

Item No. 8

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/14/02713/FULL
LOCATION	Home Farm, 1 High Street, Wrestlingworth, Sandy, SG19 2EW
PROPOSAL	Conversion of existing barns (with partial demolition) and construction of new dwellings to form 7 new dwellings.
PARISH	Wrestlingworth/Cockayne Hatley
WARD	Potton
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Mrs Gurney & Zerny
CASE OFFICER	Samantha Boyd
DATE REGISTERED	11 July 2014
EXPIRY DATE	05 September 2014
APPLICANT	County Land & Development Ltd.
AGENT	Sherwood Architects Ltd
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	Cllr Call in. Cllr Gurney - Reason. The village is concerned over the development.
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Full Application - Refusal Recommended

Reason for Recommendation

The proposal would not constitute infill development and would, by virtue of the scale, design and siting of Plots 6 and 7, would cause significant and unacceptable harm to the appearance of the site, the setting of the listed buildings, and the character and appearance of the open countryside. The development would be unacceptable in principle and would be contrary to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policies DM3 (High Quality Development), DM4 (Development Within and Outside of Settlement Envelopes), DM13 (Heritage in Development) of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009), Design in Central Bedfordshire (2014).

In the absence of a complete agreement securing the provision of affordable housing and financial contributions, the development would fail to mitigate its impact on existing local infrastructure and would be contrary to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policies CS2 (Developer Contributions) and CS7 (Affordable Housing) of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.

Site Location:

Home Farm was formerly a working farm on the east side of High Street in Wrestlingworth. The existing farm yard area comprises a dovecote barn, singles-

trey, mostly open fronted barn to the south of the access in to the site a central, square arrangement of one and two-storey barns and a steel framed grain store to the east of the site.

The farm buildings, apart from the grain store, are in generally good condition and are listed by virtue of falling within the historic curtilage of Home Farmhouse (to the south and outside of the application site), which is a Grade II Listed Building. The dovecote has particular historic and aesthetic value and remains intact. The site is edged to the east and south by existing vegetation and shrubs and on the High Street frontage there are four Ash trees.

To the north are modern bungalows and residential properties of mixed character lie opposite.

Much of the site falls within the Settlement Envelope for Wrestlingworth (all but the southwest corner, including the Dovecote). The site also falls within the Environment Agency Flood Zone 3.

The Application:

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing barns to three dwellings and the erection of four new dwellings together with garaging, amenity areas and parking provision.

Plots 1 and 2 would be semi-detached, new buildings on the frontage of the site with the High Street with garages to the rear.

Plot 3 would be formed from the conversion of an existing farm building which would incorporate the Dovecote together with a glazed link and a detached garage.

Plots 4 and 5 would largely comprise the conversion of the central square of brick built barns together with garages and courtyard amenity space.

Plots 6 and 7 would be detached new-builds at the rear of the site following the demolition of the existing grain store.

The application is submitted in conjunction with an application for Listed Building Consent under ref no. CB/14/02714/LB.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009)

- CS1 Development Strategy
- CS2 Developer Contributions
- CS5 Providing Homes
- CS7 Affordable Housing
- CS13 Climate Change
- CS14 High Quality Development

CS15	Heritage
CS16	Landscape and Woodland
CS18	Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
DM1	Renewable Energy
DM2	Sustainable Construction of New Buildings
DM3	High Quality Development
DM4	Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes
DM10	Housing Mix
DM13	Heritage in Development
DM14	Landscape and Woodland
DM15	Biodiversity

Central Bedfordshire Revised Design Guide (2014)

Appendix F (Parking Strategy) of the Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan (2012)

Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2009)

Recent Planning History:

