

Planning Committee: 12 July 2005

Item Number: 13

Application No: W 05 / 0754

Registration Date: 05/05/2005

Town/Parish Council: Stoneleigh

Expiry Date: 30/06/2005

Case Officer: Martin Haslett

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Park Farm House, Stareton Lane, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, CV8 2LL
Conversion of 3 barns into 3 dwellings with external car parking etc. FOR L J
H Barnacle Esq

This application is reported to the Committee because of the support of the Parish Council and since the recommendation is one of refusal.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Parish Council: fully supports proposal, if refused barns could become derelict and detrimental to area, barns are within an enclosed courtyard.

WCC (Archaeology): no objection subject to a condition on a photographic survey and programme of archaeological work.

WCC (Ecology): no objection, subject to condition on protected species survey and bird note.

CPRE: objection: site in Green Belt and Special Landscape Area, development should only be granted in very special circumstances, residential use contrary to policy, every effort should be made to secure alternative business uses.

Environment Agency: no objection.

RELEVANT POLICIES

(DW) C3 - Criteria for the Conversion of Rural Buildings (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

(DW) ENV3 - Development Principles (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

(DW) C8 - Special Landscape Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

(DW) ENV1 - Definition of the Green Belt (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

RAP1 - Development within Rural Areas (Warwick District 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

RAP2 - Directing New Housing (Warwick District 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

RAP8 - Converting Rural Buildings (Warwick District 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DAP1 - Protecting the Green Belt (Warwick District 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DAP3 - Protecting Special Landscape Areas (Warwick District 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

(DW) C1 - Conservation of the Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1995) *The Conversion of Agricultural Buildings*, advisory leaflet, 1996.

RA.4 Conversion of Existing Rural Buildings-Warwickshire Structure Plan 1996-2011.

PLANNING HISTORY

Whilst other parts of the former farm complex have a planning history, these barns have not been the subject of significant previous planning applications.

KEY ISSUES

The Site and its Location

The barns are in the centre of Stareton and form a courtyard immediately to the west of the (former) farmhouse, which is in the same ownership. They are situated hard onto the highway verge and have a blank elevation to the road. The site is entered through an existing driveway adjoining the farmhouse which leads into a large, paved courtyard surrounded by the barns, which although of various ages and designs, are all old and of some architectural interest. This part of the site is connected by a narrow tongue of land to a further, larger area, to the rear of the farmhouse, which consists of a tarmac tennis court and grass, forming part of the farmhouse garden.

To the rear of the courtyard there are operational agricultural buildings which are in separate ownership and surrounding the tennis court/garden there is additional land in the applicant's ownership.

Details of the Development

It is proposed to convert the barns into three dwellings, two of them (in the lower buildings) being single storey with a two storey conversion in the larger barn. A small area of an existing barn would be demolished to create a separation between barns 1 and 2. The courtyard would provide a parking and turning area for the new dwellings, but no garaging for the converted barns is proposed. Detached gardens for each of the converted barns would be provided in the existing tennis court/garden area.

Assessment

The issues to be considered are the suitability of the buildings for conversion, the proposed use and the details of the conversion scheme.

The buildings are 'of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction' and thus meet one of the principal tests for conversions set out in *PPG 2 Green Belts*. The

Guidance also requires the form, bulk and general design of the buildings to be in keeping with their surroundings, which they are. The requirements of policy C3 of the Warwick District Local Plan, which reflects Government policy are also met. The principle of conversion is therefore accepted.

Warwickshire Structure Plan policy urges planning authorities to give priority to non-residential uses for rural converted buildings, in response to the significant growth in rural dwellings experienced over past years. Residential use for barn conversions is now contrary to policy, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. The applicants have submitted a market assessment, prepared by chartered surveyors, which sets out their opinion of the market prospects for non-residential uses. They are of the opinion that the buildings are not suited to commercial uses, that vehicular access is sub-standard, that the location would not be favoured by commercial users and that industrial processes or commercial uses would be unneighbourly towards the adjoining dwellings. Furthermore, the site is not considered 'ideal' for use as offices for which there is said to be an over-supply in the area.

It is accepted that industrial and commercial purposes are not suited to the location or the buildings, but both are well-sited to office uses. This option is not entirely dismissed in the assessment and needs to be given more attention. Furthermore, the possible use of the barns as "live-work" units is not addressed even though this use would satisfy the policy requirements. Possible use as holiday lettings is dismissed, but this would also satisfy the employment policy criteria. In these circumstances, I cannot agree that all other options have been exhausted and that permission for a use fundamentally contrary to policy is acceptable.

The final issue is the design of the conversion scheme. Whilst the use of existing door and window openings is good and the overall appearance of the conversion proposals is generally good, it fails one of the principal requirements of a residential barn conversion in that no garaging is provided within the existing buildings. Indeed, none is provided at all. The use of converted space to provide a minimum of one garage per dwelling is a fundamental requirement of the Conversion of Agricultural Buildings policy approved by the Committee in 1996. This issue forms an additional reason for refusal.

In conclusion, the proposals are contrary to policy in very important respects and cannot therefore be recommended for approval. Although this report has been brought before Committee because of the support of the Parish Council, I cannot agree with their opinion. They are concerned at the possibility of the buildings becoming derelict, but this is far from the case at present and there is no reason why the further options for use of the barns should not be considered and if necessary, market tested.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons :

- 1 The Warwickshire Structure Plan Policy RA.4, and emerging policy RAP2 of the first deposit version of the Local Plan (1996-2011) state that preference should be given to the re-use of rural buildings for employment use, not residential, and to grant consent would therefore be contrary to the Development Plan since insufficient evidence has been supplied of any attempt to find alternative uses for these substantial buildings.

 - 2 Policy (DW) C3 of the Warwick District Local Plan (supported by supplementary advice on *The Conversion of Agricultural Buildings*) and emerging policy RAP8 of the first deposit version of the Local Plan (1996-2011) set out a number of criteria for the re-use or adaptation of existing rural buildings and the policy specifically refers to the need for the proposed use to be accommodated without extensive rebuilding, alteration or extensions to the building, and for the appearance and setting of the building following conversion to protect and where possible, enhance the character and appearance of the countryside. It is considered that the failure of the conversion proposals to include garaging within the existing structures would lead to cars being parked outside and would also lead to future pressures for the construction of additional garage buildings, both of which would be detrimental to the appearance and setting of the buildings and thereby to the character and appearance of the countryside.
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