

APPLICATION NO.	P17/S1554/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	22.5.2017
PARISH	IPSDEN
WARD MEMBERS	David Nimmo-Smith & Charles Bailey
APPLICANT	Mr & Mrs Rowland Passey
SITE	Larkstoke Farm, Church Lane, near Ipsden
PROPOSAL	Conversion part of barn to 3 bed dwelling and recladding of the remainder of the building (application site area extended to include the entire building as shown on amended plan and application form received 21st May 2017).
OFFICER	Paul Lucas

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Officers recommend that planning permission should be granted. This report explains how officers have reached this conclusion. The application is referred to Planning Committee due to Ipsden Parish Council's objection to the plans.

1.2 The application site is as shown at **Appendix A**. The site comprises a parcel of land belonging to a mixed agricultural and equestrian holding containing a steel portal framed building and an associated hardstanding. The building extends to approximately by 23.4 metres by 12.2 metres, providing about 286 square metres of floor area. The building rises to 3.7 metres to the eaves and 5.5 metres at ridge height. The building is clad with grey profiled metal sheeting. A roller shutter door and pedestrian door in the western elevation provide access. The interior floor is laid with concrete. The roof is of corrugated fibre cement sheeting with 15 skylights. The barn has been used to store various cars and vehicles over the years. As the applicant is ceasing to work in the automotive trade, there will no longer be any reason for the continued storage of many cars. Most of the vehicles recently stored have been moved out. There remains a need for continued storage for the applicants' campervan, one or two cars and agricultural equipment as per the existing planning permission, but the use is much reduced. Half of the building is now dis-used.

1.3 The holding extends to approximately 11 hectares (around 27 acres) and comprises pasture fields, areas of mixed deciduous woodland, a conifer plantation, an access track and a farmyard. The holding is bordered by Church Lane to the north, to the east by the Icknield Way public bridleway, to the west by residential properties, a stonemason's yard and mobile homes with the A4074 Portway beyond. The southern boundary of the holding adjoins the grounds of Larkstoke Manor and the curtilage of Larkstoke Farmhouse. The pasture is used for hay production and grazing. The applicants own a number of horses and ponies and a donkey. The farmyard also comprises a small open-sided hay barn, a number of stable buildings and areas of hardstanding. A mobile home has been stationed in the farmyard to provide the applicants with rest facilities when they are working on the farm. Containers have been placed on the land for many years, largely for the storage of timber and associated woodland uses. The yard is accessed via two entrances, both of which come off an established farm track, which itself comes off an access track from Church Lane. The access track from Church Lane and the track into the farmyard are in the ownership of the applicants.

The Icknield Way is located to the immediate east of the farm access track. The hay

1.4 store and stables are accessed via gates to the east of the yard. The steel-framed building subject to the application at the west of the yard is accessed via the track between the plantation and the farmyard. A thin hedgerow and close-board fence separate the access track from the farmyard and buildings with an area of semi-mature trees on the other side of the track. The site lies within the Chilterns AONB. A tree belt ranging from 80 metres to the west of the site and 125 metres to the south of the site is subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the recladding of the building with timber and the conversion of the western half of the building to form a three-bedroom dwelling, as shown on the current plans and supporting documents submitted with the application.

2.2 Copies of the current plans are attached at **Appendix B** whilst other documentation associated with the application can be viewed on the Council's website:
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P17/S1554/FUL>

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 **Ipsden Parish Council** – The application should be refused on the grounds that the site is agricultural land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is outside the developed village area.

South Oxfordshire District of CPRE - We believe that the proposed conversion of the barn to a dwelling is inappropriate and that it will do nothing to enhance or conserve the landscape of the Chilterns AONB.

Environmental Protection Team - No objection

Contaminated Land Officer – No objection

Highway Liaison Officer – Previous comments apply – no objection

Forestry Officer – Previous comments apply – no objection subject to tree protection condition

Countryside Officer – Previous comments apply – no objection subject to bat informative

Neighbours – One representation of objection due to concern that building is subsequently found not to be fit for conversion and that residential occupation not ancillary to a host dwelling should not be supported.

The responses can be read in full on the Council's website.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 [P16/S1554/FUL](#) - Withdrawn (12/07/2016)

Conversion of part of barn to 3 bed dwelling incorporating the addition of dormer windows and formation of access.

