

APPLICATION NO	P16/S4292/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	6.1.2017
PARISH	HARPSDEN
WARD MEMBERS	Will Hall Paul Harrison
APPLICANT	Thames Farm Developments Limited
SITE	Barn at Thames Farm, Reading Road, Lower Shiplake, RG9 3PH
PROPOSAL	Change of use of barn to 4 residential units (C3) plus associated parking in the form of proposed outbuilding, courtyard, landscaping, demolition, closure of access from Thames Farm field and amendments to access onto Reading Road.
AMENDMENTS	As clarified by additional highways information received 21 February 2017 and letter dated 28 February, and amended plans and additional information received 20 March 2017.
OFFICER	Emma Bowerman

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee as the officer's recommendation conflicts with the views of Harpsden Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) is a 0.67 hectare site located to the west of the A4155 (Reading Road). The site contains a redundant barn, which is timber clad with clay roof tiles. The barn was constructed in 2000 for the purpose of storing materials related to the use of the adjoining agricultural land.
- 1.3 The built up area of Lower Shiplake lies to the east of Reading Road. The former Wyevale Garden Centre is to the north of the site. There are two existing accesses that serve the site. One is from the Reading Road and the other is off Bolney Lane to the north.
- 1.4 The strips of woodland along the eastern and northern boundaries of the site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The site is not within any areas of special landscape designation.
- 1.5 The site is within the parish of Harpsden, with the eastern boundary of the site positioned up to the parish boundary with Shiplake. The site is within the designated Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan area.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks full planning permission to convert the barn into four independent residential units. The application includes some alterations to the elevations of the barn to facilitate the proposed change of use. A new outbuilding is proposed to provide parking for the homes.
- 2.2 The homes would be accessed from the existing access off Bolney Lane. The application proposes to close access to the converted barn directly from the Reading

Road.

- 2.3 To the west of the site are two unfinished and dilapidated structures that would be demolished as part of the development. The application also proposes a courtyard area and landscaping, including private gardens for each of the homes.
- 2.4 Additional information was submitted during the application process and the plans were also amended. The additional information was provided to address consultation responses from Oxfordshire County Council highways, and our environmental health and contaminated land officers.
- 2.5 The application plans are **attached** as Appendix B. The application is accompanied by a number of supporting documents, including a Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement. These are available to view on the council's website at www.southoxon.gov.uk.
- 3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**
- 3.1 **Harpsden Parish Council** – Object for the following reasons:
- Not designated for housing in Neighbourhood Plan
 - No proper access to the A4155 as gate should be closed for safety reasons
 - Danger to and from traffic
 - Garage / cycle store would damage character of the area
 - Pedestrian access is poor
- 3.2 **Shiplake Parish Council** – Object for the following reasons:
- The history of the site – retrospective application allowed at appeal
 - Out of character with surrounding area
 - Increase in vehicles and impact on highway safety (including pedestrians)
 - Increase in housing in this area not covered by Neighbourhood Plan
- 3.3 **Henley-on-Thames Town Council** – Object for the following reasons:
- Barn does not have planning permission and should have been removed
 - Concern about access and traffic
- 3.4 **Henley Society** – Object as proposal would form an isolated development and would intrude into open space between Henley and Shiplake. Contrary to Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.5 **Oxfordshire County Council Highways Officer** – No objection following the submission of additional information. Recommended conditions regarding off-site highways works, vision splays, turning and car parking.
- 3.6 **Oxfordshire County Council Countryside Access** – Provided general information on rights of ways.
- 3.7 **Southern Gas Networks Gas Transporter** – Provided guidance on safe practice around gas pipes.
- 3.8 **Forestry Officer** – No objection following amended details that allow for more light to enter the middle dwellings. Recommended a tree protection condition.
- 3.9 **Countryside Officer** – No objection
- 3.10 **Contaminated Land Officer** – Commented that it is preferable that contamination risks are investigated prior to the application being determined but is satisfied that the matter

can be adequately addressed through a condition.