CB/13/03262/FULL	Conversion of existing barns (with partial demolition) and construction of new dwellings to form 7 new dwellings. Withdrawn: 2 December 2013
CB/13/03263/LB	Listed Building: Conversion of existing barns (with partial demolition) and construction of new dwellings to form 7 new dwellings. Withdrawn: 2 December 2013
CB/12/02468/FULL	Erection of double garage, poly tunnel, access gate & parking area Approved: 19 September 2012
CB/12/02471/FULL	Change of use of grazing land to paddock, erection of stable block and sand school Approved: 18 September 2012
CB/14/00619/Full	Conversion of existing barns (with partial demolition) and construction of new dwellings to form 7 new dwellings. Refused: 16 April 2014
CB/14/00620/LB	Conversion of existing barns (with partial demolition) and construction of new dwellings to form 7 new dwellings. Refused: 16 April 2014

Representations:

(Parish & Neighbours)

Wrestlingworth Parish Council

The following note, prepared by the Planning Group (councillors Ram and Turner) after discussion of a draft at the Parish Council meeting on 04 August 2014, is the response of the Parish Council to the latest Home Farm planning application - response date by 12 August 2014. This is the third application and the Parish Council view is much as before. Our formal response to the second application should be read in association with this one.

To our knowledge no letters have been received from residents about the latest application.

It appears from written papers submitted with the latest application that its predecessor was rejected for three reasons, identified below. This response updates the Parish position on each of them, on the assumption that they will form the main focus of assessment in the new application.

1. The scale design, and situation of the buildings, will cause significant and unacceptable harm to the appearance of the site' and contravene a number of planning policies. PARISH RESPONSE TO PRESENT APPLICATION. The parish understanding is that only units 6 and 7 were offensive because they do not constitute infill development. We have no problems with the scale design and situation of buildings.

2. There was no flood risk assessment. PARISH RESPONSE TO PRESENT APPLICATION. One has now been made which we understand from the developer is agreed in principle with the Environment Agency subject to minor additions. We accept this professional judgement.

3. Lack of agreement on affordable housing. PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO PRESENT APPLICATION. Written assurances were given at the time of the second application that £100,000 would be made available for providing this on another site, but there was no legal agreement. We understand the CBC housing officer and the developer are now completing a formal agreement and the Planning Department has confirmed that the applicant has offered £100,000 as a commuted sum towards off site provision of affordable housing. However this has not been formerly agreed by CBC as yet and a S106 Agreement will need to be signed in order to secure the amount. I understand from the Planning Department this might take some time. We cannot approve the application without this agreement being in place.

The overall position of W&CH Parish Council is that we consider this development to be of benefit to Wrestlingworth and that the scheme overall is well designed. However, as pointed out above, our support for it is conditional on a legal agreement being completed to make £100,000 available for off-site affordable housing.

Neighbours

Four letters received summarised as -

The revised application does not address the previous reasons to refuse. Plots 1,2 6 and 7 remain outside the footprint of existing building and will change the appearance of the site. The development does not constitute infill.

Will alter the character and appearance of the village.

Affordable housing should be provided. A commuted sum does not guarantee the housing would be provided in the village and it would appear there is no land left to development.

There does not seem to be a genuine attempt to provide affordable housing.

There will be an increase in traffic causing danger to pedestrians and traffic. There should be traffic calming measures in place if development is allowed.

No objections to plot 1 and 2 but bungalows should be built in line with existing dwellings along High Street.

Site Notice

11/08/14

Application Advertised

27/07/14

Consultations/Publicity responses

Archaeology

The proposed development site is located within the core of the medieval village of Wrestlingworth (HER 17167), a heritage asset with archaeological interest as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The early phases of the development of the settlement at Wrestlingworth are obscure. The first documented reference is in the 12th century but its origins are likely to be substantially earlier, probably in the Late Saxon period. In the medieval period the settlement was larger than it is at present and remains of the settlement survive as well preserved earthworks to the north east of Home Farm (HER 3421). Elsewhere in the village archaeological investigation has shown that buried

archaeological deposits survive.

