

**UTT/2522/11/LB – (FARNHAM)**

*(Referred to Committee by Cllr Loughlin Reason: Should the recommendation be for approval to assess the impact on neighbouring properties and loss of local amenity).*

**PROPOSAL: Demolition of extension to barn and outbuildings, and partial demolition of stable building. Conversion of barn to 2 no. dwellings. Erection of associated outbuildings. Creation of new vehicular and pedestrian access**

**LOCATION:** Walkers Barn, Levels Green, Farnham

**APPLICANT:** Hassobury Management Ltd

**AGENT:** Donald Purkiss Associates

**GRID REFERENCE:** 547511/224522

**EXPIRY DATE:** 16 February 2012

**CASE OFFICER:** Miss S Wellard

**1.0 NOTATION**

1.1 Outside development limits, Grade II Listed Building

**2.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE**

2.1 The application relates to farm buildings which forms part of the historic farmyard of Walker's Farmhouse. The buildings are Grade II listed. The main building to the south is a large double aisled, 8 bay timber framed barn of 16<sup>th</sup> century origins. The structure to the west is a brick and flint built single-storey outbuilding that runs along the roadside of the site.

2.2 The site is currently used as a do-it-yourself livery yard. The brick built outbuilding contains stabling, and timber purpose built stables have been erected within the site. The main barn is partly used in association with the stables, for storage of tack, feed and hay, and is partly used for storage.

2.3 The site is accessed by a track to the south of the main barn. There is an open field to the south of the buildings, that comprises a large floodlit ménage.

2.4 To the north and north east of the site are neighbouring residential dwellings. The building immediately adjacent the northern boundary of the site is a converted barn that is used for tourist accommodation.

**3.0 PROPOSAL**

3.1 The proposed scheme seeks to convert the main timber framed barn and the single-storey brick and flint building to two residential dwellings.

3.2 The main barn would be split with the five bays to the east forming one dwelling and the three bays to the west linked to the single-storey structure by a glazed element to form a second dwelling. Two of the five bays to the east would remain open to the roof, and one of the three bays to the east. New windows and openings would be formed in all elevations. The existing block work lean-to extension the south of the main barn would be demolished.

3.3 The main barn is currently roofed with corrugated sheeting and it is proposed to remove this sheeting and re-roof with handmade clay plain tiles. The external walls would be finished with black featheredged board.

- 3.4 It is proposed to close the existing vehicular access to the south of the barn and create a new access to the north by removing part of the existing flint wall. The existing ménage would be removed and the field divided into two to form residential gardens.
- 3.5 The existing modern timber purpose built stable blocks within the site would be removed. Two new outbuildings would be erected within the courtyard to provide covered parking accommodation and storage. The courtyard would be hard landscaped, existing hedging would be retained and walls repaired as necessary. New walls would be constructed in brickwork to match the existing walls.
- 3.6 The application has been amended from the original proposal. The proposed garden curtilages have been reduced in scale to align with the existing ménage. The window in the eastern elevation at first floor level would be glazed with obscured glass. A new window opening in the southern elevation has been repositioned to serve the bedroom rather than be situated over a proposed void. Additional information has been submitted with regards to the current and proposed use of the site and the financial viability of retaining the current use and making improvements to the listed building.

