

UTT/18/2238/LB – THAXTED

PROPOSAL: Conversion of and alterations to Grade II Listed barn to provide a residential dwelling, conversion, extension and alterations to curtilage barn to residential

LOCATION: Cutlers Green Farm Cutlers Green Cutlers Green Lane Thaxted Essex

APPLICANT: Mr R Hingston

AGENT: Laura Dudley-Smith, Strutt & Parker

EXPIRY DATE: 22 October 2018 – Extension of time 22 March 2019

CASE OFFICER: Karen Denmark

1. NOTATION

1.1 Outside development limits/Grade II Listed Building/within the Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan's designated area

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

2.1 The application site is part of Cutlers Green Farm which lies on the northern side of Bolford Street. The settlement of Thaxted lies approximately 1.5km to the east, with Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden around 11km away.

2.2 The applicant states the site is approximately 0.83ha in area and comprises of a central Grade II listed barn, surrounded by a range of other agricultural buildings and structures including a large grain store and drier, and a range of silos. The site, which is brownfield, is being redeveloped as the buildings are no longer suitable.

2.3 The ground slopes gently downwards to the north and west with mature plantation along the site boundaries, with farmland to the north and a small ribbon development of residential development. The village green is to the south of the site with further residential development around this feature.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 The scheme can be summarised as:
Plot 1 – conversion of existing barn to form three storey detached four bedroom dwelling;
Plot 6 – conversion of existing barn to a single storey two bedroom dwelling;

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 Town and Country Planning (Environmental Assessment):
The proposal is not a Schedule 1 development, nor does it exceed the threshold criteria of Schedule 2, and therefore an Environmental Assessment is not required.

5. APPLICANT'S CASE

- 5.1 The applicant has included the following documents in support of his application:
- Planning Statement by Strutt & Parker (July 2018);
 - Design and Access Statement by Rachel Furze Design (June 2018);
 - Uttlesford District Council's contamination checklist;
 - Heritage Statement, prepared by Architectural Management (May 2018);
 - Ecology Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which incorporates a bat survey inspection prepared by T4 Ecology Limited (April 2018);
 - Bat Surveys prepared by Essex Mammal Surveys (June 2018 and September 2018);
 - Phase 1 Geo-environmental Report prepared by Brown 2 Green (March 2018);
 - Sustainable Drainage Strategy prepared by MTC Engineering (June 2018);
 - Structural Assessment prepared by Gawn Associates (April 2018);
- 5.2 The applicant's argument for the development is contained in the planning statement.

Conclusion of Planning Statement:

This application seeks Full Planning Permission for the:

Redevelopment of Cutlers Green Farm to provide for 7 residential dwellings through partial demolition and conversion, with associated gardens and private access.

The proposed scheme will allow the sympathetic reuse of this now redundant agricultural brownfield site to meet local housing needs whilst respecting and enhancing the rural character and historic setting of the site. Built development is to be focused largely on the previously developed areas of the site, reflecting the original farmstead form and arrangement across the site. The scheme takes into consideration the existing rural context and impact on the historic setting, in accordance with pre-application discussions. The proposals therefore fully accord with relevant local and national policy.

The proposal is supported by a series of technical reports that have informed the design and layout of the site and conclude that the proposals would be viable and not detrimental to the rural surroundings.

On balance, the proposals put forward a highly sustainable scheme that provides a wide range of planning benefits.

The proposal reutilises a now redundant agricultural site providing much needed housing for the local area and seeks to consolidate the community by introducing local housing fronting the village green. In redeveloping this redundant site to provide for a visually improved site that is both sympathetic and respectful of the surrounding rural and historic setting, the proposals provide a strong public benefit.

Relocation of the agricultural functions to a nearby site ensures the commercial longevity of the farm and allows opportunity for a residential redevelopment of the site to help support the vitality of Cutlers Green.

The designs shown that retention and sympathetic conversion of existing buildings on site, coupled with the removal of additional structures that undermine the rural and historic context, seek to respect the original agricultural character of the site.

This will improve the visual appearance of the site with retention of trees and additional planting, gardens and removal of hardstanding, landscape views are improved across the site.

The relocation of the agricultural building will also mean fewer larger vehicles will travel through the village centre and improve traffic flows, including mitigating visual and noise impacts.

The proposal therefore presents an opportunity for significant environmental, social and economic benefits to ensure sustainable development and redevelopment of this redundant agricultural site.

6. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

6.1 Although the site has been subject to previous applications, the LPA does not consider that any of these are relevant to the current scheme.

