
APPLICATION NO.	P15/V2617/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	16.11.2015
PARISH	LETCOMBE REGIS
WARD MEMBER(S)	Yvonne Constance
APPLICANT	Mr David Maundrell
SITE	Blandys Farm Bassett Road Letcombe Regis Wantage, OX12 9LJ
PROPOSAL	Part demolition, conversion and extension of existing agricultural building to provide a single dwelling. Relocation of existing access to Bassett Road and provision of garage building adjacent to Bassett Road. (As amended by the agents email dated 12 January and attached plans which seek to amend the stone wall for timber fencing along the eastern boundary)
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	437751/186260
OFFICER	Charlotte Brewerton

SUMMARY

This application comes to planning committee as Letcombe Regis Parish Council have objected to the proposal on the grounds of the new entrance encroaching into agricultural land that is within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the proposal would seek to increase the square footage of the previously permitted dwelling and concerns over the use of the adjacent car sales business on agricultural land. There are no neighbour objections.

The main considerations in the determination of this application are:

- The Principle of Development
- Impact upon Design and Character
- Impact upon Highways
- Other Issues

Amended plans have been submitted which have now overcome the Conservation and Design Officers original holding objections with concerns to the design and rural impact. There are no highways objections and Officers consider the amenity impact to be acceptable. All other material considerations have been discussed in the report and are found to be acceptable.

Officers are therefore recommending this application for **Approval**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located at Blandys Farm which forms a cluster of agricultural buildings located just outside the settlement of the village of Letcombe Regis but within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Letcombe Basset Conservation Area sits immediately adjacent to the site. A site plan can be seen **attached** at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The building is located within a former farmyard that sits on noticeably higher land. The access runs through the centre of the site, allowing access to the large farm buildings immediately to the north of the barn, now in use as a car sales business,

and the original farmyard buildings to the west.

- 1.3 The building subject of this application is a reasonably modern Dutch barn. It was previously used as a grain store, so has few openings. It has a domed corrugated steel sheet roof, with a gable end. There are elements of brick infill, with a part brick built lean-to on the western side, and a smaller steel lean-to on the eastern side. Smaller outbuildings and sheds lie to the rear of the main building with open countryside beyond.

- 1.4 Planning permission was granted for the conversion of this redundant former agricultural building to a single dwelling in July 2014 (P14/V1091/FUL) following two previously unsuccessful applications for the conversion of the building into a dwelling.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks planning permission to amend the design of the previously approved scheme and construct a new access to the south of the site in the adjacent field to the dwelling. Proposed plans can be seen **attached** at Appendix 2.

- 2.2 The proposed scheme seeks to convert the building as before into a single four-bedroom family dwelling. The proposals look to remove the existing corrugated steel cladding from the existing Dutch barn and retain the main steel structure, reducing the number of 'bays' to three by omitting the northernmost steel frame, and removing the lean-to element to the west elevation. The remaining steel structure will be re-utilised to form the main body of the new dwelling, with single-storey extensions to the south and west providing additional living accommodation, while ensuring the barn structure remains the dominant feature.

- 2.3 In order to facilitate the new extensions, it is proposed that the existing underutilised ancillary buildings are demolished.

- 2.4 A new access from Bassett Road will be formed to the south-eastern corner of the plot, to serve the proposed dwelling and which will sweep into a private parking area shielded from the road by the proposed new single-storey flat roof garage unit. This access would replace one immediately to the south which served a timber garage building (22.5 m2), now demolished.

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1

Letcombe Regis Parish Council	Object. "Letcombe Regis Parish Council have strong reservations about this planning application for Blandys Farm. The Vale approved an application to convert the barn into a single four bedroomed dwelling house (ref P14/V1091/FUL). However this current application not only increases the square footage of the build but the request for a new entrance from Bassett Road is encroaching onto more of the agricultural land taking it out of use and this is also an AONB. The used car business which is also on the farm site has already taken out a large agricultural area."
Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council)	No objections subject to conditions.
Conservation Officer	Original Objections to stone wall along boundary. Suggest

Vale	revising. Revised plans now overcome previous objections subject to conditions.
Countryside Officer(South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse)	Nesting barn owl in stables. Revised mitigation strategy needed. Revised mitigation acceptable no objections subject to condition that implemented as per updated strategy.
Neighbour Approve (1)	We have no objections to this scheme

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P15/V1673/FUL](#) - Approved (11/11/2015)

Erection of steel framed building for the preparation of cars for sale, together with staff facilities (retrospective).