This followed officer advice that the proposed dormer windows would result in an incongruous structure; loss of a B8 employment use; lack of information about impact on future occupiers from adjoining uses and transformer; lack of information about potential contamination.

[P10/E2010](#) - Refused (15/03/2011)

Erection of two storey 4/5 bedroom dwelling and attached double garage.

[P00/S0826/RET](#) - Approved (28/11/2000)

Change of use of building to use for general storage. (Retrospective).

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) Policies

- CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity
- CSEM4 - Supporting economic development
- CSEN1 - Landscape protection
- CSM1 - Transport
- CSQ2 - Sustainable design and construction
- CSQ3 - Design
- CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011) policies;

- C4 - Landscape setting of settlements
- C8 - Adverse affect on protected species
- D1 - Principles of good design
- D10 - Waste Management
- D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
- D3 - Outdoor amenity area
- D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers
- EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration
- EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP8 - Contaminated land
- G2 - Protect district from adverse development
- T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016) – Section 7 Plots & Buildings & Technical Document 7 – Building Conversions
- South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment – Character Area 6 – Central Vale Fringes

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

The policies within the Core Strategy and SOLP 2011 of relevance to this application are considered to be in general conformity with the provisions of the NPPF and NPPG and therefore this application can be determined against these relevant policies. Paragraph 55 – “To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.”

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether the proposed development would:

- Be acceptable in principle;
- Have an acceptable impact on the rural character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area, bearing in mind its location within the Chilterns AONB;
- Result in any conditions prejudicial to highway safety;
- Cause any residential amenity issues; and
- Give rise to any other material planning considerations

6.2 Principle of Development

The site lies outside of the built up confines of any of the District's recognised settlements and as such there is a presumption against new independent residential development. However, in this case, the dwelling would be created through the conversion of a rural building. Such applications for the re-use of rural buildings are supported by the SOLP 2011 Policy E8, provided certain impact-based criteria are met. In relation to the requirement under criterion (vii) to explore other uses prior to residential, planning permission [P00/S0826/RET](#) is subject to a personal planning condition restricting the storage use the applicant only. This means that the use of the building would revert back to agricultural use upon the ownership of the holding changing hands. In this particular location, the alternative re-use for business purposes independent of the Larkstoke Farm enterprise would be likely to give rise to greater traffic generation on unsuitable roads. Consequently, the proposal would accord with the spirit of criterion (vii) of Policy E8.

6.3 Officers have also had regard to guidance contained within the NPPF (Paragraph 55), which is more recent than Policy E8 and takes a more permissive stance in relation to the reuse of existing buildings for residential use, provided two tests are met. The building meets the first test set out in bullet point three of Paragraph 55 through making use of disused space. The grey cladding, whilst being functional for its original purpose and the subsequent B8 use, is potentially visually at odds with its immediate surroundings. Timber cladding is proposed, stained dark to match the adjacent stables building. The precise colour could be agreed through the proposed materials planning condition. Timber would more readily blend with the woodland surroundings and be in keeping with the adjacent stables yard, which is closer to public views from the Icknield Way to the east. Timber cladding would be entirely in keeping with the immediate woodland setting and adjacent timber built form, more so than the existing grey metal sheeting.

6.4 A small curtilage is proposed. The area is already laid to hardstanding. Part of the hardstanding within the curtilage would be retained for parking and turning and some would be returned to grass as a lawn. Small areas of patio would be laid beneath the doors into the dwelling. An area for the storage of bins would be provided in an existing space between the building and the track. The bin area is screened by a hedge, which would be improved by additional planting, which could be agreed through a landscaping condition. The close-board fence which was erected to replace a thinning hedge would be removed and a new mixed thorn hedge would be planted, restoring the former hedge line. Additional planting is to be implemented outside the application area, as the applicants improve the remainder of the hedge line, which has become thin over time. The rest of the curtilage would be marked by post and rail fencing, to match the existing fencing around the pony paddocks to the south of the building. Access to the stables would be provided via a gate in the curtilage's boundary fence. Gates would be timber and agricultural in style, and entirely in keeping with the rural surroundings. The design of the small curtilage would respect the existing the surroundings and, through additional planting, would improve the appearance of the current site. The immediate setting, both in terms of the external appearance of the building and the curtilage, will be enhanced in accordance with the second test of bullet point three of Paragraph 55.