7. POLICIES

7.1 Uttlesford Local Plan (2005)

GEN7 – Nature Conservation
ENV2 – Development affecting Listed Buildings

7.2 Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance

N/A

7.3 National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Other Material Considerations

7.4 Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan: At the time of writing the report the Neighbourhood Plan was not 'made'. However, it had been to referendum and the vote was in favour of the Plan. On 12 February 2019 Cabinet resolved to support the Plan and Full Council were due to consider this on 21 February 2019. Until the Plan is 'made' it does not have full weight, but the policies carry substantial weight at this time given its stage in the process. The following policies are relevant:

TX HC1 – Heritage and Development
TX LSC3 – Wildlife Habitats and landscape features

7.5 The emerging Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 18 January 2019. While its policies currently carry little weight in decision making, it is noted that the following are relevant:

Emerging Local Plan

EN1 – Protecting the Historic Environment
EN4 – Development affecting Listed Buildings

8. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 8.1 The Parish Council supports the application but would like all future permitted developments rights to be removed and the site developed in accordance with the submitted plans. The Council would also wish to see a small reorganisation of the site to remove the pinch point between buildings one and five.

Revised scheme: RESOLVED to SUPPORT subject to the following recommendations/Comments:

Permitted development rights are to be removed, Thaxted Parish Council register their strong objections to the Velux Window in their current location and are therefore Seeking to Transfer the Velux windows to the Northern elevation. In accordance to the Emerging Neighbourhood and Thaxted's Village Design Statement.

Additional comments include Thaxted Parish Council stated a Commendable effort from the architect who has taken on board our previous comments, they listened and subsequently revised the plans. We look forward to viewing the plans again with these small modifications included.

9. CONSULTATIONS

ECC - Ecology

- 9.1 **No objection subject to securing biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures.**

Summary

I have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Incorporating Bat Survey Inspection (T4 Ecology Ltd., April 2018) supplied by the applicant, and the subsequent Bat Survey (Essex Mammal Surveys, Sept 2018), a brown long-eared bat was found roosting in a joint in the timber barn (building 3). An European protected Species Licence will be required for this development.

I am satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination

This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on Protected and Priority species and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable. I support the reasonable biodiversity enhancements that should also be secured by a condition on any consent.

This will enable the LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006.

The mitigation measures identified in Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Incorporating Bat Survey Inspection (T4 Ecology Ltd., April 2018) should be secured and implemented in full. This is necessary to conserve and enhance Protected and Priority Species.

Impacts will be minimised such that the proposal is acceptable subject to the conditions below based on BS42020:2013. In terms of biodiversity net gain, the enhancements proposed will contribute to this aim.

Conservation Officer

- 9.2 The proposal subject of this application is the creation of 7 residential units as part of the conversion of redundant farm buildings. The site is located in Cutlers Green which is a small hamlet in an open countryside. It could be said that it is a brown field site as it contains a selection of unremarkable/unsightly modern farm buildings, apart from a 3 bay timber frame barn of possibly C17 origins listed in its own right.

The scheme aims at the conversion of some of the structures and rebuilding others. In principle the saved policy H6 aims at the conversion of redundant rural buildings if their historic, traditional or vernacular form enhances the character of the rural area. Clearly, apart from the listed building, the other structures are rather unremarkable or positively unsightly.

However, I find the proposed scheme architecturally exceptional and one which will positively contribute to the locality and stand as an innovative and interesting example of possible conversion of rural modern buildings. The suggested conversion of the metal silos with its novel arrangement of glazed screens while retaining its agricultural features, would provide future generations with some evidence of typical C20 farming practice.

The other buildings would also retain most of their agricultural characteristics, but the suggested modernistic fenestration and elevational finishes would give them a unique C21 flavour. In conclusion I feel the scheme would enrich the locality and represent architectural gem, subject to being implemented strictly according to the current architect's proposal.

10. REPRESENTATIONS

- 10.1 This application has been advertised and representations have been made raising the following issues. Notification period expired 1 February 2019.
- too many houses, three (or five as suggested in a separate representation) would be a better number;
 - the development's traffic generation could be dangerous;
 - houses' materials are inappropriate, for example the roofs should be constructed from thatch;
 - existing drainage serving Maynards Croft;
 - safeguarding the adjacent garage on Maynards Croft, including the brick boundary wall;
 - excessive number of parking spaces;
 - safety of access sight lines;
 - oil tanks and location of gas supplies;
 - excessive noise from the development's traffic;
 - development could cause damp issues for a neighbouring occupier;
 - worried about damage to the neighbours' trees.

11. APPRAISAL

The issues to consider in the determination of the application are:

- A Impact on listed buildings (ULP Policy ENV2; NPPF)
- B Site biodiversity (NPPF, Local Plan Policy GEN7);
- C Other material planning considerations (Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan; Emerging Local Plan)

A Principle of development (NPPF, Local Plan Policies S7 and H6)

- 11.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 states that a planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting..." and LPA's are required to apply this statutory advice when determining listed building applications. ULP Policy ENV2 requires that development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings, adding that development proposals that adversely affect the setting and alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that "In determining [planning] applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to their setting", whilst paragraph 196 states that "Where in cases where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use".
- 11.2 The scheme involves the conversion of a Grade II listed barn and a curtilage listed barn. The scheme has been sensitively designed respecting the character of the buildings. There would be less than substantial harm arising from the proposals and the public benefits would be the long-term viability of the two buildings, together with additional housing to meet local needs.

