

Planning Committee: 17 January 2012

Item Number: 7

Application No: W 11 / 1089

Town/Parish Council: Warwick
Case Officer: Steven Wallsgrove
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Registration Date: 20/10/11
Expiry Date: 15/12/11

Leafields Farm, Stratford Road, Warwick, CV34 6RA

Conversion of farm buildings into offices (including demolition of other buildings)
and erection of link building FOR C+S Taylor LLP

This application is being presented to Committee due to an objection from the Town Council having been received.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Warwick Town Council : The Town Council are concerned that the creation of a separate business use within the Castle Park should be a precursor of similar applications, which would be difficult to refuse and could lead, at the very least to a demand for the extension of commercial uses if the principle office use is established.

Environment Agency : Confirm site lies in Flood Zone 2 and refer to standard advice.

English Heritage : Consider that the 'harm' to the Registered Park is less than significant and that the form of the historic buildings will, in fact, be better revealed by the removal of later accretions. They recommend conditions about parking, surfacing, and restoration planting (since the barn to the north is to be removed).

WCC (Ecology) : Note the submitted bat report and recommend that, as a precautionary measure, a bat box is erected before works commence, that the timing of works needs to avoid the need for a license, and that there should be post development monitoring. They also recommend a nesting bird condition.

CAAF : Members felt that the use must remain ancillary to Castle Park, and wondered if it was necessary to have a link to the 'Old Barn' which should still stand independently.
It was also felt that the car parking would best be located on the footprint of the old 'Dutch Barn' and the area currently earmarked for parking landscaped as appropriate.

Conservation : Comments on the number of solar panels, but note that they are not generally visible to the public.

WCC (Archaeology): recommend a photographic record condition of the buildings to be altered since they appear on the 1880's Ordnance Survey map.

RELEVANT POLICIES

- DP8 - Parking (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Vehicle Parking Standards (Supplementary Planning Document)
- Ministerial Statement of 23 March 2011 on "Planning for Growth"
- Sustainable Buildings (Supplementary Planning Document - December 2008)
- UAP2 - Directing New Employment Development (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP13 - Renewable Energy Developments (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP2 - Protecting the Areas of Restraint (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP8 - Protection of Conservation Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP9 - Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP11 - Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- SC13 - Open Space and Recreation Improvements (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Planning Policy Statement 5 : Planning for the Historic Environment
- Planning Policy Statement 25 : Development and Flood Risk

PLANNING HISTORY

An application to convert the buildings into a single dwelling was refused in 1977, but an application to convert them into offices, with an entrance lobby, was allowed on appeal in 1998.

KEY ISSUES

The Site and its Location

The site consists of two brick built farm buildings, two ranges of timber shelter sheds, and a large, portal framed, farm building, with other farm buildings to the north. The whole site lies in the Conservation Area and the Registered Historic Park. The site is approached from Stratford Road along a private farm drive which leads to Leafield Bridge.

Details of the Development

The proposal is to convert the two ranges of brick built farm buildings into offices, with a relatively small conference room link. Parking is shown in the existing yard and the roof plans and elevations show the proposed solar panels. The application was accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, a Sustainable Buildings Statement, a Flood Risk Assessment, and a Bat Report (amended in October).

Assessment

The proposal raises a wide variety of issues, including impact on the Conservation Area and Registered Historic Park, employment policy, the Area of Restraint and flood risk. There are also a number of more minor issues which are generally satisfied by the submitted reports and details.

The starting point can be taken as the Town Council objection to the principle of the creation of a separate business use. In the present case, although the site clearly lies in the 'countryside', the rural area policies do not apply since the site does not lie within the defined area in the Local Plan. The relevant Local Plan policy is, therefore, UAP2: directing new employment development to more accessible locations in the urban area, although this has to be weighed against the 'Planning for Growth' ministerial statement and the other Local Plan policies.