4.2 [P14/V1091/FUL](#) - Approved (10/07/2014)

Conversion of existing agricultural building to a single dwelling.

4.3 [P13/V1433/FUL](#) - Refused (16/08/2013)

Conversion of a disused agricultural building into a single dwelling. (Re-submission of refused application P12/V2069/FUL)

4.4 [P13/V0464/FUL](#) - Approved (07/05/2013)

Change of use of buildings and land from agriculture to car sales business (retrospective).

4.5 [P12/V2069/FUL](#) - Refused (21/02/2013)

Conversion of a disused agricultural building into a dwelling

4.6 [P11/V0471](#) - Approved (17/05/2011)

Change of use of land for the stationing of a mobile home for an agricultural worker for a period of three years.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;**

GS2 - Development in the Countryside

GS8 - Re-use of non vernacular buildings outside settlements

DC1 - Design

DC5 - Access

H13 - Development Elsewhere

HE1 - Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development

NE6 - The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

5.2 **Emerging Local Plan 2031 – Part 1**

The draft local plan part 1 is not currently adopted policy. Paragraph 216 of the NPPF allows for weight to be given to relevant policies in emerging plans, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, and only subject to the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of the relevant emerging policies with the NPPF. At present it is officers' opinion that the emerging Local Plan housing policies carry limited weight for decision making. The relevant policies are as follows:-

Policy No. Policy Title

Core Policy 1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Core Policy 2 Co-operation on unmet housing need for Oxfordshire

Core Policy 3 Settlement hierarchy
Core Policy 4 Meeting our housing needs
Core Policy 7 Providing supporting infrastructure and services
Core Policy 33 Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility
Core Policy 35 Promoting public transport, cycling and walking
Core Policy 36 Electronic communications
Core Policy 37 Design and local distinctiveness
Core Policy 39 The historic environment
Core Policy 42 Flood risk
Core Policy 43 Natural resources
Core Policy 44 Landscape
Core Policy 45 Green infrastructure
Core Policy 46 Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

5.3 Letcombe Bassett have no Neighbourhood Development Plan

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Design Guide – March 2015

The following sections of the Design Guide are particularly relevant to this application:-

Responding to Site and Setting

- Character Study (DG6) and Site appraisal (DG9)

Establishing the Framework

- Existing natural resources, sustainability and heritage (DG10-13, 15, 19)
- Landscape and SUDS (DG14, 16-18, 20)
- Movement Framework and street hierarchy (DG21-24)
- Density (DG26)
- Urban Structure (blocks, frontages, nodes etc) DG27-30

Layout

- Streets and Spaces (DG31-43)

Parking (DG44-50)

Built Form

- Scale, form, massing and position (DG51-54)
- Boundary treatments (DG55)
- Building Design (DG56-62)
- Amenity, privacy and overlooking (DG63-64)
- Refuse and services (DG67-68)

- Open space, sport and recreation future provision – July 2008
- Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009
- Affordable Housing – July 2006
- Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006
- Planning and Public Art – July 2006

5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.6 The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

5.7 Other Relevant Legislation

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990
- Community & Infrastructure Levy Legislation Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
- Localism Act (including New Homes Bonus)

5.8 **Human Rights Act**

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report.

5.9 **Equalities**

In determining this planning application the Council has regard to its equalities obligations including its obligations under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main considerations in the determination of this application are:

- The Principle of Development
- Impact upon Design and Character
- Impact upon Highways
- Other Issues

6.2 *Principle of development*

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. The development plan currently comprises the saved policies of Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF provides that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.3 Other material planning considerations include national planning guidance within the NPPF and NPPG and the emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan: Part 1-Strategic Sites and Policies and its supporting evidence base. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF expects local planning authorities to "use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area"... The authority has undertaken this assessment through the April 2014 SHMA which is the most up to date objectively assessed need for housing. In agreeing to submit the emerging Local Plan for examination, the Council has agreed a housing target of at least 20,560 dwellings for the plan period to 2031. Set against this target the Council does not have a five year housing land supply.

6.4 Paragraph 49 of the NPPF states "Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites". This means that the relevant housing policies in the adopted Local Plan are not considered up to date and the adverse impacts of a development would need to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits if the proposal is refused. In order to judge whether a development is sustainable it must be assessed against the economic, social and environmental roles.

6.5 Policy GS1 of the adopted Local Plan provides a strategy for locating development concentrated at the five major towns but with small scale development within the built up areas of villages provided that important areas of open land and their rural character are protected. In terms of a hierarchy for allocating development this strategy is consistent with the NPPF, as is the intention to protect the character of villages.