#### **4.0 APPLICANTS CASE**

- 4.1 Design and Access Statement (Summary): Explains the proposed layout, scale, appearance and built form. The proposed scheme will preserve and enhance the historic buildings and their environment. The protected lane is unsuitable for use by commercial vehicles. Alternative uses would generate more traffic movements than the proposed residential use and this is why the site has not been marketed.
- 4.2 Structural Survey (Summary): The main barn is in good structural condition for a building of this age and type of construction. It may be converted to form two dwellings with the retention of the majority of the existing original timbers. It will be possible to convert the outbuilding with the retention of the original roof structure and with care the rear flint wall may also be retained.
- 4.3 Protected Species Survey (Summary): Protected species on site is limited to a transitional roost for single numbers of Natterer's bat and a foraging pipistrelle bat within the listed barn. The other buildings are not suitable for bats. Compensation for the loss of the original roosts has been provided for above one of the garages. There is a colony of house sparrows nesting on site which must be accommodated in the new development. In compliance with PPS9 recommendations have been made for house sparrow provision and a dedicated pipistrelle roost on the west gable of the barn. Adjacent to the north boundary of the site is a pond. A habitat suitability assessment for great crested newt was undertaken on the pond and the result was poor meaning that the pond characteristics are not suited to a breeding population of this species. The pond is separately from the proposed development by a wall and fencing. There is no significant vegetation on the site.
- 4.4 Transport Statement (Summary): Rectory lane is a single track, protected lane with informal passing places. The site does not afford particularly good sustainable transport link, as such in terms of transportation and a sequential test of land use, residential development is the most appropriate land use as the traffic generation would be considerably lower than the same size of business development.
- 4.5 Additional Supporting Information from applicant (Summary): The site is not a business in itself and is not a public facility, recreation space or a community use. Other riding facilities are available within the village. The tenant farmer has offered all the licensees with horses at the site alternative stables at Levels Green. Without the grazing on the other side of the road which is not part of the application, the stables could not be let out nor could the yard be run as a riding school. The modest

income that the yard brings in will never be enough to secure that the barn is restored and preserved.

- 4.6 Additional Supporting Information from Savills (Summary): The stables together with sufficient grazing could reasonably be expected to continue to generate the current level of income. If the barn itself was made weatherproof, it could potentially generate an additional income of £4,000 per year. In other words, if one had the required grazing and carried out repairs on the barn, the site could potentially generate an income of £11,000 per year (less the cost of additional grazing). At that rate, it would take at least 20 years just to cover the cost of repairs by which time, inevitably, further repairs would be required. The current use of the barn does not generate any income and the use of the stables is not a viable means of generating an income to maintain a barn of this size in the long term.

## **5.0 RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

- 5.1 None relevant

## **6.0 POLICIES**

### **6.1 National Policies**

- Policy PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment

### **6.2 East of England Plan 2008**

- Policy ENV6 – The Historic Environment

### **6.4 Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005**

- Policy ENV2 Development affecting Listed Buildings

## **7.0 PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS**

- 7.1 Farnham Parish Council: The application is a worthy and viable application which complied with the Uttlesford Local Development Plan. In coming to this conclusion the Parish Council had looked for a flexible interpretation of striking a balance between the effective use of the barns at the site whilst sustaining the effective character of those barns.

The concerns about the economic effects and lack of leisure facilities on Farnham are unfounded as the applicant confirmed that the stables and ménage at the site would be located at Levels Green Farm.

Notes minor concerns with regards to the position of the upper floor windows on the east elevation of the proposed property which currently appear to overlook the swimming pool of the adjacent property and ask if there is any flexibility in the positioning of those windows.

Acknowledge the concern from some parishioners on the demolition of part of the flint wall forming the roadside boundary of the site in order to allow vehicle access. It is acknowledged however that this wall is currently in a poor state of repair.

## **8.0 CONSULTATIONS**

### **Local Highways**

- 8.1 No objection subject to the imposition of highway conditions.

### **Archaeology Officer**

- 8.2 The Historic Environment Record shows that the proposed development lies within the historic farm and moat complex at Walkers Farm (HER3859). The historic environment assets consisting on both the buildings within the farm complex and any below ground archaeological deposits associated to the moat and earlier occupation of the farm will need to be recorded as part of the development programme and should be securely by an appropriate condition attached to any forthcoming planning consent.

### **Natural England**

- 8.3 Used their standing advice to assess the application. With regards to bats, permission may be granted subject to appropriate conditions including a detailed mitigation and monitoring strategy for bats. The lpa should consider requesting biodiversity enhancements for great crested newts (e.g. creation of new water bodies and suitable terrestrial habitat).

