

**Land West of Hornton Hall
Quarry Road
Hornton**

13/00868/F

Ward: Wroxton

District Councillor(s): Cllr Webb

Case Officer: Graham Wyatt

Recommendation: Refuse

Applicant: Mr H Keller

Application Description: Conversion of timber barn to dwelling and relocation of modern barn - re-submission of 12/01811/F

Committee Referral: Major application

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site is located to the north west of Hornton and to the west of Hornton Hall and is accessed off Quarry Road. The site contains two barns that are located adjacent to each other. The first barn is a single storey building constructed of brick and timber with horizontal timber cladding under a fibre cement roof. A second barn, of a more modern portal frame construction, abuts to the south elevation of the timber barn. The modern barn is open sided with vertical cladding to the upper elevations with a profiled fibre cement roof.
- 1.2 The site lies within the open countryside and is currently in agricultural use. The area is rural in character and lies within an Area of High Landscape Value. A public footpath (255/6A) runs to the south of the site and the route of a Conservation walk runs to the east of the site Quarry Farmhouse is a grade II listed building and lies to the northwest of the site. Starveale Barn lies to the southeast of the site is also listed grade II.
- 1.3 The proposal seeks planning permission for the conversion of the timber barn into a dwelling and the relocation of the modern barn some 78m to the east of the timber barn. A private amenity area would be provided in the space created by the relocation of the modern barn and parking and turning areas would be provided to the front of the barn. The converted barn would provide two bedrooms, a kitchen/living room, a bathroom, a WC and utility room at ground floor and a further bedroom within the roof space. It is proposed to re-clad the building in new timber boarding and cover the roof with natural slate. New planting is also proposed along Quarry Road.

2. Application Publicity

- 2.1 The application has been advertised by way of a press notice, site notice and neighbour letters. The final date for comment on this application was 11th July 2013. No correspondence has been received as a result of the consultation process.

3. Consultations

- 3.1 **Hornton Parish Council** - No objection.

3.2 **The Environment Agency** - This application is deemed to either have a low environmental risk or relate to conditions that were not recommended by the Environment Agency.

3.3 **Thames Water** – No objection

Cherwell District Council Consultees

3.4 **Ecologist** – No objection subject to conditions

3.5 **Arboricultural Officer** – No objection

3.6 **Anti-Social Behaviour Manager** – No objection

Oxfordshire County Council Consultees

3.7 **Highways** – No objection.

4. Relevant National and Local Policy and Guidance Policy Considerations

4.1 Development Plan Policy

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (Saved Policies)

H19: Conversion of buildings in the countryside
C7: Landscape conservation
C8: Sporadic development within the countryside
C13: Areas of High Landscape Value (AHLV)

Other Material Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

5. Appraisal

5.1 The issues raised by this development are:

- Policy Context and principle of the conversion;
- Design of the converted building;
- Relocation and design of the modern building;

Policy Context and principle of the conversion

5.2 Paragraph 55 of the NPPF seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas and refers to the location of housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Paragraph 55 also continues by indicating that Local Planning Authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as the re-use of redundant or disused buildings leading to enhancement of the immediate setting. Saved policy H19 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 also makes provision for the conversion of buildings in the countryside into dwellings provided the building is capable of

conversion without major rebuilding or extension and without inappropriate alteration to its form and character. The proposal should also not cause significant harm to the character of the countryside or the immediate setting of the building. The policy also makes it clear that not all buildings are suitable for conversion and the council will resist proposals that imply substantial rebuilding and are tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling in the countryside. I find saved policy H19 consistent with the aims of the NPPF in this regard.

- 5.3 Policy C7 and C8 seek to ensure that the character of the rural area is not harmed. Policy C13 places additional emphasis on AHLV which seeks to protect the land from development that does not conserve or enhance the environment. I find saved policies C7, C8 and C13 consistent with the aims of the NPPF in this regard.
- 5.4 The applicant states in their Planning Statement that the proposal meets the expectations of paragraph 55 of the NPPF in that it will lead an enhancement of the area as the modern portal barn will be relocated and the timber barn repaired and reused. Policy H19 makes it clear that not all buildings are worthy of conversion and that “a free standing cattle shelter or hovel will not normally be regarded as worthy or suitable for conversion whereas a substantially built barn in relatively good structural condition might well be acceptable.” The applicant agrees that building “is not of any specific architectural or historical significance” at paragraph 6.3(ii) of the submitted Planning Statement.
- 5.5 It is agreed that the building has little architectural merit. This should not preclude a conversion. However, in my opinion a significant amount of work would be required to enable the conversion, which is tantamount to a new dwelling in the countryside. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) contains a method statement for the repair and conversion of the building. From this statement it is clear that a large amount of supposition has been given to the repair of the building. For instance, the statement states that it will be necessary to “remove the roof finishes and timber cladding to expose timber framework for inspection and any necessary repairs. “ It would appear that no examination of the existing structure has been undertaken to assess its current state and what repairs are necessary which could result in the whole frame having to be replaced. Moreover, The plan on page 12 of the DAS indicates a “zone for new internal timber structure/insulation.” This new timber structure would be similar to the existing frame in size and location. Moreover, there are no calculations that the existing roof is capable of supporting the additional weight of any new roof finishes.
- 5.6 In addition, it is not considered that the proposed dwelling would lead to an enhancement of its immediate setting. The existing building is a utilitarian structure of little architectural merit and lies within a remote, open rural location. The conversion of the barn to a dwelling would erode the open character of the area with the domestication of the site. Policy H19 states that a residential use can bring with it “characteristics which are difficult to reconcile with unspoilt countryside, including caravans, sheds, greenhouses and swimming pools, which are often exempt from planning control.” and that in “an isolated location in relatively open landscape...conversion would be resisted.” In my opinion, the use of the building for residential purposes would increase the prominence of the site and would cause significant harm to the character of the area and its immediate setting which has particular importance here as the site is within an Area of High Landscape Value.
- 5.7 The closest village to the site is Hornton, which provides limited services. A new

