

Application Ref: 11/014

Application Type	Full
Grid Ref:	SM82970873
Applicant	Mr H Halpin
Proposal	Conversion of derelict agricultural building to residential home
Site Location	The Old Cowshed, Butterhill, St Ishmaels

Summary

The following report was presented to members at the Development Management Committee meeting on the 23rd March, 2011.

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the Cowshed at Butterhill Farm to full residential use. The building is located to the rear of the Mansion house at the site.

A structural survey submitted with the application advises that the building is capable of being converted subject to care being taken when removing and replacing the roof. It mitigates for protected species on site and also shows a landscaping scheme to mitigate for the loss of 2 trees. Vehicular access is considered to be acceptable and the requirement for a contribution towards affordable housing is not required as the Supplementary Planning Guidance in respect of this issue has not been adopted. Due to the site being located in the countryside and beyond reasonable walking distance to the nearest Centre (St Ishmaels) and the lack of a regular bus service in the area, an additional dwelling at this location would make the community less sustainable and should therefore be resisted on this basis and as such the application contravenes Local Development Plan policies, in particular Policy 7 and also advice in Tan 6.

The application has been brought before the Development Management Committee because the view of St Ishmaels Community Council is contrary to the officer's recommendation.

Consultee Response

St Ishmaels Community Council: No objection

Environment Agency Wales: No objection

Countryside Council for Wales: No objection - The dimensions of the roost look fine and there is a note saying that there will no external lighting.

Hyder Consulting: Standard Advice

Public Response

4 letters have been received. Two authors object to the proposal stating that the application should not be supported if it means the buildings use will be for holiday letting purposes or as a second home as this use would affect the

social cohesion and permanent community in this area. Other issues raised relate to agreeing the location of the access, the incorporation of a number of new openings in the building, ownership issues raised in the previously withdrawn application and alterations agreed between both parties are not included on the plans.

Policies considered

LDP Policy 01 - National Park purposes and duty
LDP Policy 07 - Countryside
LDP Policy 08 - Special Qualities
LDP Policy 11 - Protection of Biodiversity
LDP Policy 15 - Conservation of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
LDP Policy 29 - Sustainable Design
LDP Policy 30 - Amenity
LDP Policy 32 - Surface Water Drainage
LDP Policy 45 – Affordable housing
LDP Policy 52 - Sustainable Transport
PPW4 Chapter 04 - Planning for Sustainability
PPW4 Chapter 05 - Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast
PPW4 Chapter 06 - Conserving the Historic Environment
PPW4 Chapter 07 - Supporting the Economy
PPW4 Chapter 08 - Transport
PPW4 Chapter 09 - Housing
PPW4 Chapter 11 - Tourism, Sport and Recreation
PPW4 Chapter 12 - Infrastructure and Services
SPG03 - Sustainable Design
TAN 05 - Nature Conservation and Planning
TAN 06 - Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities
TAN 12 - Design
TAN 18 - Transport

Officer's Appraisal

Background & Description

Butterhill is located about 1.5km north of the centre of St.Ishmaels and is accessed via a long track extending westwards from the C3051 county road. The subject building is of traditional construction with random stone walls and a double pitched slate roof. It is a long rectangular single storey outbuilding with many openings of variable sizes in the west elevation but with only one large window in the east elevation. The building is connected to the original walled garden which is in separate ownership. There is also a small, attached roofless building on the southern end which will be repaired and form the mitigation for protected species. This outbuilding is physically very well related to the mansion house and the other converted buildings positioned about the

farmyard. This group of buildings, in turn, is surrounded by fields reflecting its countryside location.

Butterhill Grange was once a large farmyard complex of buildings surrounding the mansion house. Historically, the mansion, which is a listed building, was allowed permission for subdivision into six flats and one dwelling, however this work was not carried out and the application lapsed. A more recent application allowed the restoration and rehabilitation of that building to one single unit.

Planning permission has also been given for conversion of five other traditionally constructed outbuildings, within the farm complex to full residential and holiday use, and which are now in separate ownerships. The Cowshed (known as the potato shed in previous applications) is the last traditionally constructed building on the site which has not been converted.

Permission was sought under planning application NP/58/91 to convert this building to two residential units within the old farm complex. However the application was withdrawn after concern was raised by the Authority of the number of new dwellings (10) that would be at this open countryside location.

