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8th October 2014

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**Planning Application 2014/210/FUL**

**Reconstruction of farmhouse building to create two dwellings. Conversion of existing barns to create five dwellings and erection of garage buildings and stores**

**Lowans Hill Farm, Brockhill Lane, Brockhill, Redditch, Worcestershire, B97 6QX**

**Applicant: Mr Keir Price  
Expiry Date: 29th September 2014  
Ward: BATCHLEY AND BROCKHILL**

**(see additional papers for Site Plan)**

The author of this report is David Kelly, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527 881345 Email: d.kelly@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

**Site Description**

The site consists of an existing group of historic farm buildings which appear to have been poorly maintained in recent times. The buildings are 1-2 storeys, arranged around a courtyard and were originally designed for agricultural purposes such as animal housing, feed store and equipment storage. The farmstead dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century according to the County Historic Environment Record. The site of the former farmhouse was located on the west side of the farm buildings. This was unfortunately damaged by fire and demolished in 2009. The land to the south of the farmhouse (at a lower elevation) has largely been developed as part of the Brockhill Residential scheme under application 2011/177/OUT.

**Proposal Description**

The application comprises two components: the conversion of the remaining farm buildings to five residential units and the provision of two residential units through the rebuilding of the former farmhouse. The reconstructed farmhouse would occupy the same position as the former house, would have the same building envelope height and window openings.

The four sides of the courtyard would each become a dwelling, and the detached cart shed would also be converted to a single dwelling. The courtyard area would be a surfaced area for vehicular and pedestrian access and includes parking arrangements for some of the dwellings. To the rear of the buildings, on the 'outside' of the courtyard, each dwelling would have a rear garden area adjacent to the agricultural fields that surround the site. Two new timber car ports are proposed within the site. The barn to the east of the site would also be extended, on the northern side for a covered parking area and on the southern side a small single storey extension to form a utility room. This would be in place of what seems to have been a previous extension that no longer exists on the site.

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The proposed access to the site would now be from the existing completed residential scheme to the south (approved under 2011/177/OUT). In the previous proposal, two alternative accesses to the site were considered.

The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement, a Climate Change Statement, a completed West Midlands Sustainability Checklist, a Contaminated Land Phase 1 study, a Drainage Plan, a Bat Report and a Landscape Character Assessment.

**Relevant Policies:**

**Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3:**

CS07 The Sustainable Location of Development  
BBE11 Buildings of Local Interest  
BBE13 Qualities of Good Design  
BBE19 Green Architecture  
BRA03 Areas of Development Restraint  
CT12 Parking Standards  
BNE01A Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

**Emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4**

Policy 2: Settlement Hierarchy  
Policy 3: Development Strategy  
Policy 46: Brockhill East

**Others:**

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework  
SPG Encouraging Good Design  
SPD Open Space Provision  
SPD Planning Obligations for Education Contributions

**Relevant Planning History**

2009/077/DEM	Application for prior notification of proposed demolition - Demolition of former Lowans Hill Farmhouse and outbuildings	Refused	23.06.2009
2011/087/FUL	Reconstruction of farmhouse building to create two dwellings. Conversion of existing barns to create five dwellings and erection of garage buildings and stores	Approved	07.09.2011

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**Consultations**

**Education Authority**

There would be an education contribution required in respect of the following schools: Shared Tardebigge CE First and Holyoakes First, Birchensale Middle and Trinity High School.

**Arboricultural Officer**

No objection subject to conditions.

**North Worcestershire Water Management**

No objection subject to condition.

**Highway Network Control**

No objection subject to condition H25 (Access, turning and parking).

**Area Environmental Health Officer**

No objections subject to conditions.

**Development Plans**

No objection - renewal of previously approved scheme.

**Parks and Green Space Development Officer**

No comments received.

**Leisure Services**

The projects that that may benefit from proposed contributions located within the area are as follows: Batchley Play Area, Batchley Pond, Brockhill Park and Birchensale School (sports pitches).

**Landscape & Countryside Manager**

No comments received.

**Crime Risk Manager**

No comments received.

**Severn Trent Water Ltd**

No objection subject to conditions.

**Conservation Advisor**

No comments received. No objections were raised to previous scheme.

**Worcestershire Wildlife Trust**

No comments received.

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**Worcestershire Archive and Archaeological Service**

No objection subject to condition.

