

Item No. 17

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/12/00421/CA
LOCATION	Walkers Farm, Leighton Road, Great Billington, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9BJ
PROPOSAL	Conservation Consent: Demolition of 6 ancillary, residential and agriculture buildings
PARISH	Billington
WARD	Eaton Bray
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllr Mrs Mustoe
CASE OFFICER	Abel Bunu
DATE REGISTERED	03 February 2012
EXPIRY DATE	30 March 2012
APPLICANT	Mr R J Rogers
AGENT	Maze Planning Ltd
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	Called in at the request of Councillor Mrs M Mustoe
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Conservation Area - Granted

Site Location:

Walkers Farm lies to the west of Leighton Road in Great Billington and is a former pig rearing holding situated within the Green Belt and Conservation Area. It is an historic farmstead grouping of buildings and the farmhouse itself is a Grade II Listed Building. The Statutory List description records modern extension of the building to the rear.

The Application:

Conservation Area Consent is sought to demolish six outbuildings shown on the Site Plan comprising a jetski store, stable, barn, hay store, log store and porch.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012 and replaced the previous national planning policy documents PPG's and PPGs. The following sections of the NPPF are considered relevant to this application.

Section 7: Requiring good design.

Section 9: Protecting Green Belt Land.

Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Regional Spatial Strategy East of England Plan (May 2008)

ENV7 Quality in the Built Environment
ENV6 The Historic Environment

Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011

None saved.

South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review Policies

THE NPPF advises of the weight to be attached to existing local plans for plans adopted prior to the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, as in the case of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review, due weight can be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the framework. It is considered that the following policy is fully consistent with the Framework and significant weight can be attached to it.

BE8 Design Considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design in Central Bedfordshire, A Guide for Development, Adopted 23 July 2010

Planning History

CB/12/00436/LB	Pending. Two storey side extension, internal and external alterations and demolition of outbuildings.
CB/12/00440/FULL	Pending. Two storey side extension, internal and external alterations and demolition of outbuildings.
CB/11/01864/CA	Withdrawn. Demolition of five outbuildings.
CB/11/1835/FULL	Withdrawn. Two storey rear extension, internal and external alterations and demolition of five outbuildings.
CB/11/01832/LB	Withdrawn. Two storey rear extension, internal and external alterations and demolition of five outbuildings.
CB/10/04521/AG	Refused. Erection of Agricultural storage barn.
SB/TP/09/06364	Permission. Retention of wall and gates for access to agricultural land and retention of access track.
SB/TP/08/0639	Permission for widening of existing vehicular crossover
SB/LBC/91/00001	Conversion of barn to residential accommodation
SB/TP/90/01135	Permission. Change of use of barn to residential accommodation.

Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)

Parish Council

Objection

- the “special circumstances” referred to in the Design and Access Statement as a reason for granting these Applications to a Listed Building, in a Conservation Area in the Green Belt, have not been proven
- a condition for any subsequent granting of a further revised Planning Application should be that the property should not be used for any non-agricultural commercial purposes;
- Although the revised plans have reduced the size of the proposed extension, the following issues mentioned in our previous submission (29th June 2011) remain relevant:
- The fact that Mr Rogers is proposing to knock down outbuildings has nothing to do with the planning

application for the house extension. It would appear they are trying to justify the size of the extension by saying that by demolishing outbuildings, they are not increasing the sq m size of the total buildings on the property – but they are still increasing the size of the house by around 40%.

