

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

10th August 2011

PLANNING APPLICATION 2011/087/FUL

RECONSTRUCTION OF FARMHOUSE BUILDING TO CREATE TWO DWELLINGS AND CONVERSION OF EXISTING BARNs TO CREATE FIVE DWELLINGS, ERECTION OF GARAGE BUILDINGS AND STORES

LOWANS HILL FARM, BROCKHILL LANE, REDDITCH

**APPLICANT: PERSIMMON HOMES SOUTH MIDLANDS LTD
EXPIRY DATE: 1ST JUNE 2011**

WARD: BATCHLEY & BROCKHILL

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(See additional papers for Site Plan)

Site Description

Existing suite of historic farm buildings which appear to have been poorly maintained in recent times, but show evidence of use until recently, probably within 2-5 years. 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.

Adjacent to these buildings is a site where a farmhouse stood until it was recently burnt down. Since its recent vacation, the site has been subject to vandalism and Anti Social Behaviour.

The site is accessed along an unmade track leading from Hewell Road adjacent to Lowans Farm Cottages, which front Hewell Road. The track leads uphill to the farm site and is bounded by hedgerows on both sides.

Proposal Description

The detailed plans associated with this application have been amended since the application was submitted, in order to address various comments raised by the Conservation Adviser. Therefore, this description of the proposal represents the proposed development, as amended, in order that it provides an accurate description for the purposes of consideration and determination.

The application proposes the conversion of the remaining farm buildings to five residential units and the erection of a pair of semi detached two storey dwellings in the location of the former farm house.

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

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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.

Two plans showing access to the site have been submitted for consent. These show two alternatives. The first shows the existing access track from Hewell Road being improved to cater for the potential traffic movements, whereas the other shows how the site would be accessed if the adjacent residential development of the site to the south were to occur as proposed under planning application 2011/177/OUT, which can be found earlier on your agenda papers. It is the case that the application can be considered and determined on the basis of either the one arrangement or the other, and so effectively two possible accesses would be possible if permission were granted.

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 Key Policies

All planning applications must be considered in terms of the planning policy framework and all other relevant material considerations (as set out in the legislative framework). The planning policies noted below can be found on the following websites:

www.communities.gov.uk

www.wmra.gov.uk

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

National Planning Policy

PPS1 (& accompanying documents) Delivering sustainable development

PPS3 Housing

PPS9 Biodiversity and geological conservation

PPG13 Transport

Regional Spatial Strategy

Whilst the RSS still exists and forms part of the Development Plan for Redditch, it does not contain any policies that are directly related to or relevant to this application proposal. Therefore, in light of recent indications at

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national level that such policy is likely to be abolished in the near future, it is not considered necessary to provide any detail at this point in relation to the RSS.

Worcestershire County Structure Plan

SD2	Care for the environment
SD4	Minimising the need to travel
T1	Location of development
T3	Managing car use
T4	Car parking
IMP1	Implementation of development

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3

CS7	Sustainable location of development
B(BE)11	Buildings of local interest
B(BE)13	Qualities of good design
B(BE)19	Green architecture
B(RA)3	Areas of development restraint
C(T)12	Parking standards
B(NE)1a	Trees, woodland and hedgerows

Supplementary Planning Guidance / Supplementary Planning Documents

Encouraging good design
Open space
Education
Designing for community safety

Other Relevant Corporate Plans and Strategies

Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

Local Plan Designations

The site includes land designated as an ADR (area of development restraint) and a very small quantity of Green Belt on the north eastern edge of the site.

The relevant policies seek to retain ADR land for development beyond April 2011 and to maintain the openness of the Green Belt.

Core Strategy Update

The Core Strategy along with other Local Development Framework documents will eventually replace the Local Plan. It has been published and consulted upon, and therefore counts as emerging policy to which some weight can be given in the decision making process. The current version is the 'revised preferred draft core strategy'.

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The Core Strategy contains objectives for the overall approach to development in the Borough up until 2026, as well as strategic policies. The policies that could be considered of relevance to this decision are:

- 4 Sustainable travel and accessibility
- 8 Housing provision
- 29 Brockhill East strategic site

Policy 29 includes a list of criteria which development on this site and others near it should meet in order for proposals to be considered favourably.

Relevant Site Planning History

Appn. no	Proposal	Decision	Date
2009/077/DEM	Demolition of former farmhouse and outbuildings	Refused	28/6/09

An application to the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) for the buildings on this site to be added to the statutory list of buildings was being considered, and therefore the demolition was not considered acceptable due to the historic merit of retaining the built form. The application to the DCMS was denied, due to insufficient historic or local architectural merit, however the buildings will be considered when the local list is next reviewed and it is likely that they will be recommended for inclusion by Officers.

