

Item No	Application No. and Parish	8/13 week date	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(1)	17/00351/FULD Beenham	6 April 2017	Conversion of existing barn into residential dwelling with ancillary parking and amenity space Barn south of Butlers Farm Back Lane Beenham Reading Mrs T Palmer

To view the plans and drawings relating to this application click the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=17/00351/FULD>

Recommendation Summary:

To **DELEGATE** to the Head of Development and Planning to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION** for the reason for refusal set out in section 8.1 of this report.

Ward Members:

Councillor Keith Chopping

Reason for Committee Determination:

Requested by Councillor Chopping to allow committee to consider the application

Committee Site Visit:

Contact Officer Details

Name: Cheryl Willett
Job Title: Senior Planning Officer
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1. Relevant Site History

- 08/00280/AGRIC: Recladding of existing barn to enable use of structure for storage, etc. Application not required as agricultural use proven 17.03.08.
- 09/01122/AGRIC: Alteration to existing barn and outbuildings to make buildings secure. Application not required 29.07.07
- 14/00242/CLASSM: Change of Use under Paragraph M3 of Class M from Agriculture to B8. LPA notified 07.02.14

2. Publicity of Application

Site Notice Expired: 24th March 2017
Neighbour Notification Expired: 9th March 2017

3. Consultations and Representations

3.1 Consultations

Beenham Parish Council No objections.

Highways No objections.

Environmental Health No comments.

Waste Management No objections.

SuDS No comments received by date of writing.

North Wessex Downs AONB No objections. Adjacent to the village and forms part of the envelope of the built environment in this locality. The proposal is simple and sympathetic and appears to retain the existing structure with a small pitched roof added to the single storey projection. Restrictions on external lighting and PD rights for outbuildings.

Thames Water No comments received by date of writing.

Ecologist No comments received by date of writing.

3.2 Representations

Total: 7 Object: 2 Support: 5

Summary of objections:

- No planning notice displayed (prior to it being placed at the entrance);
- Overdevelopment of the site. Large dwelling in an area where there are small semi detached houses and bungalows;
- No residential development north of this section of Back Lane;

- Set a precedent;
- When the barn was constructed it was in a manner conducive to conversion;
- Barn has never been overtly used as an agricultural building;
- Land has recently been partitioned and hedge along Back Lane has been allowed to grow higher over the past 5 years;
- Further vegetation planted to the rear of the site;
- Site is within the AONB, thereby creating an additional intrusion into the AONB;
- Building visually and physically separated from the adjacent built development.

Summary of support:

- Houses are needed in the village;
- Good use for an unused building;
- Conversion is a visually sympathetic method of providing residential housing in the village;
- Assist the local economy, providing additional custom to the pub and to surrounding towns;
- Building is within the building line;
- No impact on access to allotments;
- No impact on neighbours.

4 Planning Policy

- 4.1 The statutory development plan comprises the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and those saved policies within the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007) (WBDLP).
- 4.2 Other material considerations include government legislation and guidance, in particular:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (NPPF);
 - The National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) (PPG).
- 4.3 According to paragraph 215 of the NPPF, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

The policies within the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) attract full weight. The following policies are relevant to this application:

- ADPP1: Spatial Strategy;
- ADPP5: North Wessex Downs AONB;
- CS1: Delivering New Homes and Retaining the Housing Stock;
- CS13: Transport;
- CS14: Design Principles;
- CS17: Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- CS19: Historic Environment and Landscape Character.

- 4.4 The policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (1991-2006) Saved Policies 2007 attract due weight in accordance with their degree of consistency with the

policies of the National Planning Policy Framework. The following saved policies are relevant to this application:

- OVS5: Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control
- OVS6: Noise Pollution
- TRANS1: Meeting the Transport Needs of New Development;
- HSG1: The Identification of Settlements for Planning Purposes;
- ENV19: The Reuse and Adaptation of Rural Buildings

4.5 In addition, the following locally adopted West Berkshire Council policy documents are relevant to this application:

- Supplementary Planning Document, Quality Design (June 2006): Part 2, Residential Development
- The West Berkshire Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2014)
- The North Wessex Downs Area of outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019
- Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (adopted March 2014)
- Beenham: A Parish Design Statement

4.6 According to Paragraph 216 of the NPPF, decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

(1) The stage of preparation,

(2) The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies and

(3) The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF.

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) provides a timetable for the preparation of emerging development plan documents.