The application includes an Archaeological Field Evaluation and Heritage Asset Assessment (Albion Archaeology Document 2013/25, Version 1.0, 5th February 2013). This was prepared for an earlier application for the development of this site (CB/13/03262/FULL), and although it has not been updated the information it contains is still relevant. It comprises the results of a trial trench evaluation and an assessment of the impact of the proposed development. It was not possible to investigate all the proposed trial trenches because some of them contained contaminated material, therefore, it has not been possible to identify the presence, absence or character of archaeological remains on the whole of the proposed development site. In those trenches that it was possible to investigate archaeological features were identified, particularly in the north western part of the site. These consisted of a number of ditches and a pit dated by pottery to the 12th - 13th centuries and likely to represent domestic occupation rather than agricultural activity. The presence of residual Saxo-Norman pottery in these features also indicates that remains of activity of that period also exists within or in close proximity to the proposed development site.

The Assessment (5.2) says that the proposed development will have a significant adverse impact on sub-surface archaeological remains although it suggests that the loss of information will be low. The development will have a major negative impact on buried archaeological remains, but I do not agree that the loss of information will be low. The investigation of rural Saxon and medieval settlements to examine diversity, characterise settlement forms and understand how they appear, grow, shift and disappear is a local and regional archaeological research objective (Wade 2000, 24-25, Oake 2007, 14 and Medlycott 2011, 70). Therefore, the archaeological remains identified at Home Farm are of regional significance. Furthermore, although some of the trenches did not contain any significant archaeological remains because other of the trial trenches could not be excavated, it is not possible to be certain that there are other, as yet unidentified archaeological remains surviving within the site.

Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of heritage assets before they are lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to

make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible (CLG 2012). Policy 45 of the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (Revised Pre-submission Version, June 2014) echoes this and also requires all developments that affect heritage assets with archaeological interest to give due consideration to the significance of those assets and ensure that any impact on the archaeological resource which takes place as a result of the development is appropriately mitigated.

The proposed development will have a negative and irreversible impact upon archaeological deposits of medieval date that are known to survive at the site and, therefore, upon the significance of the heritage assets with archaeological interest. This does not present an over-riding constraint on the development providing that the applicant takes appropriate measures to record and advance understanding of the heritage assets. This will be achieved by the investigation and recording of any archaeological deposits that may be affected by the development; the post-excavation analysis of any archive material generated and the publication of a report on the works. 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 a written scheme of archaeological investigation; that includes post excavation analysis and publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development hereby approved shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.”

Reason: To record and advance understanding of the heritage assets with archaeological interest which will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of the development.

This request is in line with the requirements of Chapter 12 of the NPPF and policy 45 of the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (Revised Pre-submission Version, June 2014).

Ecology

I was consulted on the pre-application for this development 12/4441 and in my advice I recommended, in line with that of the bat and owl assessment, updated surveys will be required. A further application was submitted in 2013 on which I commented that the Final Bat and Owl assessment was undertaken in August 2011 and it states in 5.1.1 that should redevelopment be delayed for more than one season a re-survey maybe required. Given that this application is now 3yrs post

survey date I would require an updated survey. Equally the 2011 survey was not written with reference to the current development proposals and predated the NPPF, hence ecological mitigation / enhancement has not been included.

It is likely that an EPS licence will be required to undertake works and as such I would like to see a survey update to be secured through condition which will include details on construction methods, timing / work schedules and proposed ecological enhancement associated with the proposal to ensure protected species are not harmed as a result of the development. Such enhancements may include provision of a Barn Owl nest box on one of the buildings nearest to the meadow land to the rear of the development and bat entry points into the roof spaces for summer roosting. Swifts are also known in the area and the provision of swift nest box bricks in the buildings would be welcomed.