Public Consultation Responses

Responses in favour

1 comment received raising the following points:

- Support the proposal in principle as reuse of vacant buildings
- Attention to detail should result in buildings worthy of inclusion on the local list
- Should add buildings to local list once development complete

Responses against

1 letter of objection has been received raising the following concerns:

- The access road would encroach into open space
- Barn owl information in support of the application is contradictory
- The nearest bus service is too infrequent for commuters and currently under threat of total cessation

Consultee Responses

Development Plans Team

Confirm that the proposals are compliant with existing and emerging policy framework and note an over provision of parking relative to the standards in the local plan appendix

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Conservation Adviser

No objection to the amended scheme providing conditions are attached to ensure appropriate boundary walls and structural planting are agreed and implemented

Arboricultural Officer

No objection as proposal is appropriate and sympathetic in terms of tree works and planting proposals

Drainage Officer

No comments received

Landscape & Biodiversity Officer

No objection subject to conditions and informatives regarding nocturnal survey work

Leisure Services

No comments received

County Highway Network Control

No objection subject to conditions and informatives

County Education

No contribution required as sufficient capacity available in local schools

Worcestershire Regulatory Services: Environmental Health

No objection subject to conditions regarding hours of construction and informatives regarding burning on site

County Archaeologist

No objection subject to conditions ensuring that recording of the historic form of the buildings and site are completed to an agreed standard prior to occupation

Bromsgrove District Council

No objection

Crime Risk Manager

No objection

Severn Trent Water

No comments received

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

No objection

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Procedural matters

This application is reported to Planning Committee for determination as it is recommended for approval subject to a planning obligation.

Assessment of proposal

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

Principle

The site lies largely within the designated ADR, which is reserved for possible development beyond the 2011 plan period. 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. It is considered that the principle of residential development on this site is acceptable because of the proximity of the site to existing residential development and that proposed in the emerging core strategy. Within the core strategy, this site falls within an identified strategic site for residential development at Brockhill East where the evidence points towards a demand for further housing and that this is a sustainable and appropriate location for residential development.

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. 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.

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 punching 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.

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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, 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

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 Permitted Development Rights (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.

The re-use of historic buildings of interest is both policy compliant and sustainable and it is therefore considered important to encourage such development proposals wherever possible, particularly where buildings are not in good repair.

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. With this in place, it is considered that the natural environment would not be compromised as a result of the proposal.

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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 28 parking spaces, which would equate to 2 spaces per dwelling and 2 visitor spaces per dwelling. Whilst this is significantly in excess of the standards set out in Appendix H of the Local Plan, given the unique nature and location of the site and the recent amendments to PPG13 to remove the 'maximum' nature of parking standards, this is considered acceptable in this case. The parking spaces have been set within the overall layout of the site in such a way that they are considered to be sympathetic to the setting of the buildings and easily identifiable to users of the site. Therefore, these elements of the proposal are considered to be acceptable.

Both the proposed access arrangements are considered to be acceptable and therefore both can be included within the recommendation below. This would result in both gaining consent, and then either could be implemented in the future depending on whether other developments in the vicinity occur.

Sustainability

The site is considered to be in a sustainable and easily accessible location and 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 playing pitches and play areas in the area due to the increased demand/requirement from future residents in compliance with the SPD.

As there is capacity of places in the schools within the catchment area no education contribution is required in this case.

The applicant has agreed to provide the appropriate open space maintenance, play equipment and pitch provision contributions as detailed in the SPG.

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Conclusion

The proposal is considered to comply with the current and emerging planning policies that apply; it is thought to be unlikely to result in any adverse impacts to safety or amenity; it is considered to be an appropriate method of retaining buildings of local historic merit and is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Recommendation

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

- a) a 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; and**
- b) conditions and informatives as summarised below:**

Conditions

- 1. Time limit for commencement of development
- 2. PDRs removal
- 3. Historic building recording
- 4. Highways condition(s)
- 5. Structural planting
- 6. Boundary walls details
- 7. Hours of construction restriction
- 8. Materials to be submitted and agreed
- 9. External lighting supports details to be agreed
- 10. No development until remaining bat survey work has been agreed and completed
- 11. Approved plans specified

Informatives

- 1. Reason for approval
- 2. NB S106 attached to consent
- 3. Highway informatives
- 4. NB both access arrangements included in consideration and decision