Subsequent applications NP/649/91 and NP/043/97 allowed the conversion of this building to garaging and storage to be used by the residence of the dwelling units on the site. To this day the building has not been converted and those applications have lapsed. It is now redundant and in separate ownership to some of the other buildings on the site.

Current proposal

The proposal involves the conversion of this outbuilding into one unit of full residential use. The scheme indicates a two bedroom dwelling, and due to the height of the existing building a first floor will be constructed to allow for this accommodation. Existing openings will be utilized on the front elevation while four new openings will be made in the rear elevation wall. A lean-to extension will be constructed on the northern end of the building to house a utility room. The existing asbestos corrugated roof will be replaced with natural slate roof. The rear elevation roof slope will include 5 conservation style rooflights to allow natural light into the first floor accommodation. The front roof slope will incorporate a bi-spoke patent glazing panel over the main access and first floor gallery. External materials include pointed stonework, painted timber windows and doors and as stated natural slate roofs will replace asbestos corrugated sheeting.

An existing access to the east of the manor house and south of the application building will be utilized. No other access is indicated on the plan, which was an issue raised by a neighbour. It will be necessary to protect the existing raised garden wall to the east of the track by constructing a stone faced retaining wall at track level and at the foot of the embankment abutting the garden wall. This will match other walls in the complex.

Parking would be provided to the front of the outbuilding and a large garden area would be provided to the rear. Foul drainage would be taken to a septic tank and surface water to soakaways and water butts for recycling on the garden. A sustainable ground source heating system will be employed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Detailed plans and drawings have been submitted showing how the conversion scheme would be carried out and the application is also supported by a Design and Access Statement, an European Protected Species survey and a structural survey.

Key Issues

Having regard to the policy framework set out above the key issues are considered to be:

- the suitability of the building for conversion purposes
- impact of the scheme upon the character of the host building and the surrounding area
- appropriateness of the proposed use
- the effect on nature conservation
- technical suitability (e.g: access, drainage) and accessibility to centres.

Officers Considerations

National policy and related TAN guidance offers an overall framework for development in rural areas, including the National Park, and sets out several topic areas that should be considered together as part of reaching a balanced view on the merits of any individual planning application(s). The relevant policy issues are set out in the preceding section of this report. This national approach is distilled into the adopted development plan for the area which, for the National Park Authority, is the Local Development Plan (LDP). It is these policies against which the proposal should primarily be judged.

In advocating a sympathetic conversion scheme the proposal is considered to meet the requirements of policies 1, 8, 15, 29, and 30 which deal with National Park purposes, special qualities, conservation interests, sustainable design and amenity. The issues relating to the number of new openings on the rear of the building, raised by a third party, is not in this instance considered to impact on this very long building. Most of the apertures will be small to allow for the introduction of windows, with only one being larger to accommodate a door. These are sympathetically designed and will match others on this site. Other issues relating to ownership have been resolved under this application by the completion of Certificate B. Matters relating to connection to party walls will be dealt with under the Party Wall Act.

Turning to other matters the EPS survey recommends utilising the old Forge building as a sanctuary for protected species, supporting information also indicates the retention of existing hedge boundaries to provide natural habitat and shelter. Favourable comments have been received from CCW and as such it is considered the proposal would meet the biodiversity requirements of policy 11.

Favourable consultation responses have also been received from the Highway Authority, Welsh Water and the Environment Agency regarding access / parking / turning, foul drainage and surface water disposal. Accordingly the proposal is considered to meet the highway and drainage requirements of policies 53 and 32.

Parking would be provided to the front of the outbuilding and individual garden areas would be provided to the rear. Foul drainage would be taken to a septic tank and surface water to soakaways. Detailed plans and drawings have been submitted showing how the conversion scheme would be carried out and the application is also supported by a Design and Access Statement, an European Protected Species survey and a structural survey.