4.7 The emerging Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD) is the second DPD of the new West Berkshire Local Plan, which will allocate non-strategic housing sites across the district. The Proposed Submission Version of the HSA DPD was published in December 2016. The HSA DPD has undergone examination and consultation on Main Modifications, and is now pending the Inspectors report. According to the latest LDS update, adoption of the HSA DPD is now anticipated in Spring 2017. It is therefore at an advanced stage of preparation. No specific housing allocations are relevant to this appeal, but its progress is relevant to the housing supply considerations raised by the Appellant. The following policies from the HSA DPD are relevant to this development and now carry significant weight.

- C1: Location of New Housing in the Countryside
- C3: Design of Housing in the Countryside
- C4: Conversion of Existing Redundant Buildings in the Countryside to Residential Use
- P1: Parking Standards for New Residential Development

5. Description of Development

- 5.1 The application seeks full permission to convert the existing barn into a four bedroom dwelling, with garaging. The existing doors would be converted into full height glazing. New openings are proposed in the other elevations. The hardstanding to the front would be retained. The proposed garden would be confined to the existing application site. A fence and hedging has been erected to denote the western boundary.
- 5.2 According to the applicant the barn currently houses equipment such as a tractor and trailer. No hay is stored and has not been stored for the past year. The applicant advises that the building is surplus to requirements and the equipment will be relocated to an existing building on Butlers Farm.
- 5.3 The barn was adapted / reconstructed in 2009, and is of a modern appearance. The building was previously dilapidated, with aerial photographs showing that the roof was partly missing.

6. Appraisal

6.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 6.1.1 The application has been considered under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended). A screening opinion has been issued confirming the proposed development is not EIA development and therefore an Environmental Statement is not required.

6.2 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.2.1 The proposed works would be liable for payment of the Community Infrastructure Levy. This has been provisionally calculated at a sum of £16,467.50, subject to confirmation of the floor area.

6.3 Consideration

- 6.3.1 The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are:
- Principle of development;
 - Impact of the proposed works on the character and appearance of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - Impact on neighbouring amenity and amenity of future occupants;
 - Impact on highway safety;
 - Impact on ecology;
 - Planning balance

6.4 The principle of development

- 6.4.1 The application site is located outside of the defined settlement boundary, where new development is more strictly controlled. The NPPF outlines in paragraph 55 that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, and isolated new homes should be avoided unless where, amongst

others, 'the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting'.

- 6.4.2 Policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy requires development to follow the existing settlement pattern and comply with the spatial strategy. Beenham is not a village listed within the settlement hierarchy, and the site is located outside of the settlement boundary, as identified by Local Plan policy HSG1. Core Strategy policy ADPP1 outlines that in smaller villages with settlement boundaries (including Beenham) only limited infill development would be suitable, subject to the character and form of the settlement. Outside of the settlement boundaries only appropriate limited development would be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy. The supporting text to Policy ADPP1 outlines the following at paragraph 4.17 (with officer emphasis in bold):

'Settlements below the service village level in the hierarchy would deliver additional housing but this would be limited to infill or minor development where a settlement boundary has been defined, and to rural exception schemes for affordable housing to meet local needs. Some limited development is important for the long-term sustainability of rural communities. As no allocations are proposed for villages that are not listed in the settlement hierarchy, infill and rural exceptions sites in these settlements would be additional sources of housing supply which would introduce a further element of flexibility to help meet the development objectives of the strategy. Outside these settlements, **in the countryside, a more restrictive approach to development will be taken. Specific exceptions to this approach could include barn conversions** and agricultural workers dwellings to support the rural economy. **Any development within the North Wessex Downs AONB will be more restrictive than in the general countryside, reflecting the national designation of the landscape**'.

Policy ADPP5 of the Core Strategy, when discussing the AONB, seeks to focus housing allocations in rural service centres and service villages.

- 6.4.3 Moving away from the development plan policies the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD) now attracts substantial weight in decision making. Policy C1 of the emerging HSA DPD also outlines that exceptions to the restriction on new residential development outside of the settlement boundaries would be limited to the conversion of redundant buildings, among others.
- 6.4.4 Policy C4 of the emerging HSA DPD applies to the conversion of existing redundant buildings in the countryside, specifically to those that are structurally sound. The applicant outlines that the building is surplus to requirements, and the existing machinery stored in the building would be relocated to an existing barn at Butlers Farm. Therefore, the change of use would not result in a subsequent application for a replacement building, despite the building not being genuinely redundant.
- 6.4.5 Beenham is a small settlement, with services including a primary school, public house and church. There is a limited bus service serving the village between Thatcham and Calcot Savacentre on Mondays and Wednesdays, and between Newbury and Theale on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and a late service to set customers down on Monday to Friday. There would be a reliance on the private car to access other services and places of employment. This is not in line with the Core

Planning Principles in the NPPF which states that planning should manage growth through making the most of public transport, walking and cycling, and focusing development in locations which are or which can be made sustainable.