3.11 **Neighbour representations** – 28 received in objection to the application raising the following concerns:

- Not in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan
- Precedent for future development
- Application should not be considered in isolation
- Access contravenes previous planning decisions
- Disregard for planning law
- Access should be directly into A4155 and proposed entrance permanently closed
- Increase in traffic
- Impact on highway safety (including pedestrians)
- Impact on semi-rural nature of area
- Land designated for agricultural use
- Remote from village and not a sustainable location
- Additional pressure on infrastructure
- Overdevelopment

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 The application site and adjoining field have a complex planning history. The barn was allowed at appeal in 2001 under application P00/S0815. The building was partially constructed when the appeal was determined. The Inspector who allowed the appeal attached a condition requiring the barn to be used for agricultural purposes.

4.2 In 2009 the council granted planning permission to change the use of the building from agricultural use to offices (P08/E1357). Then in 2011, the council refused planning permission to convert the barn into a single dwelling (P10/E1755). The reasons for refusal related to conflict with policy which favoured employment uses for rural buildings and also that the access was substandard. The application to convert the barn into a single dwelling was allowed at appeal in 2012.

4.3 Applications were subsequently submitted for office use of the barn in 2011 and 2014 (P11/E2262/EX and P14/S2924/FUL). Both were granted planning permission. A further application for the conversion of the barn to a single dwelling was allowed in 2014 (P14/S2882/FUL). The two most recent planning permissions have not expired and so the barn has current planning permission to be converted into either an office or a single dwelling.

4.4 Planning applications on the adjoining field include the refusal of an application for 95 homes in 2016 (P16/S0970/O) and the refusal of 110 home in 2013 (P13/S2184/O). This application is for a change of use of an existing building and is therefore materially different to the previous applications on the adjoining field. This application should therefore be considered on its own merit and these applications for a large housing development on the adjoining field are not relevant in the consideration of this current application.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

5.2 **NPPF Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**

5.3 **South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) 2027**

CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

CSEN1 - Landscape protection

CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity
CSI1 - Infrastructure provision
CSM1 - Transport
CSM2 - Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
CSQ3 - Design

5.4 **South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2011 saved policies**

E8 – Re-use /adaptation of rural buildings outside of built up areas
G2 - Protect district from adverse development
G3 - Development well served by facilities and transport
G4 - Protection of Countryside
C4 - Landscape setting of settlements
C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity
C8 - Adverse affect on protected species
C9 - Loss of landscape features
D1 - Principles of good design
D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
D3 - Outdoor amenity area
D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers
EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
EP8 - Contaminated land
R8 – Public rights of way
T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

5.5 **Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan (JHHNP) 2027**

EN1 – Biodiversity
DQS1 – Local Character

5.6 **Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2032**

The consultation on the second 'Preferred Options' for the emerging Local Plan closes on 17 May 2017. The Preferred Options provides draft allocations for strategic development sites. With the exception of Crowmarsh Gifford and Nettlebed, the plan proposes to devolve the delivery of houses in villages to the Neighbourhood Plan process.

5.7 **South Oxfordshire Design Guide (SODG) 2016**

Sections 6 (outbuildings) and 7 (building conversions).

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The key planning considerations in the determination of this application are:

- the principle of the development
- highway safety and traffic impact
- design and appearance
- trees and landscape

Other relevant matters include neighbour amenity and the amenity of future occupiers, housing mix, ecology and environmental matters.

The principle of the development

6.2 The principle of the conversion of the barn to four dwellings has to be considered on its merits. The planning status of the barn is that:

- The structure itself is lawful
- The building is currently redundant

- The building could be used for agricultural purposes
 - The building could be used as a single dwelling
 - The building could be used as an office
- 6.3 The principle of converting the barn to residential use has been established through previous planning applications. The barn has an extant planning permission to be converted to a single dwelling and this can be implemented up until 31 October 2017. This represents a valid fall-back position.
- 6.4 The Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan (JHHNP) does not contain any policies that consider the conversion of rural buildings to dwellings. The development should therefore be assessed under the relevant sections / policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP).
- 6.5 The NPPF is generally permissive towards the conversion of rural buildings for housing where the development would re-use redundant or dis-used buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting. In this regard, the Inspector who allowed the appeal under application P10/E1755 commented that the proposed conversion to a single dwelling would not harm the character and appearance of the surroundings.
- 6.6 The external alterations proposed under this application to convert the barn to four dwellings are similar to those permitted to facilitate the conversion to a single dwelling. As with the conversion to a single dwelling, the external alterations proposed to the barn would not harm the character and appearance of the surroundings.
- 6.7 The proposed conversion of the barn to four dwellings would be in general conformity with policy E8 of the SOLP. Policy E8 is supportive of proposals for the re-use of rural buildings subject to a number of amenity and environmental considerations. The policy does require other uses to have been explored and found unacceptable before residential use is considered. Given that the barn has an extant permission for residential use, it is not necessary to explore other uses.
- 6.8 Furthermore, there has been a recent shift towards greater flexibility of use within buildings. This is highlighted under recent legislation that allows the conversion of agricultural buildings under permitted development (PD) rights. Subject to a number of other criteria, agricultural buildings can be converted into up to three dwellings without the need for planning permission.
- 6.9 The proposal would bring back into use an empty building at a time when there is an identified need for additional housing. The conversion of the barn to four homes would represent a more efficient use of the site than the conversion to one large house. The provision of four homes would contribute towards housing needs and I consider that the principle of the development is acceptable.

Highway safety and traffic impact

- 6.10 The proposed homes would be access via an existing gated access point on Bolney Lane. The southern access point that leads to Reading Road would be closed off within the red line boundary of the site, and any hardstanding would be removed and returned to grass.
- 6.11 A garage / carport building would provide two parking spaces per dwelling and four visitor spaces would be provided. The parking spaces would be provided around a courtyard with sufficient manoeuvring space to ensure that all spaces are useable. A cycle store would also be provided.

- 6.12 The County Council highways officer raised a holding objection to the initial consultation and required further information in relation to access, parking and cycle storage. Following the submission of some additional information and a review of the planning history, the highways officer has no objection to the application subject to conditions.
- 6.13 One of the amendments secured requires the developer to resurface Bolney Lane from the site access to the junction with Reading Road. This is because this surface is in a very poor condition and additional traffic movements would result in the further deterioration of the surface. This can be secured through a condition requiring the approval of off-site highway works and a programme of implementation.
- 6.14 Subject to the other conditions recommended by the highways officer in relation to visibility splays and the retention of parking, I consider that the development would be acceptable with regards to its highway impacts. The provision of four dwellings would not have a significant impact on the highway network, particularly compared to the extant planning permission for an office.

Design and appearance

- 6.15 The external works required to facilitate the conversion of the barn would include the insertion of windows, doors and roof lights, and the addition of porches. The existing dormer windows would also be lowered. The alterations would be similar to those approved under the previous application to convert the barn into one large dwelling.
- 6.16 The proposed conversion works would retain the character and appearance of the original building. The fenestration would be plain in appearance and the specification of windows and doors can be secured through a condition to ensure that the details are appropriate. In general, the proposed conversion works comply with the advice in the Design Guide and in my opinion would be acceptable in design terms.
- 6.17 The proposed carport / garage would have a simple functional appearance. The building would be subservient to the homes in the converted barn and would not compete with the barn in terms of scale and height. Appropriate materials could be secured through a condition. In my opinion the design and appearance of the garage / carport building would be appropriate to the character of the local area and would comply with the guidance for residential outbuildings in the council's Design Guide.

Trees and landscape

- 6.18 The belt of woodland trees to the north of the site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. These trees are of significant amenity value as they soften / screen the site from the adjacent public right of way and highway. The woodland is close to the northern elevation of the barn and would restrict morning and late afternoon sun reaching into the proposed homes.
- 6.19 The council's forestry officer initially raised concern that the conversion of the barn to four homes would result in pressure to extensively prune / remove the protected trees. He recommended that a more open floor layout be used for the two middle units to allow more light into the building from the south and to reduce this pressure.
- 6.20 The applicant has acted on this advice and amended the floor plans to provide a more open plan layout. Following the submission of these amended plans, the council's forestry officer has withdrawn his objection subject to the imposition of a tree protection

condition. As such, I consider that the development would have an acceptable impact on the trees on site.