**Planning Services - Bromsgrove District Council**

No objection.

**Public Consultation Response**

No responses received.

**Assessment of Proposal**

Members should note that the proposal is identical to the previously approved scheme for the conversion of the farm buildings and the reconstruction of the farmhouse. (2011/087/FUL). This consent expired on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

The policy framework within which the application would be considered has changed since 2011, most notably with the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012. The local development plan remains the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3 adopted on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006. The policies of the adopted plan carry significant weight where these policies are consistent with those of the NPPF. It is considered that the policies of LP No.3 in relation to the matters of design and buildings of local historic interest are consistent with the policy objectives of the NPPF and therefore remain relevant in the determination of the application.

The key issues for consideration in this case are as follows:

**Principle**

The site lies largely within the designated Area of Development Restraint (ADR) in the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3 where land is reserved for possible development beyond the 2011 plan period. The site and the entirety of the surrounding area are identified for mixed use development (Policy 46) of the emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4. The site remains ADR until LP4 is adopted. Applications within ADR land should be considered under policies relating to development within the countryside, in order to protect ADR land for future development. Within the open countryside, the re-use of existing vacant buildings is considered to be appropriate both in terms of retaining and revitalising buildings of local historic interest and also in terms of sustainability. The new build units would not normally be acceptable in the countryside. However, the designation of the land in the emerging Local Plan No. 4, proximity to recent residential development and the site history mean that the reconstruction of the farmhouse in the ADR would be acceptable.

Whilst some of the north eastern edge of the site falls within the Green Belt, there are no proposed structures to be built within it, and therefore the policy protection of the openness of the Green Belt would not be compromised as a result of this scheme. The

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site is also entirely enclosed from this side. It is considered that the openness should be protected by the imposition of conditions preventing freestanding structures from being erected in the rear gardens through removing appropriate Permitted Development Rights. This would also ensure that the character of the converted buildings was retained.

Design and Layout

The conversion of the former farm buildings has been designed sympathetically so that their form, character and appearance would be protected as much as possible, through the retention of existing openings and keeping to a minimum the insertion of new ones in the external walls of the building. The internal form and structure of the buildings would also be largely retained, leading to five different dwellings all designed to be in keeping with the existing historic built form on the site. Each of the five conversion properties would have a substantial private rear garden area, and the layout of the site has been designed so that each property would have its own identifiable parking areas, including visitor parking spaces. Each dwelling also has a cycle store/shed that is accessible from the access drive to the site. The conversion design is such that there would not be any overlooking between the properties.

The new build pair of semis has been designed to reflect the appearance of the farmhouse that had previously stood on the site. Whilst it has been altered to some extent and the internal layout is different as the built form now provides a pair of semis rather than a single large dwelling, this is considered to be acceptable. Each of the semis would have four bedrooms with the accommodation arranged over three floors, including a small bedroom within the roof space. The bulk and massing of the building is not overly large or dominant for the site or its surroundings and would not result in a detrimental impact on the landscape character of the site or any longer vistas. Each dwelling would have sufficient amenity space and parking arrangements and are orientated and designed so that they do not cause any harmful impacts on surrounding residential amenities. Therefore, it is considered that both the conversions and the new build dwellings are considered to comply with the detailed policy requirements for dwellings and as such are considered to be acceptable in that regard.

Historic Environment

Lowans Hill farm was considered for statutory listing by English Heritage prior to the destruction of the farmhouse in 2009. It was subsequently decided not to include it on the statutory list but the farmstead remains of local interest reflecting changes to farm methods over several centuries. It is evident on the site visit that the remaining buildings have been subject to some fire damage and finding a viable alternative use is important for their survival.

Due to the sensitive nature of the buildings to be converted and their historic interest, it is welcomed that minimal alterations are proposed to the external elevations of the buildings. In order to protect their historic integrity, it is recommended that PDRs be removed so that porches, extensions and changes to the roofs cannot be carried out without first seeking planning consent. This can be ensured through the imposition of conditions.

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## Landscaping and trees

Some information has been provided in relation to the landscaping and tree works needed as part of this proposal, which is considered to be acceptable. The loss of natural planting has been kept to a practical minimum, with the perimeter hedging proposed to remain in place. However, it has been recommended that some structural planting be required through the imposition of a condition, to ensure that the impact on the landscape of the reuse of the site be minimised. Similarly, it is important to ensure that any boundary treatments between properties, dividing up what was the farmyard area, be of sympathetic design and materials. It is considered that the imposition of the landscaping condition (No. 5) attached to the previous application would be acceptable to mitigate any impact.