6.4.6 In consideration of the scheme the barn is capable of conversion without significant adaptation and is not in an isolated location. The Building Survey submitted with the report shows that the building is in good condition capable of conversion without demolition or substantial change. The conversion is supported in principle by Local Plan Policy ENV19, subject to compliance with the criteria set out within. However, the barn is not genuinely redundant and therefore conflicts with emerging policy C4 of the HSA DPD. Beenham is not an example of a sustainable settlement, where travel would be necessary to access most services and places of employment. Another point is that if the site was not in the AONB permitted development rights would exist for conversion to residential, subject to the prior notification procedure. The Government's intention is to bring buildings back into beneficial use and help boost the supply of housing. The building is currently being used, despite the claim it is surplus to requirements.

6.4.7 In consideration of the development plan policies the principle of whether the development is acceptable is subject to compliance with criteria set out within development plan policies and to emerging policies. This is discussed below. However, there is conflict with emerging planning policies as it hasn't been proven that the barn is genuinely redundant.

6.5 Design and impact of the proposed works on the character and appearance of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

6.5.1 The site is situated within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is an area of nationally significant landscape importance where the conservation of the character and appearance of the AONB is given a high level of importance in planning decision making.

6.5.2 Policy ENV19 of the Local Plan requires that proposals for the re-use of buildings are in keeping with their surroundings, and respect local building styles and materials. Policy C3 of the emerging HSA DPD states 'the design of new housing, including rural housing exception sites, conversions, extensions and replacement dwellings, must have regard to the impact individually and collectively on the landscape character of the area and its sensitivity to change'. Furthermore, development should have regard to the character of the area, taking into account the local settlement and built character.

6.5.3 Due to the open character of fields surrounding the site it is highly visible in views from surrounding locations. The public right of way BEEN/19/1 is located approximately 75 metres to the west of the site, and shared with the entrance road to Butler's Farm. A hedge is sited along the eastern edge of the road, providing some screening to the site. There are gaps in the hedge where the barn can be seen. The barn is viewed against the backdrop of existing houses along Back Lane.

6.5.4 The height and form of the building would remain unchanged. The proposed external alterations to the building would be clearly visible from surrounding public viewpoints. The change of use of the land forming the proposed curtilage to

residential use would detract from the character of the area and the AONB, with the introduction of domestic landscaping and domestic paraphernalia. Such paraphernalia could include children's play equipment, closely mown grass, washing lines, hard landscaping such as garden paths, and soft landscaping including planted areas. This cannot be controlled by planning conditions. Permitted development rights could be used to manage any planned residential extensions, outbuildings and alterations to the building itself.

- 6.5.5 The barn is large, and visually stands in isolation beyond the edge of the settlement. However, it currently is an agricultural barn and an example of such rural buildings that are part of the established countryside scene. It is recognised to be a building which is utilitarian in style, and the proposed adaptation would retain this utilitarian style, particularly with the insertion of a significant amount of glazing. The conversion of the building would not lead to an enhancement of the site but would accentuate the prominence of the building within the site and draw attention to its presence.
- 6.5.6 There is a clearly defined pattern of development in the locality, where houses are located south of Back Lane opposite to the site and either side of Back Lane when turning the corner. There is no other development, including any non-residential, north of Back Lane in the immediate locality. There is more established development either side of Back Lane on the western side of the village, which is visually distinct from the application site.
- 6.5.7 In the context of surrounding development the existing building is conspicuous and not in keeping with the general small scale bungalows and two storey housing in close proximity. The creation of a dwelling on this location would go against the general grain of existing residential development which is concentrated to the south of Back Lane, and along the east and west of Back Lane as the corner is turned away from the site. The proposal would introduce a new tier of residential development in the immediate locality where none currently exists. The site is particularly sensitive, especially from the adjacent public right of way and views from Back Lane, when viewed from the south-east.
- 6.5.8 Landscape works would not on their own make the development acceptable, as the height and overall massing of the barn would mean that such landscape would need to be substantial. Furthermore, landscaping cannot make an unacceptable scheme acceptable.
- 6.5.9 The AONB is an intrinsically dark landscape. The proposed development with its extensive glazed areas would be likely contribute to increased light pollution at sight. External lighting can be controlled by planning condition. The preservation of dark night skies within the AONB is specifically mentioned in policy ADPP5 of the core strategy.
- 6.5.10 Overall, the proposal is considered to domesticate the building and its curtilage, and the building would be plainly visible from public viewpoints. The building would harmfully juxtapose against the countryside and diminish the existing extent of the settlement. When considering the context of the site a large dwelling and its associated curtilage would not follow the established character of the immediate locality and would have a negative impact on the local distinctiveness and sense of place of this part of the AONB contrary to the aims of policy ADPP5

6.6 Impact on highway safety

- 6.6.1 The existing access from Back Lane and the existing hardstanding would be utilised.
- 6.6.2 The proposed works are not considered to result any additional impact on highway safety. Parking would be provided at a sufficient level to meet with the requirements of both existing and emerging policies.