### **Essex Wildlife Trust**

- 8.4 No comments received

### **Drainage Engineer**

- 8.5 The application states that surface water drainage will be to soakaway but no further information is provided in particular relating to the drainage of the vehicular access/hardstandings. There is no reference to PPS25 in the Design and Access Statement. The aim when redeveloping a brownfield site should be to return run off to the previous greenfield rates. Recommends condition should be imposed.

### **Conservation Officer**

- 8.6 Recommends approval subject to the imposition of conditions.

### **CPRE Essex**

- 8.7 Object to the application for the following reasons:
- 1) It would replace the attractive and working rural character of the area with domestic driveway and gardens
  - 2) There would be a loss of recreational facilities as a consequence of the demolition of stables and riding area
  - 3) There would be an erosion of Farnham's rural economy through the loss of stables and riding area
- Following email stating - To make you aware that I have been informed by Mrs Susie Dutton, that in terms of the stables and riding facilities an alternative location has been offered to house these, which is, I understand very close by. I was not aware of this when I made the previous comments. Should this alternative be an acceptable and viable option then my comments 2 and 3 would no longer be relevant.

## **9.0 REPRESENTATIONS**

- 9.1 With regards to the original consultation, a site notice displayed at entrance to the site and the occupiers of 9 neighbouring properties notified via letter. 76 Letters of objection received which are summarised as follows;
- Loss of stables/riding facility
  - Adverse impact on local rural economy (loss of site and to those people associated with the equine use)
  - Loss of provision of recreational activity/community use
  - Erosion of potential of the property for increased economic activity.
  - Loss of rural character of area by conversion of and to gardens and driveways

- Loss of rural views
- Concern over demolition of part of the historic flint wall
- There is evident deterioration of this rural building that needs a solution.
- Adverse impact on residential amenity by way of overlooking, noise pollution, extra traffic, external lighting.
- Removal of wall and installation of new access drive in close proximity to holiday lets immediately adjacent would diminish the tranquillity of the accommodation day and night
- Concern over increase in traffic on rural lane
- Threat to local wildlife
- Sets precedence for future expansion
- Not enough capacity at Levels Green Farm to accommodate 12 new horses and a ménage
- The building is not redundant. It has been used for storage by local business, Stansted Glass
- Proposed garaging/cartlidges are too large and would cluster the site and spoil views, having a negative impact on the setting of the listed buildings.
- Windows and rooflights would create domestic character and spoil the agricultural character of the barn.
- Light pollution caused by the open nature of the barn
- Mr and Mrs Fraser Andrews offered to buy the barn in September 2011 with a covenant preventing residential use in perpetuity. The applicant has not undertaken UDC requirement to undertake active marketing of the site for business use.
- Parish Council's representation does not reflect the discussion at the meeting

1 letter of support received

- 9.2 The application was amended and additional supporting information submitted. All those who commented on the initial proposal were reconsulted;  
71 letters of objection received whereby previous concerns remain.  
1 letter of withdrawal of original objection  
2 letters stating that Mr Fraser Andrews expectations of financial viability are realistic and achievable, however the number of lessons quoted may take a while to achieve.  
3 letters from Mr and Mrs Fraser Andrews (Walkers Farm House);  
- Provides information stating that there is potential to enhance the income that is currently earned by the livery yard site, whilst preserving the existing terms of the tenant farmer's lease. Puts forward two business options for the site. There is significant demand for equestrian business use in the area. Current income levels quoted do not realise the market potential of the site. He has sufficient grazing land for such a business. There is local demand to occupy the surplus space in the barn for storage use. States that use as a business would provide ample funds to sustain the fabric and structure of the barn. The quotations for weatherproofing the barn are not credible for essential repairs.  
- Obscure glass will not overcome privacy issues  
- Scale of cartlidges will overshadow our garage and summerhouse.