Housing Officer	Development	<p>I would expect to see 35% affordable housing or 3 affordable residential units. The SHMA identifies a split of 63% Social/Affordable Rent and 37% Intermediate tenures such as Shared Ownership. In this case I would like to see 2 units for affordable rent and 1 for Intermediate Tenure. I would like to see the affordable units integrated with the market housing to promote community cohesion & tenure blindness. I would also expect all units to meet at the very minimum the code for sustainable homes level 3 and meet all HCA design and quality standards.</p>
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However the scheme has viability issues, which shows affordable housing cannot be achieved on site and therefore a commuted sum for affordable housing could be acceptable.

Strategic Officer	Landscape	<p>Landscape impact - this revised scheme indicates additional planting to the rear of the site, which will assist in mitigation. However, I still feel that Plots 6 and 7 are for substantial properties which will urbanise and intrude into views from the surrounding countryside.</p> <p>As per my previous comments, I am unhappy with the path detail serving Plot 1 off the High Street. This house could be accessed from one path leading from the new road, a typical detail for cottages in a village. I am concerned that creating a path direct from the High Street will damage tree roots and detract from the landscape character of the verge, which is a valuable local feature. The path would also cut across the rising ground and</p>
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probably require steps .

A simpler design would also benefit the parking and front paths for Plots 4 and 5.

I do not object to the principle of development, but feel attention to these small details would enhance the scheme. At present the proposals have insufficient mitigation and are still an overdevelopment of a site which needs to respect it's location on the village edge. As such it detracts from local character and conflicts with Policy 58.

A full planting scheme will be required.

LDF Team

Development within and beyond Settlement Envelopes (CS11 and DM4)

Policy DM4 states that in small villages development will be limited to infill residential development. Paragraph 11.1.7 defines infill development and an assessment needs to be made as to whether the site meets this definition.

The Dovecote, proposed garden and new garages of Plot 3 fall beyond the Settlement Envelope. Policy DM4 of the adopted Core Strategy states that beyond Settlement Envelopes limited extensions to gardens will be permitted provided that they do not harm the character of the area and that they must be suitable landscaped/screened. Given that the area beyond the Settlement Envelope appears to be landscaped and therefore residential in character, locating the garden beyond the Settlement Envelope is therefore considered acceptable in principle. The erection of garages are considered contrary to policy but when considered alongside the wider scheme this may not necessarily be a grounds for refusal.

Policy CS11 supports the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings beyond the Settlement Envelope and para 6.5.3 acknowledges that residential conversions may be appropriate in some circumstances. Given that the rest of the site and adjacent buildings are proposed for residential use, a conversion of the Dovecote to form part of a dwelling could be acceptable in principle subject to meeting the requirements of policies CS15 and DM15 relating to heritage.

Policy CS7: Affordable Housing

The key issue with the proposal is the lack of affordable housing provision. The Wrestlingworth Housing Needs

Survey prepared in May 2013 identified a need for 4 affordable units in the next 10 years. Paragraph 5.4.13 and Policy CS7 of the adopted Core Strategy state that off site provision or commuted sums may be acceptable in exceptional circumstances where it can be robustly justified. A commuted sum may therefore be acceptable in principle but a sufficient timeframe will be required in order to identify a site to meet local needs. Consideration should be given to the response of the Housing Officer.

In relation to the Listed Building application (CB/14/02714/LB) there are no specific comments other than ensuring that the proposal complies with policies CS15 and DM15 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD, and consideration is given to the adopted Design Guide.

It is also worth noting that the Parish Council are in the early stages of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan to guide development within the Parish.

Forest of Marston Vale	This application may be relevant for a contribution to the delivery of the Forest of Marston Vale.
Internal Drainage Board	No comments to make
Environment Agency	No objections subject to conditions relating to flood risk compensation works
Highways Officer	<p>You will be aware from my responses to the pre-app submission and the previous withdrawn application that there is no fundamental objection to the principle of residential redevelopment of the site subject to conditions.</p> <p>I note from looking at the documentation for the previous application that the applicants were agreeable to my previous requirements in respect of the junction radii, position of pedestrian access to plots 1 and 2 and also the contribution of £5000 toward off site safety enhancements.</p>
Tree and Landscape Officer	<p>The site at present consists of a number of barns and dilapidated farm buildings and the intention is to rebuild/refurbish along with the construction of a number of new buildings.</p>

Of prime importance and most readily visible from the

High Street are four Ash trees, the largest of which may just be offsite to the north. These are located alongside the road and on slightly higher ground, approx a metre higher. The trees are early mature with substantial potential for future growth. They are worthy of retention on the site and plans indicate that they are to be retained. This should be agreed.