In this context, the site lies in the Conservation Area, the Registered Historic Park, and an Area of Restraint but, in all these cases, the reuse of buildings is generally acceptable since the generally open, historic, character of the area will be protected. In fact, in the present case, the historic open character will be improved, a point noted by English Heritage, since a number of more modern farm buildings will be demolished. It is considered that the duty to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area is justification to over-ride the conflict with UAP2 policy which would otherwise prevent the proposed development. In addition, the Ministerial Statement states that local planning authorities should 'support enterprise and facilitate economic and other forms of sustainable development'. It is considered that, while the site is not within the built up area, it is very close to it so that the site can be considered as being 'sustainable', particularly from an access point of view.

The alterations to the buildings, to enable their re-use, include replacing the existing windows, installing solar panels, and raising the floor levels slightly to satisfy the Building Regulations. This element will also mitigate the flood risk, which is small, as the site is within Flood Zone 2, not Flood Zone 3. The replacement windows have been designed as simple, double glazed, timber windows to respect the utilitarian nature of the buildings as the existing window frames are in relatively poorer condition. The large number of solar panels shown on the building, together with the use of a biomass boiler (which can use timber from the Park itself), will satisfy the 10% renewable energy requirements.

The application also includes a relatively small extension to link the two retained buildings together, as part of the alterations. However, this is well hidden, being in the corner between the two buildings and close to the boundary of the former Park and will have significantly less visual impact than the two buildings to be demolished. It is considered, therefore, that this extension will, on its own, preserve the character of the area and, when taken with the demolition of the modern, poor quality, buildings will result in an overall enhancement of the Conservation Area.

English Heritage have also commented on the parking and landscaping but appear to have misunderstood the plans since 14 parking spaces are shown, and labelled, on the submitted plans, while the existing concrete surface will be modified to incorporate drainage. The adopted Parking SPD only requires 12 spaces since the office floorspace will be some 352 sq.m. In terms of landscaping, they refer to the "main barn" to the north as being demolished, with a need to then landscape the area to restore it to its nineteenth century

design. However, this building is not being demolished while the 'cattle yard' building, which is to be removed, will result in the original open cattle yard being restored.

The only other impact will be the additional traffic that will be generated by the proposed use. This will affect three houses that have their access off the private drive, but it is considered that the level of disturbance (by 12 cars) will not be unreasonable, and there are no visibility problems onto the Stratford Road due to the width of the verge.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT, subject to the conditions listed below.

CONDITIONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. **REASON** : To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details shown on the application form, site location plan and approved drawing(s) 11122-10, -13, -14, -15Rev.A, + -16, and specification contained therein, submitted on 26 August and 3 November 2011 unless first agreed otherwise in writing by the District Planning Authority. **REASON** : For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DP1 and DP2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 3 The car park hereby permitted shall be constructed, surfaced, laid out and available for use prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, in full accordance with the approved plan. **REASON** : To ensure that adequate parking facilities are available, in accordance with the requirements of Policy DP8 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011.
- 4 The development hereby permitted shall not be first occupied unless and until the renewable energy scheme submitted as part of the application has been wholly implemented in strict accordance with the approved details. The works within this scheme shall be retained at all times thereafter and shall be maintained strictly in accordance with manufacturers specifications. **REASON** : To ensure that adequate provision is made for the generation of energy from renewable energy resources in accordance with the provisions of Policy DP13 in the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 5 The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations in the Bat Survey and Mitigation Report of October 2011, including the timing of the works. **REASON**: To ensure that protected species are not harmed by the development.
- 6 No development shall commence on site until a photographic record of

the buildings have first been obtained in accordance with a brief to be first agreed in writing by the District Planning Authority in consultation with the Warwickshire Museum. The record so obtained shall be deposited with the Museum prior to work commencing. **REASON:** To ensure a record is made of the structure which is part of the built heritage of the District, in order to satisfy the requirements of Policy DP4 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

INFORMATIVES

For the purposes of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, the following reason(s) for the Council's decision are summarised below:

In the opinion of the District Planning Authority, the development achieves acceptable standards of layout and design and does not give rise to any harmful effects in terms of impact on the Conservation Area, Registered Historic Park, or flooding which would justify a refusal of permission. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the policies listed.