## Highways and access

No objections in terms of access arrangements and safety have been raised and these are therefore considered to be acceptable. The proposal includes 14 parking spaces, which would equate to 2 spaces per dwelling and 2 additional visitor spaces. This level of parking provision complies with the provisions of Appendix H of the Local Plan.

## Sustainability

The site is considered to be in a sustainable and easily accessible location with integration possible with the cycle route in the larger residential scheme to the south. The re-use of existing buildings in preference to replacing them is also considered to be sustainable in nature. There are no further concerns with this proposal in this regard.

## Planning Obligations

The size of the proposed development is above the policy threshold for requiring contributions which should be sought via a planning obligation. Normally the following would be required under the adopted policy framework:

- A contribution towards County education facilities in compliance with the SPD; and
- A contribution towards open space, playing pitches and play areas in the area due to the increased demand/requirement from future residents in compliance with the SPD.

The applicant has agreed to enter into such an Agreement and is working with the Council's Legal Team on a draft version.

## Conclusion

The proposal is considered to comply with the current and emerging planning policies that apply and the retention and conversion of the buildings represents a sustainable form of development in an accessible location.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, authority be delegated to the head of Planning and Regeneration to GRANT planning permission subject to:-**

- a) **The satisfactory completion of a S106 planning obligation ensuring that:**
- **the Council are paid appropriate contributions in relation to the development for pitches, play areas and open space provision in the locality to be provided and maintained;**
  - **the County Council are paid appropriate contributions in relation to the enhancement of local education provision.**

**b) Conditions and informatives as summarised below:**

- 1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of the grant of this permission.

Reason: - In accordance with the requirements of Section 91(1) 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 approved shall be implemented in accordance with the following plans:

Plan Numbers to be inserted.

Reason: To accurately define the permission for the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is satisfactory in appearance in order to safeguard the visual amenities of the area in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3

- 3) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no works (other than those expressly authorised by this permission and shown on the approved plans) shall take place within the site of this dwelling without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To bring any future development or proposed change to the elevations of this building under planning control to ensure the character and appearance of the building and its surroundings is retained in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

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- 4) No development shall take place until a Programme of Historic Building recording and Interpretation, including a Written Scheme of Investigation, has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:
1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording.
  2. The programme for post investigation assessment.
  3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording.
  4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
  5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation
  6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- B) No demolition/development shall take place other than in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A).
- C) With a written agreed date the site investigation and post investigation assessment shall be completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5) The Development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the access, turning area (if applicable) and parking facilities shown on the approved plan have been properly consolidated, surfaced, drained and otherwise constructed in accordance with details to be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority and these areas shall thereafter be retained and kept available for those uses at all times.

Reason: - In the interests of highway safety, to ensure the free flow of traffic using the adjoining highway and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 6) No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include proposed boundary treatment and other means of enclosure, hard surfacing materials, new planting, trees and shrubs to be retained, together with measures to be taken for their protection while building works are in progress.

Reason:- In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and in accordance with Policy CS.8 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3



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- 7) Prior to the commencement of development details of the boundary treatments to be provided on site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:-To ensure the development is afforded privacy and security between neighbours and the public realm and in the interest of the visual amenity of the street scene and in accordance with Policies B(BE).13 and S.1 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

- 8) In the event that new wall and roof materials are required to be used in the development they should match in colour, form and texture those on the existing buildings, or if a near match cannot be found, the written approval of the Local Planning Authority should be obtained for materials, prior to development commencing. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:- To ensure that the development is satisfactory in appearance to safeguard the visual amenities of the area and is in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

**Informatives**

- 1) THIS PERMISSION DOES NOT AUTHORISE THE LAYING OF PRIVATE APPARATUS WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY. The applicant should apply to Worcestershire County Council for consent under the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 to install private apparatus within the confines of the public highway. Precise details of all works within the public highway must be agreed on site with the Highway Authority.
- 2) The local planning authority have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner to seek solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with this planning application through negotiation and amendment.

**Procedural matters**

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because the application requires a S106 Agreement. As such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.