Looking at the plans it would appear that properties on plots 1 and 2 will be within approx 10 metres of these trees. This should be acceptable but we would ask for temporary tree protection fencing to be erected in line with details and distances in BS 5837 2012 Trees in relation to Design demolition and Construction. Recommendations.

There will be the loss of a number of medium size Ash trees within the area of Plots 4,5 and 6 which would be of little significance and could be compensated for with new landscaping.

Trees shrubs and vegetation on the north and south boundaries of the site should be retained for screening purposes.

Additional landscaping detail and boundary treatment detail would be required to include species, sizes and densities of planting.

Conservation & Design
Officer

The gist of the issues is that the key conservation objective from the re-use of this now redundant farmyard complex of buildings is the securing of the future preservation of this unusual dovecote- a rare survival with almost intact interior of nesting boxes & ledges (each wall approx 13x13 boxes= 169). The exterior & interior are now showing signs of neglect & dilapidation so I am most anxious that it does not deteriorate further

The negotiations with agent/ applicant have- from my point of view- concentrated very much on finding a scheme that allows the dovecote interior to remain intact, which could well include some enabling element in the calculation of the balance of conversion & new development for the site to make it economically viable & positively encourage in terms of NPPF. The frontage new 2 small dwellings (really reflecting the simple forms of the outbuildings opposite) did not seem to be particularly contentious however there were concerns about the principle of new 2 dwellings at the rear of the site, in place of the large & ungainly modern farm sheds. With previous application they appeared too bulky & obtrusive

for the rear part/ rural edge of the site, with views back from the footpath by the church to the north- but if scaled down to single, or possibly 1 & a half storey, & simple in design- perhaps more like the new frontage houses, this would not seem unreasonable, I feel, in order to save the important dovecote.

Clearly the balance of any new development has to feel right for the site provided you are satisfied that this is not overdoing the new build element- then no objection to the revised proposed conversions (to 3 no. dwellings) & new dwellings (4 no.)- subject to the usual high quality design required in terms of all materials- buildings & paving/ surfacing/ edgings/ kerbs & criteria of the Barns Checklist. Suggest sec. 106 to secure the repair of the dovecote ahead of start of any new development.

Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are;

1. The principle of the development
2. Affordable housing and developer contributions
3. The impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
4. Impact on the setting of the listed building
5. Neighbouring amenity
6. Highways and Parking
7. Flood risk
8. Other issues

Considerations

1. The principle of the development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act set out that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site lies within the village settlement envelope for Wrestlingworth, wherein the principle of residential development is considered to be acceptable, in accordance with Policy DM4 of the Council's Adopted Core Strategy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also encourages the siting of residential development within existing settlements.

Wrestlingworth is defined as a Small Village under Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy where new development is limited to infill only. Paragraph 11.1.7 of the Core Strategy defines infill development as small scale development utilising a vacant plot which should continue to complement the surrounding pattern of development. Although the conversion of the barns to residential would not fall strictly within the definition of infill, both the Core Strategy and NPPF support the

re-use of existing traditional farm buildings where these are now redundant, particularly where these are considered to be of historic or architectural interest, and where the conversion scheme would allow help secure their future use.

Plot 1 and 2 are new builds and would be located to the frontage of the site between the existing dwellings and the existing barns. These dwelling are considered to be infill.

Plot 3, 4 and 5 are the result of the conversion of the existing farm buildings and their conversion is acceptable in principle.