## **10.0 APPRAISAL**

- 10.1 The main issue to consider in the determination of this application is the impact of the proposal on the historic character and appearance of the listed buildings.
- 10.2 Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan states that development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings. In cases where planning permission might not normally be granted for the conversion of listed buildings to alternative uses, favourable consideration may be accorded to schemes which incorporate works that represent the most practical way of preserving the building and its architectural and historic characteristics and its setting.
- 10.3 The Council's Conservation Officer has been consulted on the associated listed building application and has made the following comments;

*'The barn subject of this application is a timber framed 8 bay structure of C16 origins. The barn is redundant for agricultural use and due to its architectural and historic interest it is listed in its own right. Consequently it is important to find an economically viable use which would secure its future.*

*The proposal subject of this application is to convert it to two residential units with some accommodation and an access to the forecourt being formed within and through a single storey range running parallel to the road. This proposal has been a subject of preliminary enquiry and the final scheme has addressed the officer's original concerns.*

*I find the proposed scheme sensitive and one which aims at the retention of the agricultural character of the barn to substantial degree. The aisles which are an important element of the internal character of the barn have been left mostly un-obscured and the fenestration of the upper part of the barn intelligently provided by vertical glazing laying flush within the roof plane. The windows and doors appear to take advantage of existing opening as much as possible and a small glass link would join the main barn to the converted flint range unobtrusively.*

*I find on balance acceptable the removal of the indicated part of the road side outbuilding, which appears to be of later date, in order to provide an access to the two new units. Such access directly into the yard would be closer related to the historical location of entry to this historical farmstead. Finally I consider that formation of two new cart loges of traditional design and materials would respond well to local agricultural vernacular and would not diminish the setting of the listed buildings in the vicinity.*

*In conclusion I suggest approval subject to the imposition of conditions'.*

- 10.4 With regards to the amendment to the positioning of the window on the southern elevation, the Conservation Officer has verbally agreed that she has no objection to the movement of the window.
- 10.5 Whilst there has been concern raised to the partial removal of part of the flint wall and to the domestic use of the building, the Conservation Officer considers that the proposal is acceptable, and in accordance with National and Local Plan policy.

## **11.0 CONCLUSION**

The following is a summary of the main reasons for the recommendation:

- The proposals would conserve and enhance the character and setting of the listed building.

