

## **Item No. 9**

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER</b>	<b>CB/12/01536/FULL</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Building adj. to 22 Long Close, Lower Stondon, Henlow, SG16 6JS</b>
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>Conversion of office building into a one bedroom dwelling.</b>
<b>PARISH</b>	<b>Stondon</b>
<b>WARD</b>	<b>Arlesey</b>
<b>WARD COUNCILLORS</b>	<b>Cllrs Dalgarno, Drinkwater &amp; Wenham</b>
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>	<b>Mark Spragg</b>
<b>DATE REGISTERED</b>	<b>04 May 2012</b>
<b>EXPIRY DATE</b>	<b>29 June 2012</b>
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>Burke Enterprises LLP</b>
<b>AGENT</b>	<b>Wastell &amp; Porter Architects</b>
<b>REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE</b>	<b>Requested by Cllr Drinkwater. Not convinced it is suitable for conversion.</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED DECISION</b>	<b>Full Application - Granted</b>

### **Site Location:**

The application site comprises a brick built flat roofed building 4.9 x 7.2m with a flat felt roof. The building is located on a static mobile home park for the over 50's, sited between two homes, No's 20 and 22. The building was apparently previously used as an office and washing facility, however for a number of years has remained unused.

The site is located within the settlement envelope of Lower Stondon.

### **The Application:**

Full planning permission is sought for a conversion of the building to a one bed dwelling. The proposal would include replacing the flat roof with a 3.6m high pitched tiled roof to match the adjacent park homes. The existing door and window on the west elevation would be blocked up and the existing walls insulated. A door and window would be provided at the front, with French doors and a window at the rear with a rooflight proposed to serve the shower room. An amenity area would be provided at the rear.

## **RELEVANT POLICIES:**

### **National Planning Policy Framework (2012)**

### **Core Strategy and Development Management Policies for Central Bedfordshire (North)**

**CS1: Development Strategy**

**CS2: Developer Contributions**

**CS14: High Quality Development**

**DM3: High Quality Development**

**DM4: Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes**

**Nb. (In accordance with Annexe 1: "Implementation", paragraph 215, of the National Planning Policy Framework, the above policies are considered to be broadly consistent with the NPPF and have therefore been given significant weight in the determination of this application.**

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

### **Design in Central Bedfordshire: A guide for development**

### **Planning History**

None relevant

### **Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)**

Stondon Parish Council - Object to the application on the grounds of the close proximity to neighbouring park homes and representations made in regard to fire regulations. However, the Council feels it has limited expertise in these matters and would therefore refer the matter to CBC for a more informed decision.

Neighbours - Letter of objection received from the Regency Court Residents Association. The comments made are summarised as follows:

- The building never was an office and was a shower/wash block which is now in poor condition
- The adjacent park homes both have windows facing the building
- The proposed new roof would impact on the amenity of then neighbouring plots
- The building would breach the 6 metre fire separation zone

### **Consultations/Publicity responses**

Highways - The site is served by a private road and there would be no issues relating to a public road.

Private Sector Housing - The proposal just complies with the statutory minimum room sizes. Building Control would need to ensure that the building is compliant.

Bedfordshire Fire Safety Officer - As the building is constructed with materials of limited combustibility and that all openings facing adjoining units are to be bricked in. The Fire Authority do not object to the plans to convert the property to living accommodation. Any fire risk assessment covering the site as a whole will need to be reviewed in order to reflect this change. As the building is constructed of materials of limited combustibility and that all openings facing adjoining units are to be bricked in. The fire authority do not object to the plans to convert the property to living accommodation. Any fire risk assessment covering the site as a whole will need to be reviewed in order to reflect this change.

## **Determining Issues**

**The main considerations of the application are;**

- 1. The Principle of development;**
- 2. Impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area;**
- 3. Suitability of development in terms of amenity of future occupiers**
- 4. Impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties**
- 5. Highways/parking**
- 6. Other matters**

## **Considerations**

### **1. The Principle of Development**

The application site is within the Lower Stondon settlement envelope and therefore the principle of new residential development is supported by Policy DM4 of the Core Strategy. The reuse of a redundant building within a residential area is supported by the recently issued National Planning Policy Framework which has a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 14). The encouragement for local planning authorities to support the reuse of empty buildings to provide housing is also referred to in paragraph 51 of the document.

### **2. The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area**

The application site relates to an existing building, which is utilitarian in appearance, with a flat roof and few openings, compared to the adjacent mobile homes with shallow pitched roofs and large windows. It is currently also unused and in a poor condition. The proposal seeks to provide a pitched roof on the building, similar to the neighbouring homes. In addition, the application proposes rendering the existing painted brick walls and the addition of a door and larger window on the front elevation. It is considered that the design changes made to the building would enhance the site appearance and result in a development more sympathetic to its surroundings.

### **3. Suitability of development in terms of amenity of future occupiers**

The proposed one bedroom dwelling would be small, with an internal floorspace of approximately 28sqm. However, it would contain all facilities for day to day living, a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen/living room. The bedroom at 6.9sqm would be served by a large window, whilst the kitchen/living room measuring 11.7sqm would have French doors giving access to the outdoor amenity area and a window. The rear elevation would face in a southerly direction and as such would attract a large amount of sunlight. The shower room would also have light and ventilation provided by a rooflight.