Plot 6 and 7 are located to the rear of the site, on the very edge of the Settlement Envelope boundary and would occupy the footprint of the existing steel framed agricultural buildings. Plot 6 and 7 are not considered to be infill development and are therefore contrary to Policy DM4. Their scale, design and siting are considered to be out of character for edge of village development. Although externally they are designed to be of a barn style appearance, their scale is considered to be too large and the overall design too domesticated. The dwellings would extend residential development to the east significantly beyond the established line of residential development along the High Street.

The applicant has stated that a scheme of 7 units is a critical number in terms of enabling the necessary repairs to be carried out to secure the future of the listed dovecote at plot 3. A confidential viability assessment including the scenario of 5, 6 and 7 unit scheme has been submitted. The reports relating to the 5 and 6 unit scheme clearly demonstrate that it would not be a viable option to reduce the size of the development. While viability is a material consideration, it does not override inappropriate design and layout in this case, particularly where the proposed dwellings would harm the character and appearance of the countryside and their location is contrary to policy.

While the principle of the conversion of the farm buildings into residential use is acceptable in this location together with the construction of Plots 1 and 2, Plots 6 and 7 are considered to be unacceptable and not in accordance with the definition of infill development as set out by Policy DM4. No material planning considerations have been identified that would outweigh the conflict with the development plan and therefore principle of the development would not be acceptable.

Notwithstanding the objection to the principle of the development, the scheme is also subject to careful consideration of the criteria set out in Policy DM3, in particular there must be sufficient on site parking and access, the conversion must be in keeping with the existing character of the buildings and there must not be an unduly adverse impact on the amenities of neighbours. Given the sensitivity of the site the overall design and layout of the site must preserve the setting of the listed building in accordance with Policy DM13 and CS15. Further, the development meets the criteria for Affordable Housing provision in accordance with Policy CS7 and Developer Contributions as required by Policy CS2 and the Planning Obligation Strategy. These issues are addressed below.

2. Affordable Housing and Developer Contributions

Policy CS7 (Affordable Housing) states that new developments for four or more dwellings should provide an element of affordable housing. 35% or more units should be affordable. In this case, at least 3 units should be affordable. The policy explains that in exceptional circumstances, and where robustly justified, commuted sums may be considered to achieve off-site provision of affordable housing.

Policy CS2 (Developer Contributions) sets out that developer contributions will be expected from any development which would individually or cumulatively necessitate additional or improved infrastructure, or exacerbate an existing deficiency.

The proposed development does not include any provision for affordable housing units, it does however include a sum of £100,000 to be used for the provision of affordable housing units elsewhere. In order for the commuted sum to be utilised within a reasonable time frame, and in accordance with time limits in a legal agreement, it would be appropriate to ensure the sum is used for affordable housing provision in Wrestlingworth and/or the adjoining Parishes. It is also noted that a Registered Provider is unlikely to be interested in taking on the units within the proposed development due to their size and specifications.

The applicant has submitted a financial appraisal to demonstrate the viability of the development. With the required works to the listed barns and the full amount of contributions as set out in the Planning Obligation Strategy and the commuted sum, the development would make a small profit that is well below the expected norm.

Under these circumstances the commuted sum towards off site affordable housing is considered to be an exceptional circumstance and acceptable in meeting the terms of Policy CS7.

At the time of preparing this report to Committee the S106 Agreement has not been agreed and signed therefore this would form a reason for refusal as without the S106 in place there is no means of securing the above contributions and as such the proposal is contrary to Policy CS2 and CS7.

3. The impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area

Policy DM3 (High Quality Development) states that the Council will:

- Be appropriate in scale and design to their setting
- Contribute positively to creating a sense of place and respect local distinctiveness through design and use of materials
- Respect and complement the context and setting of all historically sensitive sites, particularly those that are designated

Policy DM13 (Heritage in Development) states that the Council will ensure that proposals for development relating to Listed Buildings and Registered Parks and Gardens will pay particular attention to the conservation of locally distinctive features and uses.