- Why are buildings being knocked down when only recently they put in an application for a double height hay storage supposedly for their heating?
- The new drive was built without the necessary permission which was eventually granted retrospectively. It is still not clear why the new entrance would be safer (D&A Statement para 6:3), as both gates are set back from the road.
- We remain concerned about the references to the “farm holding (para 6.29); “agricultural holding” (para 6:37); and “agricultural accesses” (para 6:38). We would like more information about the longer-term intentions in relation to these.
- General Points relating to the revised Applications:
 - (1) Householder Application for Planning Permission: CB/12/00436/LB
 - (a) Para 5 “Pre-Application Advice”. It is clear that prior advice has been sought from the Local Authority (see page 1 of the Agents’ letter to Mr Bunu, and *passim*)
 - (2) Householder Application for Planning Permission: CB/12/00440/FULL
 - (a) Para 5 “Related Proposals”. Surely the other Planning Applications should have been mentioned here?
 - (b) Para 6 “Pre-Application Advice”. See (1) (a) above
 - (c) Para 7 “Neighbourhood and Community Consultation”.
 - (i) The Agent has been in touch with Billington Parish Council Planning Officer; and CBC has circulated near neighbours.
 - (ii) Sadly, in relation to other developments connected with the property, there has been no consultation with neighbours – rather the reverse.
 - (3) Design and Access Statement – comments by paragraph number:
 - (a) Para 2.2
 - (i) “The property ... benefits from two separate and independent vehicular accesses...”
 - How does the property benefit from having two accesses?
 - This statement is contradicted by para 6:38 which suggests closing one of them
 - (ii) The lower access “was granted

planning permission in 2009” – retrospectively, and after some alterations had to be made after construction

- (b) Para 3:3 The description of the “original dwelling” as being that in 1947 is contradicted by para 3:5 which describes the “original house” as that in 1926. This confusion relates to the mathematical calculations of floor space etc later
- (c) Paras 4:2 and 4:3 It is by no means clear from the disarray in formulation and implementation of the NPPF, the Core Strategy, and the Localism Bill, what legal guidelines are in force at the present time
- (d) Para 5:1 The labelling of the ground plans is very confusing. The “main house” looks from the plan as if it is the Granary, whereas in fact it is the Farmhouse
- (e) Para 5:3 My understanding from the plans is that the new entrance lobby is on the northern side, and the existing one to be removed is on the southern side. Is this correct?
- (f) Para 5:7 In order to be convinced that the proposals should include a “major landscaping scheme for the whole site”, which “could be the subject of a planning condition”, we would like to see these plans include at this stage of the application
- (g) Para 6:1 How does the listed building contribute “to the varied townscape and rural appearance of the village”?
- (h) Para 6:2 Reference is made here and in other paragraphs (eg 6:17) to “PPG2”, details of which are given later in Para 6:24-26. It is not clear how this relates to the change in floor space
- (i) Para 6:3 There is an understandable concern about bringing up young children in close proximity to the main road – but this affects every family on this road. We are very aware of the speed situation too, which regrettably was there well before the family decided to move to Walkers Farm. By comparison with many properties, this house is well set back from the road and safely surrounded by hedges etc. Indeed, as a visitor it is difficult to gain access the property! We support the idea of providing facilities for the family on-site (including a gym & a cinema, para 5:2); but we do not think these can be used as a factor in granting planning permission.
- (j) Paras 6:11 and 6:13 “The local planning authority uses an approx 60% increase ...”.

When I asked the Planning Officer dealing with this application about this figure of “60%”, he said that this was not even an approximate figure – each case was dealt with on its merits.

- (k) Para 6:15 How would the change from hard standings to gravel and soft landscaping (none of which can be seen from the road) “benefit ... the Green Belt’s openness and visual amenities”?
- (l) Para 6:20 Which building is being referred to here, and which “public footpath”? “Major benefits” ??
- (m) Para 6:22 Most people would not regard Walkers Farm as being “close to others” or “within a settlement”. Physically, and psychologically, it keeps itself separate from the village.
- (n) Para 6:29
 - (i) The references to “the farm holding” and “the agricultural holding” (para 6:37) raise the question of the long-term intention of how this property will be used, which is already in some people’s minds in the neighbourhood
 - (ii) There is no explanation of “PPS5” (which I gather relates to South Beds’ Policy on Sustainable Development) (referred also in paras 6:30 / 32 / 33 / 36). Surely some clarity needs to be given about the relevance of such a policy, as it is referred to so many times?
- (o) Para 6:31 Same with “PPS1” as above

(C) Other issues relating to the new plan:

(1) The site plan indicates in green the area owned by Walkers Farm. This does not include the field adjacent to the footpath between Hill View Lane and Little Billington, which has been the subject of separate concern. We understand this is because it was only recently purchased and fenced off.

