6.3 Landscape Impact

The site contains a number of steel framed agricultural buildings and these will be removed in conjunction with the development of the barns. This will enhance the setting of the Listed Buildings within the landscape, and also re-define the core buildings that originally formed the 'model farm'. One access road through the orchard has also been removed and accordingly the landscaping impact of the development is considered to be an overall improvement.

6.4 Highway Safety

The main entrance to the barns will be the existing access into the courtyard. This will provide all the car parking for the converted buildings. A maintenance track through the orchard to the east will provide rear access. A new access to the farmhouse is included and is now considered acceptable. Originally units 4, 5 and 6 would also have obtained access off this entrance but this has now been deleted. Therefore, the single access is acceptable and reduces the amount of mature hedging that would have been required to have been removed. The Council's Head of Engineering is reviewing these alterations and his revised comments will be reported to committee.

6.5 An extensive ecological report was submitted with the application and the Council's Ecological Officer has been in extensive discussions and recommend appropriate conditions to protect the protected species discovered on-site.

7. **Conditions**

7.1 These extensive range of buildings have been thoroughly investigated and the detailing restored in the finalised plans, subject to appropriate conditions the proposal complies with the main thrust of planning policies and Government Advice.

RECOMMENDATION

NE2004/1249/F

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. A01 – Time Limit for Commencement (Full Permission)

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. A09 - Amended Plans (7 September 2004)

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the amended plans.

3. B01 - Samples to External Materials

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings.

4. G01 – Details of Boundary Treatments

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure dwellings have satisfactory privacy.

5. G04 – Landscaping Scheme (General)

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

6. G05 – Implementation of Landscaping Scheme (General)

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

7. Ecological Conditions

8. Highway Conditions

Informative

1. N15 – Reason for the grant of pp/lbc

NE2004/1250/L

That Listed Building Consent be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. C01 – Time Limit for Commencement (Listed Building)

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 18(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2. A09 – Amended Plans

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the amended plans.

3. C05 – Details of All Joinery Details Including Finishes

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of special architectural or historical interest.

4. C08 – Repairs to External Brickwork

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of special architectural or historical interest.

5. C09 – External Repointing

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of special architectural or historical interest.

6. C10 – Details of Rooflights

Reason: To ensure the rooflights do not break the plane of the roof slope in the interests of safeguarding the character and appearance of this building of special architectural or historical interest.

7. C11 – Specification of Guttering and Downpipes

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of special architectural or historical interest.

8. C12 – Repairs to Match Existing

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of special architectural or historical interest.

9. C13 – Repairs in Situ

Reason: In order to preserve the integrity of the structure of the buildings, the conservation of which constitutes the reason for allowing the development where a new building would be contrary to policy.

Informative

1. N15 – Reason for the grant of pp/lbc

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.