Although the buildings at the site are not in use, they are not in a state of disrepair and the general character of the farm does not detract from the

character and appearance of the site or the wider area. The large, modern grain store at the rear of the site is not of any aesthetic value but it does represent the type of agricultural structure that corresponds with the agricultural character of the site and is not inappropriate at that transitional part of the site, on the edge with the open countryside. There are views in to the site from the East and there is a public footpath that runs past the rear of the site.

Plots 1 and 2 would be located to the front of the site and would form a pair of semi detached dwellings of barn style appearance. Plot 1 is a bungalow and Plot 2 a one and half storey dwelling. While they are set forward of the existing bungalows adjacent, their design and relationship with the existing buildings is not considered to be inappropriate within the context of the street scene. The previous refusal raised concern that these dwellings would harm the character of the street scene due to their bulky design and scale. The height of Plot 1 has been reduced to resemble the adjacent bungalows and the pitch of plot 2 increased so that it is more in keeping with the traditional barns adjacent. Dormer and rooflights have also been deleted to remove the clutter from the building.

Plot 3 is the existing part single and part one and half storey barn and include the Dovecote which would be joined to the dwelling by a glazed link. New openings are kept to a minimum and are considered to be sympathetic to the character of the barns. The reuse of the Dovecote, which would be converted to a family room/study is encouraged as its restoration and future maintenance would improve the appearance and overall quality of the site. The garden area for Plot 3 would be located outside of the Settlement Envelope boundary as would a proposed double garage. However Policy DM4 does allow for the limited extension of residential gardens beyond Settlement Envelopes providing there is no harm the character of the countryside. In such circumstances, buildings are usually not allowed on the extended garden land in order to protect the countryside from inappropriate development, however the garage is of modest proportions and sited reasonably close to the existing buildings. Furthermore given the historic value of the Dovecote, and the importance of a use being found for it so as to prevent the possibility of it falling in to disrepair, providing the residential unit with a garage would improve its attractiveness to a potential purchaser and would increase the likelihood of a new long-term use for the building being found. This would represent a material planning consideration that would outweigh the harm caused by the siting of a garage in this location.

The conversion of and garage additions to the central barns to form plots 4 and 5 would result in a sympathetic and well considered pair of units that would reflect the character of the site and would maintain the historic setting of the existing buildings.

Plots 6 and 7 would be detached two storey houses at the rear of the site, close to the boundary with the open countryside to the East and visible from public areas and footpaths. These buildings would result in residential structures being positioned at the most sensitive edge of the site and would see a residential character encroaching into the countryside, beyond the existing built environment. The result would be that significant visual harm would be caused. Residential features like gardens and boundary treatment would compound the

harmful impact.

Although this area of the site currently comprises a large agricultural grain store building, the building is characteristic of the open countryside and not inappropriate in an agricultural, rural context. Both dwellings are considered to be inappropriate in this location and would cause harm to the character and appearance of the open countryside beyond the rear boundary of the site.

Following the refused scheme plots 6 and 7 have been slightly reduced in scale and re sited, however the revision are not considered to overcome the original concerns relating to the impact these buildings would have on the character of the area.

Overall, the development would cause significant harm to the appearance of the site, to the street scene to the wider area.

4. Impact on the setting of the listed building

The proposed conversion works, alterations are considered to enhance the setting of the listed building and curtilage listed barns resulting in an improvement to the site and the setting of the buildings in general. This would comply with the NPPF and Policy DM15 of the Core Strategy.

However Plots 6 and 7 are considered to be unsympathetic in terms of overall scale and design, and this would result in harm to the setting of the historic barns and the listed Farmhouse. As such the proposal is considered to be unacceptable in this respect.