## **RECOMMENDATION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL**

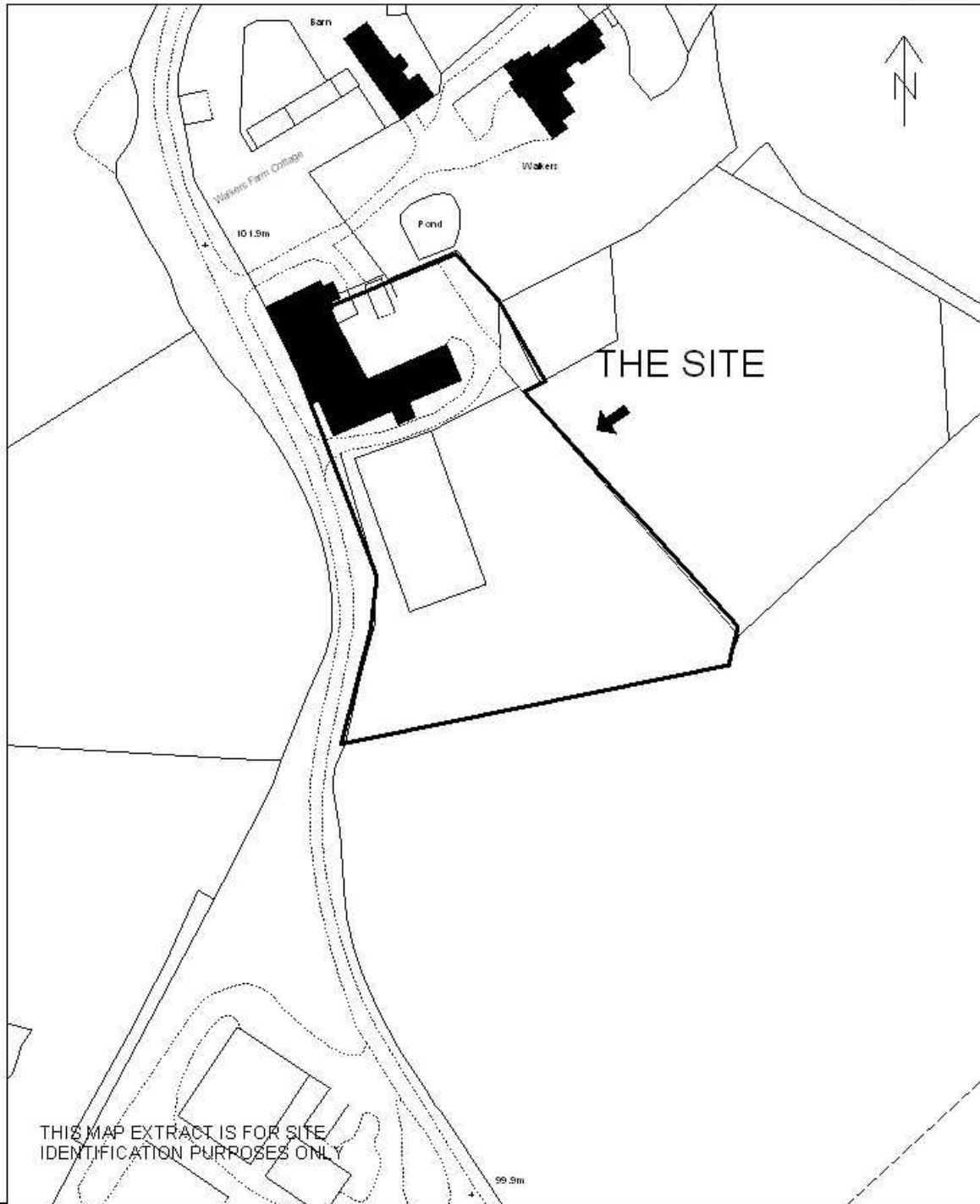
1. The development to which this consent relates shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

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

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as set out in the Schedule.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt as to the nature of the development hereby permitted, to ensure development is carried out in accordance with the approved application details, to ensure that the development is carried out with the minimum harm to the local environment, in accordance with the Policies of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005) as shown in the Schedule of Policies

3. No elements of the historic timber frame of the existing building shall be cut or removed without the prior inspection and written consent of the local planning authority.  
REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies ENV2 and GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).
4. All necessary repairs to historic timber frame to be undertaken in matching timber and cross sections.  
REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies ENV2 and GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).
5. The roofs to the main barn and cart lodges hereby permitted shall be clad with handmade plain clay tiles, in accordance with details that shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences. Subsequently, the materials shall not be changed without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.  
REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the listed building and its setting in accordance with Policy ENV2 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).
6. All external weatherboarding shall be feather-edged timber painted black, unless otherwise as agreed in writing with the local planning authority.  
REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the listed building and its setting in accordance with Policy ENV2 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).
7. All external joinery shall be black painted timber, unless otherwise as agreed in writing with the local planning authority.  
REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the listed building and its setting in accordance with Policy ENV2 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).
8. All new roof lights shall be of a conservation style, in accordance with details that shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences. Subsequently, the details shall not be changed without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.  
REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the listed building and its setting in accordance with Policy ENV2 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).
9. There shall be no fences or wall within the yard between two units, unless otherwise as agreed in writing with the local planning authority.  
REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the listed building and its setting in accordance with Policy ENV2 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).



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