- 6.21 The barn is an existing structure that already has an impact of the surrounding landscape. I do not consider that any of the proposed alterations to the barn would result in this building having a materially greater landscape impact. The proposed garage / carport would have a simple functional appearance and in my opinion, would not harm the landscape quality of this semi-rural setting.
- 6.22 The proposal would involve dividing the land around the barn to provide amenity areas for the new homes. Given that the protected trees take up most of the land that would be to the rear of the proposed homes, the two end units would have side gardens and the central units would have additional amenity space to the front.
- 6.23 The proposed site plan is annotated to show that the boundary treatments to some of the garden areas would be post and rail fencing and hedging, which would be appropriate to the character of the area. A condition could secure appropriate boundary treatments for the whole of the site.
- 6.24 The site is not within an isolated area of countryside but is in a location which has loose knit housing nearby and more built up development across the other side of Reading Road in Lower Shiplake. I consider that a converted barn and the associated development would not be out of place in these surroundings and would not detract from the overall landscape character of the area.

Other matters

- 6.25 Given the distance to surrounding buildings, the proposal would not impact on the amenity of any neighbours. The proposed layout would provide amenity spaces for all of the units and create an appropriate living environment for future occupiers.
- 6.26 With regards to mix, the development would provide 4 x 3 bedroom homes. Although this would not represent a mix of house sizes, I consider this to be preferable to the extant permission for 1 x 7 bedroom home. In terms of affordable housing, the 2014 Ministerial Statement imposed a new threshold for affordable housing and the result is that the council is not currently seeking affordable housing on 11 homes or less, unless in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 6.27 The existing barn is a modern steel framed structure which is in a good condition with very few opportunities for bats. As such, the council's countryside officer has confirmed that there are no ecological reasons to object to the proposal.
- 6.28 The council's environmental protection officer has confirmed that the requirement to carry out a contaminated land assessment could be added as a condition to ensure that any contamination is remediated and the site is suitable for residential use.
- 6.29 The development would CIL liable at a rate of £150 per square metre (index linked). The money collected from the development can be pooled with contributions from other development sites to fund a wide range of off-site infrastructure to support growth, including schools, transport, community, leisure and health facilities.
- 6.30 As Harpsden have a Neighbourhood Plan in place, the Parish Council would receive 25 percent of the CIL money collected from the development (as oppose to 15 percent without a Neighbourhood Plan). The Parish Council could chose to spend it on local projects or contribute towards strategic infrastructure.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The barn has an extant planning permission to be converted into one home. This application proposes the conversion of the barn to four homes and would represent a more efficient use of an empty building. The relevant planning policies and guidance are generally supportive of the conversion of rural buildings and the proposal would support the delivery of additional homes at a time of housing need.

7.2 The proposed development would comply with the relevant Development Plan Policies and, subject to the attached conditions, would not be detrimental to highway safety or the character and appearance of the local landscape. When considered against the development plan as a whole, the proposal would represent a sustainable form of development and would contribute towards boosting housing numbers.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 **That planning permission for P16/S4292/FUL be granted subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Planning permission – 3 years to implement**
2. **Development in accordance with approved plans (including amended floor plan)**
3. **Detailed specification of all new external openings and materials for barn**
4. **Detailed specification of materials for garage**
5. **Details of all boundary treatments**
6. **Details of external lighting**
7. **Landscaping scheme**
8. **Tree protection**
9. **Removal of structures shown for demolition**
10. **Removal of PD rights for alterations, extensions and outbuildings**
11. **Contaminated land assessment**
12. **Existing driveway to be returned to grass prior to occupation**
13. **Off-site highway works to be agreed**
14. **Vision splay protection**
15. **Car parking and turning area to be provided**
16. **No garage conversion into accommodation**
17. **Cycle parking to be provided / retained**

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