5. Neighbouring amenity

The nearest neighbour to the site would be No 4 High Street. Plot 1 (the bungalow) would stand forward of No 4 and would be set away from the boundary. A South facing window at No 4 would provide the occupiers of this property with views of the development, however it would not be of a scale or proximity to appear oppressive and cause significant loss of light, privacy or outlook.

First floor windows in Plots 4 and 5 would have long distance views of rear gardens to the north, however they would be at least 16m away (and in most cases much more) and would not face the gardens directly. Given this distance the proposal would not result in loss of amenity.

The proposed dwellings would be at least 40m away from the existing Farmhouse to the south therefore no impact would occur given the separation distance.

The proposal would not adversely impact on the amenity of the adjacent properties and is therefore acceptable in this respect.

6. Highways and parking

From a highways safety point of view there are no objections to the proposal.

However the visibility at the access point would require the removal of an established frontage hedge which would harm the existing character of the area. Therefore measures should be put in place to increase driver awareness and of compliance with the speed limit as this would be more beneficial to highway safety. A contribution of £5000 has been agreed with the applicant to be used for speed awareness measures in the High Street which could include signage and lines.

There is adequate parking within the site however in order to prevent visitors or occupants parking on the High Street, the footpath to Plot 1 should be relocated so that it shares the footpath to Plot 2 which is accessed from the development access road.

7. Flood Risk

The application site lies within Flood Zone 3 defined by the Environment Agency Flood Map as having a 1 in 100 years or less from river sources probability of flooding. Paragraph 103, footnote 20 of the NPPF (2012) requires applicants for planning permission to submit a Flood Risk Assessment when development is proposed in such locations.

The applicant has submitted an FRA and the Environment Agency have been consulted. There are no objections to the development with regard to flooding issues providing conditions are attached to any permission issued.

There are also no objection from the Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board.

8. Other issues

Trees, landscaping and ecology

Of prime importance and most readily visible from the High Street are four Ash trees, the largest of which may just be offsite to the north. These are located alongside the road and on slightly higher ground, approx a metre higher. The trees are early mature with substantial potential for future growth. They are worthy of retention on the site and plans indicate that they are to be retained.

The path from the High Street serving Plot 1 any damage the existing trees to the front of the site. This should be amended so that access is from the access road into the development.

The site requires more landscaping to mitigate the impact of the development on the edge of the village and this can be secured as a condition should planning permission be granted.

An EPS licence will be required to undertake works and as such an updated survey should be secured through condition which should include details on construction methods, timing / work schedules and proposed ecological enhancement associated with the proposal to ensure protected species are not harmed as a result of the development. Such enhancements may include provision of a Barn Owl nest box on one of the building nearest to the meadow land to the rear of the development and bat entry points into the roof spaces for

summer roosting. Swifts are also known in the area and the provision of swift nest box bricks in the buildings would be welcomed.

Human Rights/Equalities Act

Based on the information submitted there are no known issues raised in the context of the Human Rights and the Equalities Act and as such there would be no relevant implications

Recommendation

That Planning Permission be refused

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS / REASONS

- 1 The proposal would not constitute infill development and would, by virtue of the scale, design and siting of Plots 6 and 7, would cause significant and unacceptable harm to the appearance of the site, the setting of the listed buildings, and the character and appearance of the open countryside. The development would be unacceptable in principle and would be contrary to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policies DM3 (High Quality Development), DM4 (Development Within and Outside of Settlement Envelopes), DM13 (Heritage in Development) of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009), Design in Central Bedfordshire (2014).

- 2 In the absence of a complete agreement securing the provision of affordable housing and financial contributions, the development would fail to mitigate its impact on existing local infrastructure and would be contrary to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policies CS2 (Developer Contributions) and CS7 (Affordable Housing) of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.

Statement required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012 - Article 31

The application is recommended for refusal for the clear reasons set out. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant in an attempt to narrow down the reasons for refusal but fundamental objections could not be overcome. The applicant was invited to withdraw the application to seek pre-application advice prior to any re-submission but did not agree to this. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012.

DECISION

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