There is no specific guidance contained within either the Core Strategy, Central Bedfordshire Design Guidance or in the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of minimum living spaces other than a general requirement to seek a good standard of amenity for future occupiers.

The Council does have a document adopted in March 2010 and used by the Private Sector Housing department to consider the suitability of premises for letting out. The document "Amenity Guidance for Houses in Multiple occupation and other house" considers matters of living space and has a specific section relating to space standards. Whilst the document is not adopted for planning purposes and has such carries little material weight it does nevertheless provide some objectivity in considering what could be considered an acceptable living space, as the document forms a starting point for consideration of the suitability of premises by the Council's Housing team.

In respect of one person units the document refers to the minimum space acceptable for a living room/kitchen is 10sqm, with the minimum space for a bedroom being 6sqm. Based on respective internal dimensions of 11.7sqm and 6.9sqm the building just complies with the dimensions referred to in the document. In the absence of any other amenity standards and given that the building would attract a good amount of sunlight by virtue of its south facing rear elevation and the proposed new openings it is considered that on balance the accommodation would be suitable for a one bed unit.

The outdoor amenity area at the rear would have an area of 13sqm. It would be south facing and provide a suitable private sitting out area which could accommodate a clothes dryer if required. Based on the small size of the proposed dwelling and the occupation of the site by older residents it is considered that the size of amenity area would be acceptable.

### **4. Impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties**

The application site is within a mobile home park where the layout is generally more open than typical residential layouts. Both neighbouring units have side windows facing towards the side of the application building. However, as the existing side west facing door and window is proposed to be removed there would be no loss overlooking between units and indeed the removal of the existing openings could be considered beneficial to the occupants of No.20.

As the use of the building and amenity area at the rear would introduce a use where currently there is none there would inevitably be some impact on the occupants of No's 20 and 22. However, it is not considered that the relationship would be significantly different to all other units within the park. Privacy between gardens could be ensured by appropriate boundary fencing if necessary, though most gardens in the park appear to have only low screening.

There is a panel fence at the rear of the site, which abuts Cooper Close and it is not considered that the proposal would result in any undue loss of privacy or amenity to the occupants of the closest property No. 3.

On the basis of the above it is not considered that there would be any significant harm to neighbouring properties.

## **5. Highways**

The proposed development is shown with one parking space measuring 4.7 x 3.9m. Whilst the current standards require that a space of 2.4 x 5.0m. Whilst the parking space at 4.7m in length would be slightly below the current standard parking space the width of the parking bay would enabled angled parking, which would also facilitate access and egress. The Highways team have raised no objection as highway safety would not be affected, Long Close being a quiet private no through road. Furthermore, given the modest size of the unit serving a single over 50 occupier it would be less likely that the parking space would be occupied by a large family car.

On balance, and given that there is no Highways Officer objection it is considered that the parking arrangement is acceptable.

## **6. Other matters**

Concerns have been raised regarding the potential fire safety risk from such accommodation, being within the 6 metre fire safety zone applied to mobile park sites. However, such regulations apply only to mobile homes and not to brick buildings. In fact blocking up a side window to the building would be likely to reduce fire risk. The Council's Private Sector Housing unit, who are responsible for dealing with such licence requirements on mobile home sites, have raised no objection. In addition the Bedfordshire Fire Safety Officer has confirmed that there is no fire safety issues raised by the development, given the type of construction and the blocking up of the side openings.

A draft unilateral undertaking was submitted with the application, and the applicants have agreed to make the required infrastructure contributions in accordance with the Council's Planning Obligations Strategy.

## Recommendation

### That Planning Permission be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions

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

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 **The use shall not commence until a scheme for the side boundary treatment of the rear amenity area has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be fully implemented before the development is first occupied or brought into use and thereafter retained.**

**Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers.**

- 3 The external finish of the development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development is in keeping with its surroundings.

- 4 The existing side openings in the building shall be blocked up prior to occupation and thereafter retained as such. Furthermore, notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no windows shall be inserted into the flank elevation of the building.

Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring residents and to ensure compliance with fire safety requirements.

- 5 Notwithstanding any provision of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no works shall be commenced for the extension of the building hereby approved nor any material alteration of their external appearance until detailed plans and elevations have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Due to the limited size of the plot and to protect the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties.

- 6 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers [ PL01].

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

## Reasons for Granting

The proposed conversion, albeit small, would nevertheless provide an acceptable level of internal and outdoor amenity for future occupiers and would not have any negative impact on the character of the area, on neighbouring residential amenity or on highway safety. As such the proposal is in conformity with Policies CS1, CS2, CS14, DM3 and DM4 of the Core Strategy and Management Policies (2009), The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Supplementary Planning Guidance, A Guide for Development (2010)

## Notes to Applicant

1. This permission relates only to that required under the Town & Country Planning Acts 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.

## DECISION

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