6.5 Officers are also satisfied that due to the personal nature of the storage use, the loss of part of the existing building for this purpose would not constitute a loss of employment floorspace under the SOLP 2011 Policy E6. On the basis of the above assessment, the principle of conversion of the building to a residential use is acceptable.

6.6 Visual Impact

Policy CSEN1 of the SOCS aims to protect the District's distinct landscape character from inappropriate development. Officers are satisfied that the building is of permanent construction and is structurally sound, in accordance with criterion (i) of Policy E8 of the SOLP 2011. As discussed above, the building is typical of the type located within this largely arable landscape, in compliance with criterion (ii) of Policy E8. As the building will be re-clad to match the appearance of adjacent timber buildings the character of the existing building will be improved, which would comply with the requirement of criterion (iii) of Policy E8. Although located very close to the Icknield Way, the building does not appear unduly prominent in any views due to the existence of close-boarded fencing and mature planting along the western boundary of the bridleway. Where the building is visible it is seen in the context of the adjacent structures and against the backdrop of mature and semi-mature planting. This means that the building is not visible against the skyline and the proposed changes would not be readily noticeable outside of the site itself and would not be prominent in the wider landscape.

- 6.7 The application proposes the removal of existing containers and a mobile home from the land, which would be a visual benefit. The immediate surroundings of the building would also be improved with additional planting. The Council's Forestry Officer has previously commented that the closest trees could be safeguarded through a tree protection condition. As a consequence, the proposal would conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape quality of this part of the Chilterns AONB. In the light of the above assessment, the proposal would accord with the above policies.

6.8 Access and Parking

Policy CSM1 of the SOCS explains that proposals should not give rise to highway safety issues and the SOLP 2011 Policy E8 criterion (v) requires there to be no overriding highway objections. The Highway Liaison Officer has previously raised no objections to the proposal subject to a parking condition. Given the characteristics of the carriageway, vehicular traffic and speeds are likely to be low. The proposal is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the highway network. Furthermore it is noted the proposal is not in a sustainable area in terms of transport and the majority of trips are likely to be using the private car. However the movements associated with this proposal would not present "severe harm" as required under Paragraph 32 of the NPPF to warrant a recommendation for refusal. The proposal would therefore be in compliance with the above policies.

6.9 Residential Amenity Impact

Criterion (v) of Policy E8 also requires there to be no overriding environmental issues. There are no immediate residential occupiers who would be affected by the proposal. The Council's Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that there would be no conflict between the existing equestrian uses of the adjacent stables and mixed agricultural and equestrian use of the land and the remaining storage use with the future occupiers of the proposed dwelling. A pole-mounted electricity transformer unit, presently located adjacent to the western elevation of the dwelling would be relocated. The proposed garden would exceed the recommended minimum of 100 square metres for dwellings of this size. On the basis of the above assessment, the proposed development would accord with this element above criterion.

6.10 Other Material Planning Considerations

The Council's Countryside Officer has previously commented that only an informative is needed in relation to bat protection. A planning condition restricting permitted development rights is considered necessary to enable the Council to exercise control over any future householder development that might otherwise result in landscape harm. A planning condition requiring the removal of the containers and the mobile home and relocation of the transformer prior to first occupation of the dwelling is also considered to be necessary. Whilst a rural building at Larkstoke Manor was only granted planning permission in 2012 for conversion into ancillary staff accommodation, it is an established planning principle that each application must be assessed on the basis of its individual merits.

6.11 Community Infrastructure Levy

As the proposal is for an existing building which has been used for storage purposes within the last three years, it is not CIL liable.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The proposed development would be acceptable in principle, would not harm the landscape character of this part of the Chilterns AONB, the living conditions of future occupiers and not be prejudicial to highway safety and subject to the conditions below, would be in accordance with Development Plan Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Government Guidance.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **To grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement within three years.**
2. **Approved plans.**
3. **Schedule of materials required prior to commencement.**
4. **Parking and manoeuvring areas retained.**
5. **Withdrawal of permitted development rights (extensions, outbuildings, hardstandings).**
6. **Landscaping (including hardsurfacing, boundary treatment) prior to commencement.**
7. **Tree protection (detailed) prior to commencement.**
8. **External lighting – prior to commencement.**
9. **Removal of specified structures before occupation.**
10. **Bat informative.**

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