(2) The mathematics included in the D&A Statement is complex! Please could these figures be checked:

- (a) In 1947 (p.5) the floor space was increased by or to 241 sq m?? or was this 241sq m at that time.
- (b) The proposed increase is an additional 137 sq m
- (c) This totals 378 sq m – i.e. an increase of 43% over pre- or actual 1947. This is in addition to any other extensions carried out pre 1947.
- (d) The reduction that would be achieved through the demolition of some outbuildings is in our view irrelevant.

(e) The family knew what they were purchasing and must have realized that obtaining planning permission for the substantial alterations they propose to a Grade 2 Listed Building, in a Conservation Area, in Green Belt, would be challenging.

(D) We do not agree that the present proposals, even as amended, constitute the “special circumstances” referred to in the Design and Access Statement. Our conclusion is that the case is “not proven”

Neighbours
Little Orchard, Great
Billington, The Old
Rectory Church Turn

No objection

- Not much of the proposed alterations would be visible from outside the site.
- Amenities will not be affected

Consultations/Publicity responses

Conservation Officer

Walkers Farm is an historic farmstead grouping of buildings with a roadside location within the designated Billington Conservation Area. The farmhouse itself is a building of some interest with two readily visible periods of historic development juxtaposed - the exposed road-facing gable-end timber-framing hinting at possible 16th century origins, with a boldly symmetrical and high-quality refronting or rebuild, in brick, of the wing adjoining to the south, of recognisable 18th century work. The architectural expression and interest of the frontage elements thus makes an important contribution to Conservation Area character. The farmhouse was listed (Grade II) in 1980. The Statutory List description records modern extension of the building to the rear.

The submitted application seeks further extension and significant remodelling of internal layout within the farmhouse complex, along with outbuilding demolition partly within and partly beyond the designated Conservation Area boundary, which bisects the site.

Further to a site meeting and the receipt of requested amended and additional drawings (Proposed Ground Floor Plan Rev. B/ Schematic of building history Rev. A respectively), along with e-mail clarification from Applicant's Agent dated 10th March 2012, I can conform the following:

I am happy that the agricultural outbuildings proposed for demolition do not have particular historic or architectural merit.

I am therefore happy for Consents and Permission to be granted, subject to the following Conditions and Informative applied:

A full, clear and fully referenced photographic record of all agricultural outbuildings to be demolished shall be supplied to the LPA, prior to demolition.

Archaeologist

The proposed development is located within the medieval core of the village of Great Billington (HER 16883). It is an archaeologically sensitive area and a locally identified heritage asset with an archaeological interest as defined by the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*.

The *NPPF* states that any planning application for a development that is likely to have an impact on a heritage asset must be accompanied by a description of the significance of the heritage asset (Policy 128). The application includes a *PPS 5 Assessment* prepared by Headland Archaeology. This *Assessment* describes the archaeological background, context and potential of the proposed development site and assesses the impact of the proposal on archaeological remains. The application, therefore, conforms to the requirements of Policy 128 of the *NPPF*.

The *PPS 5 Assessment* concludes that the application site lies within the medieval core of Billington and has low potential to contain archaeological remains relating to the origins and development of the settlement in the medieval and post-medieval periods. It also says that the site has moderate potential to contain archaeological remains of earlier phases of the evolution of Walkers Farm, itself part of the development of the village and known to have existed from at least the 16th century. Identification of the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains of the medieval and post-medieval village and specifically Walkers Farm is reasonable. However, I disagree with the assessment of the level of that potential. I believe that, given the fact that there is evidence for lost buildings of earlier phases of Walkers Farm, there is high potential for the site contains related to earlier phases of the Farm. Furthermore, on the basis of its location within the identified area of the medieval village and the fact that Walkers Farm forms part of the historic settlement that there is high potential for finding remains relating to the medieval and post-medieval village.

The *Assessment* also considers the significance of the heritage asset with an archaeological interest represented by archaeological remains of the medieval and post-medieval settlement of Great Billington. Remains of the medieval settlement are described as being of moderate potential defined as being of regional significance; this is an appropriate assessment of the significance of the remains of the medieval settlement. Remains of post-medieval settlement are described as being of negligible significance. Post-medieval rural settlement has been identified as an important area of

research in the published Bedfordshire Archaeological Research Framework, part of the Regional Archaeological Research Framework, therefore, such remains should be considered as having local to regional significance.