- 6.6 Furthermore, the Vale of White Horse Local Plan permits the conversion of rural buildings under policies GS7 and GS8 subject to amenity criteria. In its assessment of saved Local Plan policies, the Council acknowledges that the restrictive approach of the policies is not wholly consistent with the Framework. The more permissive approach of the NPPF, particularly paragraph 51 must be taken into account when considering this proposal. In addition, the provisions of the GPDO and the ability to convert buildings to residential use provides a fall-back position which should be taken into account as a material planning consideration in this instance.
- 6.7 Furthermore there is an extant permission on this site permitting the conversion of the former agricultural building to residential use given this is a structurally sound redundant agricultural building. Therefore officers consider the principle of this application to be acceptable.
- 6.8 *Design and character*
The NPPF requires that planning decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment (paragraph 60). It gives considerable weight to good design and acknowledges it is a key component of sustainable development.
- 6.9 A number of local plan policies seek to ensure high quality developments and to protect the amenities of neighbouring properties (Policies DC1, DC6, DC9). Policy GS8 in permitting conversions seeks an enhancement to the immediate surrounding area and a protection in its landscape character whilst retaining its original agricultural charm.
- 6.10 The conversion of this building has previously fallen down on the need for it to enhance the immediate setting of its surroundings to accord with Para 55 of the NPPF, and the associated harm it would cause to the character of the adjacent conservation area and surrounding AONB. This proposal, similarly to the previously approved scheme ensures that the surrounding agricultural character is respected whilst retaining the farmyard setting of the site. The removal of the smaller ancillary buildings to the north help to enhance the visual appearance of the site when viewed from the wider area.
- 6.11 The Conservation & Design Officer has no concerns in relation to the retention and restoration the existing steel frame, which is considered to be of architectural interest. The scale and design of the outbuildings ensure subservience to the dominant building and would ensure that there would be limited views upon the character and appearance of the surrounding AONB and adjacent Conservation Area.
- 6.12 The Conservation Officer did however have concerns over the timber cladding on the barn and the extent and the design of the stone wall which is considered to enclose the north eastern elevation and prevent important long views of open pasture beyond. It was also considered that the style and design of the wall would appear out of place within the rural landscape setting formalising this area and making it more domestic.
- 6.13 Revised plans have been submitted which now overcome these concerns with the reinstatement of large areas of timber cladding to the eastern elevation of the barn to ensure it retains a rural appearance. The outbuilding would be detached from the stone wall so that it is read as a subservient structure, as per those that are to be demolished and as one would expect in a farmyard setting.
- 6.14 A timber fence in the location of the originally proposed stone wall now acts as a screen to the industrial use adjacent (car sales business) but retains the agricultural character through the use of traditional materials appropriate to this setting.

- 6.15 The Parish Council have expressed concern over the amount of land coverage this scheme will now have on the site given the relocation of the access. Officers consider that the demolishing of former redundant small scale buildings and amalgamating the extent of built development into a more efficient form will result in the enhancement of the site with appropriately designed extensions that would not detract from the setting and context of this site. The height and scale of the former agricultural building is to be retained given the retention of the frame and the use of high quality materials help to achieve a positive and efficient reuse to this site.
- 6.16 The enhancement this proposal offers is primarily in the use of the dark stained timber cladding and the replacement aluminium roof. Similar cladding was used on part of the car sales business building recently permitted providing some consistency on the site. Overall, this proposal overcomes previous concerns sufficiently to now be acceptable. It represents a modern domestic use of a functional farm building that will enhance the immediate setting without eroding the original agricultural character entirely.
- 6.17 To ensure the quality of the development, a number of conditions are necessary. Firstly, sample materials will be agreed prior to work commencing on site. The roofing material will be particularly important to the success of the scheme as this is a new feature. Similarly, the joinery details of the new windows and doors will be important to ensure they assimilate into the rural surroundings. Finally, new landscaping and boundary treatments will be needed to define the private curtilage of the new residence. The details of these will be important to prevent any overly domestic appearance to the site. Finally, details of new flues, vents and extract pipes are necessary, given the introduction of bathrooms into the new dwelling.
- 6.18 Some concerns have been raised as to the impact the formation of a new road in this location would have upon the long views across the open countryside to the rear. However given that this access road is to be flat and in the location of an existing opening in the hedge row and that a landscaping condition can be placed on any grant of approval it is unlikely that the formation of a new road in this location could be argued to significantly or demonstrably harm the openness of the surrounding AONB or surrounding conservation area.
- 6.19 Officers do have concerns that the build-up of domestic paraphernalia, such as sheds, garden furniture and play structures in this location could have an overly domestic appearance and could lead to a loss of agricultural character. Officers therefore consider that it would be reasonable and necessary to prevent additional structures or items considered to be of a domestic nature to be located south of the proposed 4 bay garage. This would prevent the character of the area being eroded and retain the openness of this part of the site on the approach to Letcombe Regis.
- 6.20 *Impact upon Highways*
Policy DC5 of the Local plan permits development that would not have a harmful impact upon traffic safety in terms of access and egress, congestion or environmental problems, circulation, turning, servicing and would not result in congestion of the site or surrounding highway network.
- 6.21 The highways officer has no objections to the proposed new driveway. Officers are satisfied that this scheme meets Highways criteria and policy and would not result in severe harm to the existing highway network.
- 6.22 *Other Considerations*
Ecology
The Countryside officer previously had reservations about the mitigation strategies