6.7 Impact on neighbouring amenity and amenity of future occupants

- 6.7.1 The proposed dwelling would be well separated from any surrounding residential property, and as such is not considered to result in any undue impact on residential amenity.
- 6.7.2 The proposed works would secure a good quality of amenity space for future occupants in accordance with the recommendations of the Quality Design SPD.

6.8 Impact on ecology

- 6.8.1 As works are proposed to an existing barn and in accordance with Local Plan policy ENV19, Core Strategy Policy CS17, the NPPF and emerging HSA DPD policy C4 the applicants have commissioned an ecological survey to check for protected species. The report concludes that there are no priority habitats present and very limited opportunities for priority species to exist on site. There are recommendations outlined in the survey for biodiversity enhancement.
- 6.8.2 The Council's ecological consultant's comments will be reported on the committee update sheet

6.9 Planning balance

- 6.9.1 When considering the benefits of the proposal the additional dwelling would add to the supply of housing in the district, though this is limited to one dwelling.
- 6.9.2 When considering the adverse impacts of the proposed development the conversion of the building, owing to its size, scale and utilitarian appearance, together with large curtilage, would result in harm to the character of the area and to the AONB. Furthermore there would be light pollution at night due to the amount and type of glazing. The site is not within a sustainable location. There is no proof that the barn is genuinely redundant. The site visit and the application documents, including the CIL form, outline that the building is in use.
- 6.9.3 Great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. This harm to the environment outweighs the benefits set out above and, as such, the proposal does not represent sustainable development.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposal to convert the existing barn into a residential dwelling with ancillary parking and amenity space would result in a significant and harmful impact on the

character of the surrounding rural and agricultural landscape in a visually sensitive location within the North Wessex Downs AONB. As such it is contrary to the requirements of policies on development in the countryside and the requirements of the NPPF.

8. Recommendation

To **DELEGATE** to the Head of Development and Planning to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the reason for refusal set out in Section 8.1.

8.1.1 Reason

1. The application site is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), visible from public viewpoints including the public footpath to the west BEEN/19/1. The existing agricultural barn is large and utilitarian in appearance. The conversion of the building and surrounding land to residential use would detract from the character and appearance of the character of the area and the AONB, with the introduction of domestic landscaping and domestic paraphernalia. The conversion would retain the existing utilitarian style, of the buildings and the insertion of a significant amount of glazing would degrade the intrinsically dark skies of the AONB. As a result the development will significantly harm rather than conserve the character of the immediate area and of the AONB.

As such the application is contrary to the provisions of Policy ADPP5 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) July 2012 and section 7 and paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires good design and seeks to ensure that development in the AONB conserves and enhances its special qualities. The proposal also runs contrary to criteria (a), (e) and (g) of Policy ENV19 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007. The application is contrary to emerging planning policy, specifically Policy C3 of the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2016) which requires development to be designed having regard to the character of the area in which the site is located; and Policy C4 of the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2016) which seeks to ensure that conversions of rural buildings to residential use protect the rural character of the application site and its setting in the wider landscape

2. Visually the barn stands in isolation beyond the edge of the settlement, and is distinct in location, scale and massing from the surrounding residential development in Back Lane. There is a clearly defined pattern of development in the locality. The appearance of the barn is in unsympathetic contrast to the bungalows located on the opposite side of Back Lane, and to the modest two storey houses to the east of the site in Back Lane.

As such the application is contrary to the provisions of Policy ADPP5 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) July 2012 and section 7 and paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires good design and seeks to ensure that development in the AONB conserves and enhances its special qualities. The proposal also runs contrary to criteria (a), (d) and (g) of Policy ENV19 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007, and does not accord with points 8 and 13 of the planning guidance outlined in the Beenham Parish Design Statement (2003). The application is contrary to emerging planning policy, specifically Policy C3 of the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan

Document (2016) which requires development to be designed having regard to the character of the area in which the site is located; and Policy C4 of the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2016) which seeks to ensure that conversions of rural buildings to residential use protect the rural character of the site and its setting in the wider landscape.

3. It has not been proven that the barn is genuinely redundant, as even though it is claimed to be surplus to requirements it is still used for the storage of agricultural related equipment. Therefore the proposed conversion is contrary to paragraph 55 of the NPPF and emerging Policy C4 of the Housing Site Allocations DPD.

DC