dwelling in this countryside location, well outside any recognised settlement, would be highly dependent upon the use of the private motor car. Therefore, the proposal would not fulfil the environmental role of sustainable development and no information has been provided to indicate how development at this location might meet sustainable objectives to support services in a village nearby. It is accepted that there is likely to be a small economic benefit from the proposal with most residential development of this kind. However, no evidence that a further dwelling is required to serve any particular agricultural need or the rural economy in general has been provided. There is also no suggestion the dwelling is required to meet the housing needs of the local community or that it would protect and enhance the natural environment.

- 5.8 In light of the above findings, I consider that the proposed conversion of this barn to an independent dwelling in this isolated countryside location would conflict with NPPF policies aimed at promoting sustainable development. The proposal would also fail to comply with saved policy H19 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 for the reasons rehearsed above and would cause significant harm to the character of the countryside or the immediate setting of the building, contrary to saved policy H19 and C7, C8 and C13 of the same plan.

Design

- 5.9 The building would be clad in new timber boarding and the roof covered in natural slate. Existing openings would be utilised with glazing introduced to all elevations. A conservation roof light is proposed on the south elevation to serve the attic bedroom and a flue is also proposed.. The end elevations would have a store hatch replaced by a window and a new window introduced on the other elevation. The north elevation (facing Quarry Road) introduces a new door into an existing opening and a bank of three small “dairy light style windows”. The south elevation encloses openings where the animal pens were with two full height windows. A glazed sliding door encloses existing door openings and a further door is added to the elevation serving the utility room.
- 5.10 The form of the building remains unaltered and only two additional openings are proposed. The north and end elevations, which are visible from public vantage points, are relatively simple elevations with a minimal amount of glazing proposed. The south elevation proposes a large amount of glazing which are restricted to existing openings. I find the design of the proposal largely acceptable and would not offer an objection on design grounds.

The relocation of the modern barn

- 5.11 The modern barn would be moved from its current position adjacent to the timber barn and relocated some 78m west. The barn would be amended in design so that the vertical boarding extends to the ground on three sides. The north elevation will remain open with only high level vertical boarding. The barn is retained on the site for the agricultural use of the land..
- 5.12 The building is a utilitarian structure and is a typical rural feature. The existing location of the building is prominent in the streetscene and I would find that the revised location would be no more harmful to the character of the area. This type of building and its agricultural use is an expected and accepted rural feature which will have an acceptable impact on the rural character of the area.

5.13 Engagement

With regard to the duty set out in paragraphs 186 and 187 of the Framework, no problems or issues have arisen during the application. It is considered that the duty to be positive and proactive has been discharged through the efficient and timely determination of the application.

Conclusion

- 5.14 In conclusion therefore taking into account the above appraisal it is considered that the proposal is unacceptable and fails to comply with the Government guidance contained in the NPPF and the other relevant development plan policies listed above.

6. Recommendation

Refusal for the following reason:

The Local Planning Authority consider that the proposed conversion to residential use would be harmful to the immediate setting of the building and the character, appearance and visual amenities of the surrounding countryside which is designated as an Area of High Landscape Value. The proposal would also require major alterations which is tantamount to a new dwelling in the countryside. The proposal would introduce a domestic character into this unspoilt rural locality which would visually intrude into the appearance of this attractive area of countryside and would be contrary to government guidance regarding sustainable development contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, and saved Policies H19, C7, C8 and C13 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan.

STATEMENT OF ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No 2) Order 2012 and paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), this decision has been taken by the Council having worked with the applicant/agent in a positive and proactive way as set out in the application report.

CONTACT OFFICER: Graham Wyatt	TELEPHONE NO: Ext 1811
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