proposed in this scheme. However a revised strategy has now been submitted which addresses these concerns. Officers are satisfied that subject to implementation of this strategy there would be no detrimental impact to roosting barn owls from the proposal in accordance with Policy.

6.23 Land Contamination

This site was once a working farm and as such there is potential for soil contamination arising. Potentially there are a range of contaminants that could be present in agricultural land. This is particularly true of areas used as farmyards which may have contained a variety of buildings such as barns and workshops, and which could have been put to a number of uses including vehicle maintenance, chemical storage, metal working, fuel storage. Aside from the presence of made ground there are a number of chemicals that could have been used and possibly leaked or been spilled particularly in farmyard areas. Chemicals typically stored and used include agricultural pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fuel. Disposal of waste on or in the land may also have occurred through fly tipping or unlicensed disposal of waste. Asbestos containing materials may be present on or in farmyard buildings such as barns that can have cement asbestos roofing.

- 6.24 To prevent future harm to occupants of the site a suitable land contamination condition is reasonable in this instance so that remedial works can take place should the need arise once construction is underway.

6.25 *Parish Concerns*

The Parish also have concerns over the car sales business having taken out a large agricultural part of this site and now this conversion will do the same. Officers have regard to the need for redundant farm buildings to diversify and both Local and National policy does allow for the efficient reuse of such redundant farm buildings. Retaining the character of these buildings in this countryside location is the main aim to ensure that whilst conversion and alternate uses are found for these buildings their agricultural character is retained.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 This application has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), relevant saved policies in the local plan and all other material planning considerations. The NPPF states that sustainable development should be permitted unless the adverse effects significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The NPPF also states that there are social, economic and environmental dimensions to sustainability and that conclusions must be reached taking into account the NPPF as a whole.
- 7.2 The conversion and extension of this redundant farm building has been found to be acceptable against policy criteria as it would enhance the immediate setting of the area without detracting from its rural setting or the AONB. The design changes are acceptable in updating and upgrading the building for residential use whilst retaining its previous agricultural character. The extensions and additional living areas are to be located to the rear of the original building and would be read as smaller subservient outbuildings providing a neater and tidier appearance to this site as a whole. There are no overriding environmental or social impacts that would outweigh the benefits of this scheme and the highways officer is satisfied with the proposed access.
- 7.3 Overall, and in view of the emphasis in the NPPF to assist in the supply of housing, the conversion of this redundant farm building is considered to amount to sustainable development, which would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Consequently, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Time limit of three years.**
- 2. In accordance with the approved plans.**
- 3. The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the amended ecology mitigation strategy.**
- 4. No development shall commence until a phased contaminated land risk assessment has been carried out by a competent person.**
- 5. SUDS compliant scheme to be submitted.**
- 6. Prior to commencement joinery details, vents, flues and extract ducts details, external lighting details, bin store details, central heating and fuel storage systems and metre boxes details shall be submitted.**
- 7. Hard and soft landscaping details to be submitted.**
- 8. Landscaping scheme to be implemented.**
- 9. Samples of materials of stained timber weatherboarding and roof covering to be submitted prior to commencement.**
- 10. Removal of permitted development rights No structures of any type and scale shall be placed to the south of the garage unit hereby permitted on the approach to the converted dwelling.**
- 11. Access (details to be submitted), including gradient.**
- 12. Closure of existing access.**

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