B Site biodiversity (NPPF, Local Plan Policy GEN7)

- 11.3 Local Plan Policy GEN7 requires applicants to show that the development would not have a harmful effect on wildlife or geological features unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the feature to nature conservation. Applicants also have a legal duty towards legally protected species or habitats. The site is in the countryside with the potential for there to be potential impacts, particularly in respect of bats given the fact that barn conversions and demolition are proposed.
- 11.4 Essex County Council's Place Services are the ecology consultants for the LPA and they consider that the proposal is acceptable, subject to their suggested conditions being added to any consent.

C Other material planning considerations (Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan)

- 11.5 It is envisaged that the Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan will be 'made' by the time this application is considered at the Planning Committee on 13 March 2019. The relevant policies are set out above in section 7.4. These policies are compliant with the requirements of the NPPF and the assessment above largely covers the issues raised in the policies.

12. CONCLUSION

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

- A** The proposals would result in the long-term viability of a Grade II Listed Building and a curtilage listed building. These benefits would outweigh any harm to the heritage assets and the proposals comply with the relevant policies.

- B** No ecological issues arise as a result of these proposals and appropriate conditions are included on the planning permission.

RECOMMENDATION – APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

Conditions

1. The works to which this consent relates shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

REASON: In order to comply with Section 18 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The windows of Plots 1 and 6 of the development hereby permitted shall be single-glazed. All new frames and glazing bars shall be painted timber, in accordance with details, which have been 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.

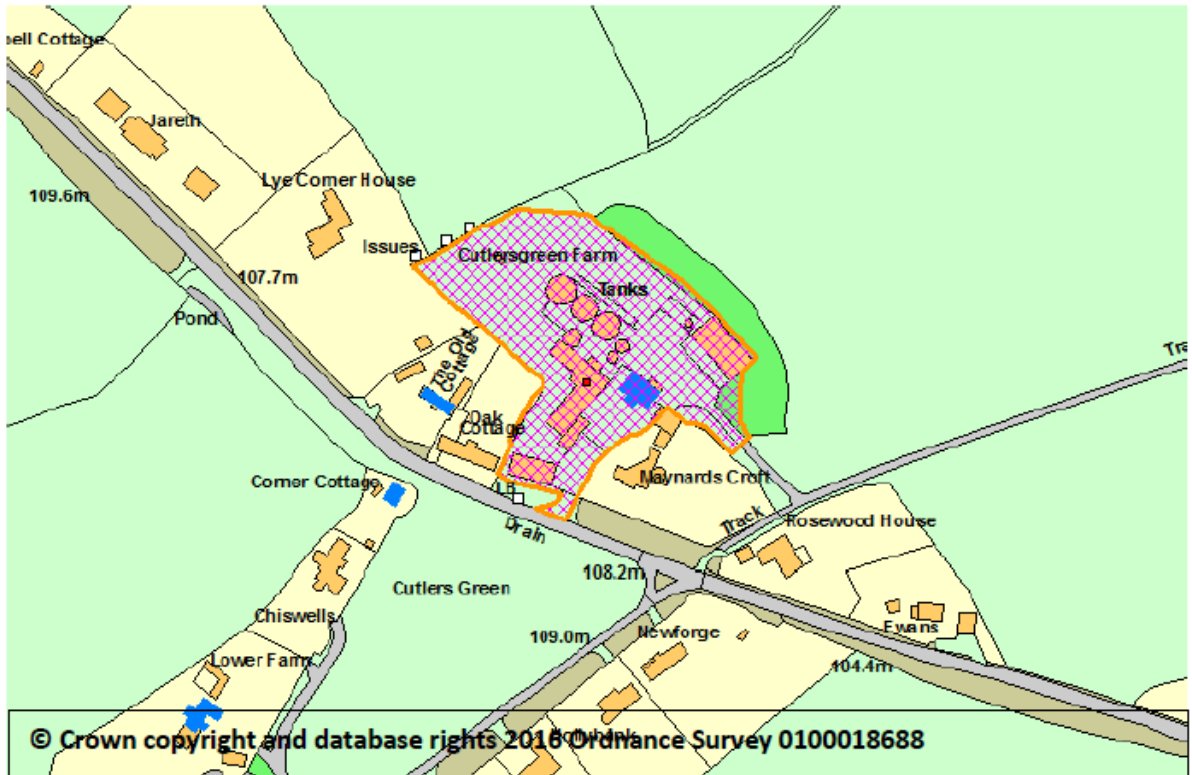
REASON: In order to protect the character of the listed building, in accordance with Uttlesford Local Plan Policy ENV2 (adopted 2005) and the NPPF.

3. Prior to the commencement of the works hereby approved samples of the materials to be used in the conversion works hereby permitted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In order to protect the character of the listed building, in accordance with Uttlesford Local Plan Policy ENV2 (adopted 2005) and the NPPF.

4. All new rooflights shall be of a conservation range and details of all the new rooflights shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences and installed in accordance with those details.

REASON: In order to protect the character of the listed building, in accordance with Uttlesford Local Plan Policy ENV2 (adopted 2005) and the NPPF.



Organisation: Uttlesford District Council

Department: Planning

Date: 20 February 2019