

Item No. 8

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/12/03129/FULL
LOCATION	Little Park Farm, Station Road, Ampthill, Bedford, MK45 2RE
PROPOSAL	Demolition of commercial building and construction of dwelling with associated landscaping
PARISH	Ampthill
WARD	Ampthill
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Duckett, Blair & Smith
CASE OFFICER	Annabel Gammell
DATE REGISTERED	31 August 2012
EXPIRY DATE	26 October 2012
APPLICANT	Mr Olney
AGENT	Phillips Planning Services Ltd
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	Whilst it might be nominally Green Belt there are other residences there who's owners find the current building an eyesore and a health hazard too
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Full Application - Refused

Site Location:

Little Park Farm is situated between the A507 Ampthill By-pass and the railway line to the west of the town of Ampthill. The site lies within the South Bedfordshire Green Belt and in open countryside. Little Park Farm is a small collection of dwellings which are either Listed buildings or curtilage listed buildings, and a utilitarian agricultural style building, which is currently being used as a builders store.

The Application:

Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the utilitarian agricultural style building which is currently being used for commercial purposes, and the erection of a dwelling house.

The proposed dwelling would be L-shaped, constructed of stained timber boarding and would have a dual-pitched roof measuring 2.6m to the eaves and 6.5m to the ridge. The roof would have 6 roof lights within it, one bedroom is shown at 1st floor level. The ground floor area would be some 141 sqm, with a first floor area of some 46.8 sqm, the total floor area for the proposed dwelling would be some 187.8 sqm.

The building to be demolished is a utilitarian agricultural style building, although it is used for a commercial purpose. It is rectangular in shape some 3.6m to the eaves and 7.2m to the ridge, the building is some 490 sqm. It is currently used as a storage facility for building materials.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Policy Planning Framework (2012)

Requiring good design
Protecting Green Belt Land

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

**Regional Spatial Strategy
East of England Plan (May 2008)**
ENV6 Design

Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011
None relevant

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies - North 2009

DM1 Renewable energy
DM2 Sustainable construction of new buildings
DM3 High Quality Design

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Central Bedfordshire Design Guide - Design Supplement 4
Planning Obligations Strategy

Planning History

No planning history directly relating to the barn building or the land associated land.

**Representations:
(Parish & Neighbours)**

Town Council	Support the application
Neighbour Response	Two letters of support received from Nettle Barn and Stewart House.

Consultations/Publicity responses

Conservation Officer Concern raised:

Previous pre-application advice was provided for a replacement dwelling on the site which stated that the replacement development was appropriate in height, however, the footprint was too large making the building appear dominant in the setting of the surrounding buildings. Furthermore, the proposed design was considered too domestic in this rural setting and will have the potential to appear too prominent due to its incongruity.

The applicant has sought to rectify concerns regarding presence of overly domestic features such as the chimney stacks and porch, which have been removed. However, there are still concerns regarding the size of the dwelling and its potential to appear too prominent and out of character in the setting of the farm house and the surrounding barns. In particular, the building is much wider than the surrounding slim and modest barns. Furthermore, the proposed design of the building still presents a number of large window and door openings, notably on the main front elevation, which gives more of a domestic, and somewhat cluttered, appearance to the building. This cluttered appearance is also further exacerbated by the lack of unity in the size and

design of the windows on this elevation.

The plans appear to show that the height of the proposed dwelling has been raised from that submitted at pre-application stage; therefore a comparative analysis would need to be undertaken on site to ascertain the impact of this increased height on the surrounding single storey barns.

As stated at pre-application stage, it is recommended that the applicant look at ways of reducing the size of the proposed dwelling, notably the width, to something more closely matching the slim and modest curtilage listed barns surrounding the application site. Furthermore, the number of windows needs to be reduced both in number and size, and a more simple and robust design be sought to allow the building to fully integrate into its rural farmland surroundings and reduce its impact on the setting of the Grade II listed farmhouse, curtilage listed barns and Grade II listed John Crosse House.

Planning
Officer

Policy Recommend Refusal:

The proposal is for a demolition of a commercial building and yard currently used as storage for a builder to a new 3 bed single storey dwelling. The dwelling will be smaller than the existing building and will be built to the character of a converted barn.

The application makes no comment on the viability of the existing use, whether the owner wants the development, if the builder has another storage site as replacement, this is inline with Policy 8 of the DS. The site is an active employment site in the countryside and should be retained. The planning policies are more favourable for re-development if the site is vacant/or not as its a brown field site as paragraph 89 of the NPPF states, as long as the impact is less than the current development. Given the site is still in use this provides vital employment in the countryside. The application does not state how many workers depend on the site for employment. This will need to be considered.

A dwelling built to the characteristics of a barn conversion will arguably have a better effect on the listed buildings adjacent the property compared to the current use. This is inline with para 55 of the NPPF.