The impact of the proposed development on archaeological remains is identified by the *Assessment* as resulting from the groundworks required for the construction of the extension to Walkers Farm; this is an accurate assessment. It does not, however, recognise that the demolition of buildings on the site could also have an impact on archaeological remains through the removal of foundations and floor surfaces. Damage to or loss of any archaeological deposits will result in a loss of significance of the heritage asset with an archaeological interest.

The proposed development has the potential to affect a heritage asset with an archeological interest: the medieval and post-medieval settlement of Billington. This is a heritage asset of regional significance. The works required by the construction of the extension and demolition of existing buildings on the site will have a negative and detrimental impact on any archaeological remains the site contains causing a loss of significance to the heritage asset they represent. This is not an overriding constraint on the proposed development provided that the applicant takes appropriate measures to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset with an archaeological interest. This will comprise the investigation and recording of any archaeological remains that are affected by the development in line with Policy 141 of the *NPPF*.

In order to secure this please attach the following condition to any permission granted in respect of this application:

“No development shall take place until the applicant or developer has secured the implementation of a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said development shall only be implemented in accordance with the scheme thereby approved.”

Reason: To record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset in accordance with Policy 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework*.

Determining Issues

The main consideration in the determination of the application are the impact of the demolition of the existing outbuildings on the character and appearance of the

Conservation Area and archeological remains on the site.

Considerations

1. **Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area and archaeological remains**

The outbuildings to be demolished are considered to be of no high architectural significance. Their removal would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Archaeological Officer advises that the demolition works are however considered to have the potential to affect a heritage asset with an archeological interest, namely, the medieval and post-medieval settlement of Billington. This is a heritage asset of regional significance. The works required by the demolition of the existing buildings on the site will have a negative and detrimental impact on any archaeological remains the site contains causing a loss of significance to the heritage asset they represent. This is not an over-riding constraint on the proposed development provided that the applicant takes appropriate measures to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset with an archaeological interest. Such measures will comprise the investigation and recording of any archaeological remains that are affected by the development in line with Policy 141 of the *NPPF*. A condition is therefore considered appropriate to ensure the investigation and recording of any archaeological deposits that may be affected by the development in line with the National Policy Framework.

2. **Other matters**

The Parish Council's objections have been noted. However, it is considered that, with adequate safeguards achieved through planning conditions and informatives there would be no detrimental harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and heritage assets on the site.

Recommendation

That Conservation Area Consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following:

- 1 The works shall begin not later than three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 **A full, clear and fully referenced photographic record of all agricultural outbuildings to be demolished shall be supplied to the Local Planning Authority, prior to demolition.**

Reason : To record and advance understanding of the significance of the grouping of farm buildings in the Conservation Area in accordance with Policy 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework*.

- 3 **No development shall take place until the applicant or developer has secured the implementation of a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said development shall only be implemented in accordance with the scheme thereby approved.**

Reason: To record and advance understanding of the significance of

the heritage asset in accordance with Policy 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework*.

- 4 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers CBC/01 - CBC/07.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Reasons for Granting

The proposed demolition works would, with appropriate conditions, enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and preserve the archaeological remains on the site thereby conforming to the development plan policies comprising policies ENV7 and ENV6 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, BE8 of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review and national advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and the supplementary planning guidance, 'Design in Central Bedfordshire, A Guide for Development', 2010 .

Notes to Applicant

1. This consent relates only to that required under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and does not include any consent or approval under any other enactment or under the Building Regulations. Any other consent or approval which is necessary must be obtained from the appropriate authority.
2. In accordance with Regulation 3 (5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings And Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990, the Council hereby certify that the proposal as hereby approved conforms with the relevant policies of the Development Plan comprising of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (the East of England Plan and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy), Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011 and the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review and material considerations do not indicate otherwise. The policies which refer are as follows:

Regional Spatial Strategy
East of England Plan (May 2008)

ENV6 The Historic Environment
ENV7 Quality in the Built Environment

South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review

BE8 Design Considerations

3. Please note that the unnumbered drawings submitted in connection with this application have been given unique numbers by the Local Planning Authority. The numbers can be sourced by examining the plans on the View a Planning Application pages of the Council's website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

DECISION

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