In conclusion from a planning policy perspective the application should be rejected. Whilst a dwelling could have a more desirable effect on the listed buildings adjacent, the new policies in the Draft Development Strategy and that of the NPPF reject the conversion of an existing employment site which is still in use. No evidence has been submitted contrary to the employment site being unviable. The site provides vital employment in the Green Belt and should be maintained. The site is outside of the settlement envelope and it is presumed that there are better sites for housing within the envelope.

Tree and Landscape
officer

No objection

Ecology	No objection
Highways	No objection
Archaeology	No objection
Public Protection	No comments received

Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are;

- 1.Principle of development
- 2.Design and residential amenity considerations
3. Highway
4. Pre-application Advice
5. Any other considerations

Considerations

1. Principle of development

The dwelling would be outside any defined settlement envelope, it is within the open countryside and the South Bedfordshire Green Belt. The principle of residential development is unacceptable, unless it is for a rural worker, or Very Special Circumstances can be ascertained.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) states:

Paragraph 14

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development for both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision-taking this means:

- *approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless:*
 - *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole;*
 - or
 - *specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.*

Paragraph 19

The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth.

Paragraph 55

To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

Paragraph 56

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

Paragraph 64

Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Paragraph 79

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Paragraph 89

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- *buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- *provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- *the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- *limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or*
- *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.*

Policy Conclusions:

The most relevant planning policy constraint relating to this application its location within the South Bedfordshire Green Belt, the five purposes of the Green Belt are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

From a planning policy perspective the site would not be deemed to be appropriate development within the Green Belt and is therefore considered unacceptable. The justification given within the application for allowing the demolition of the building and the erection of a dwelling is Paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework, specifically this section:

- *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary*

buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

Previously Developed Land within the National Planning Policy Framework is defined as:

*Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. **This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.***

It is accepted that this land is occupied currently by a permanent structure, however it is considered that this building was designed for the purposes of agriculture and used to that effect. This therefore would not be considered a brownfield site under the definition within the National Planning Policy Framework. Agricultural buildings are not considered inappropriate within Green Belt locations. It is accepted that this building may currently be used for commercial enterprise but it does not appear that it was designed as a commercial building. Indeed the building is of an agricultural appearance. The applicant has submitted aerial photos indicating that these may have been taken in the 1970 and advises the agricultural use ceased after 1984, however these do not demonstrate that the building has been in a commercial use since that time and no Lawful Development Certificate has been submitted.

It is considered that although the proposed building is smaller in scale due to the residential use it would be inappropriate within the Green Belt. Whilst each application should be considered on its merits, it is important that a clear case is demonstrated to override the presumption against inappropriate development having regard to the large number of similar sized agricultural buildings within the Green Belt.

The removal of a builders yard may provide some environmental improvement however the Government supports reuse of existing buildings (NPPF) for commercial purposes, and we are not aware of any complaints arising from the use of this building as a commercial builders yard. In the circumstances we do not think that Very Special Circumstances have been demonstrated, such as to outweigh the strong policy presumption against the development.

2. Design and residential amenity considerations

Design Considerations:

At the time pre-application advice was sought concerns were raised to the design of the dwelling in relation to the proximity with the Listed and curtilage listed buildings. Although alterations have been made, there are still concerns regarding the size of the dwelling and its potential to appear too prominent and out of character in the setting of the farm house and the surrounding barns.

It is considered that the building is much wider than the surrounding slim and modest barns, this leads to a bulky appearance out of character with the area. The proposed

design of the building still has a number of large window and door openings, notably on the main front elevation, which gives more of a domestic (less traditional barn like), and somewhat cluttered, appearance to the building. This cluttered appearance is also further exacerbated by the lack of unity in the size and design of the windows on this elevation.

It is considered that the design would not be of high enough quality to warrant approval in this sensitive location. This is in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide, the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy DM3 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.

Impact upon neighbouring properties:

It is considered that the proposed building would be smaller than the building currently in existence, in both bulk and height, it is considered that the proposed dwelling has been designed to ensure there would not be a significant impact upon the privacy, light, outlook of cause an overbearing impact upon any neighbouring properties.

Two letters of support for the application were received from neighbouring properties, stating that an additional dwelling would be preferable to the existing structure.

3. Highway considerations

There are two vehicular accesses into Little Park Farm development, it is considered that an additional dwelling on the site would be acceptable in terms of highway safety.

4. Pre-application Advice

Pre-application advice was sought before the submission of the planning application. It was stated that the application would be unlikely to receive officer support. It is considered that this decision is in accordance with the advice given.

5. Other Considerations

Planning Obligations:

The application was accompanied by a signed Unilateral Undertaking in accordance with Central Bedfordshire Supplementary Planning Document. The undertaking was for £14,236.00 for a three bedroom dwelling within Ampthill.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission be Refused for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposed development, by nature of its location outside any defined Settlement Envelope and within the South Bedfordshire Green Belt would represent inappropriate development and would be harmful to the openness, rural character and the visual amenities of the Green Belt. As such the development is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy DM3 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2009.

Notes to Applicant

DECISION

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