The application site is located in the countryside and therefore Policy 7 of the LDP is relevant. This policy allows for the conversion of appropriate buildings to a range of other uses subject to a number of criteria. In this instance the subject building is of traditional design and appearance and is considered to be one that makes a positive contribution to the character of the area thus meeting the first objective of this policy. The structural survey also confirms that it is in a sound condition and therefore capable of conversion. The works associated with the conversion are sympathetic to the original outbuilding and its setting thus meeting a further requirement of policy 7. This policy also states at criterion d) that priority will be given to affordable housing provision as part of any residential conversion scheme. The footnote to this policy clarifies that residential use would include full-time residential and holiday accommodation including self-catering accommodation. Also in this footnote it states that PPW 4 aims to meet the identified need for affordable housing and seeks 50% affordable housing provision on developments of 2 or more units. As the proposal relates to the creation of 1 unit then this does not apply. However, policy 45 which specifically deals with affordable housing under criterion d) of that policy would seek a commuted sum to help the delivery of affordable housing on housing developments below a threshold of 2 units (i.e. on proposals for single residential units). However this is the subject of a forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) by the Authority which has not been adopted therefore a commuted sum has not been required in this instance.

Policy 7, at criterion d), also states that accessibility to centres will be an important consideration when assessing the conversion of buildings in the countryside. The site is situated in the countryside, outside any Centres identified in the Local Development Plan. The nearest services and facilities are in St Ishmaels approximately 1.5km from the site.

The only bus service operating in this area is the 315/316 service, also known as the Puffin Shuttle. This provides 3 return journeys each day from Haverfordwest/Milford Haven to St Ishmaels. The distance between the site and the nearest point of the bus route is 1.9km.

The Institute of Highways and Transportation Guidelines for providing journeys on foot suggests that a target distance for a range of facilities is between 300m and 600m and an acceptable distance for those same facilities is between 600m and 1000m. In relation to bus services the Guidelines require a bus stop within 200m which gives recognition to the fact that the bus route itself is not the end facility, but a means of getting to that facility.

With no services and facilities available locally, the use of any services or facilities in this location would require trips to be made. Due to the instances involved, any journeys would realistically be made by private car.

The Scale and Location of Growth Background Paper to the Local Development Plan includes an extract taken from the former Pembrokeshire County Council Transport Plan detailing the accessibility levels of bus provision. These range from the highest 'Frequent' level of service to the lowest 'No service at all'. The range of standards set a benchmark for the minimum level considered necessary to be able to have a reasonable degree of mobility without private transport as a 'Strategic' level. This requires services at times suitable for travel to and from work, schools, morning and afternoon shopping, generally a minimum of 5 journeys a day. These journeys would be return, rather than single journeys.

Based on the above information, it is concluded that the site would only realistically be accessible by private car. This concurs with Part 4 of the applicants Design and Access Statement, where it states that "the bus service is infrequent it is anticipated that most journeys would be undertaken by car".

Paragraph 2.2.3 of TAN6 advises that;

"Where development proposals are intended to meet local needs, planning authorities should recognise that a site may be acceptable even though it may not be accessible other than by the private car. Development not intended to cater primarily for local needs should continue to be located in market towns, local service centres or clusters of smaller settlements where a sustainable function linkage can be demonstrated and which are accessible by public transport."

It can be concluded that whilst this proposal is acceptable in many respects, the location of the building means that it is only realistically accessible by private car. In policy terms it can therefore be concluded that the proposal would be unacceptable unless it is intended to meet a local need for affordable housing.

Recommendation

For this reason the application is therefore recommended for refusal

1. Policy 7 of the Local Development Plan for the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority requires amongst other issues that the conversion of buildings to full residential use is accessible to the Centres. Policy 15 of the Local

Development Plan for the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority states that development that adversely affects the qualities and special character of the National Park will not be permitted. Policy 29 of the Local Development Plan for the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority states that development will be expected to demonstrate an integrated approach to design and construction, and will be required to be well designed in terms of accessibility. Policy 52 of the Local Development Plan for the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority ensures that during the Local Development Plan period land use planning opportunities are taken to improve and promote accessibility and reduce the need to travel by car.

The proposal by reason of the property's location in the countryside, outside any Centres identified in the Local Development Plan is considered to go against the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority's strategy to support sustainable locations for development by locating housing and other development adjacent to services.

The proposal is, therefore, considered contrary to both national and local policies and detrimental to the special qualities of the National Park.

Update

At the March, 2011 meeting Members resolved to grant permission on the grounds that this was the last building on this site to be developed and it would be of benefit to the listed mansion for this building to be brought into use.

As it was considered that the granting of this application would represent a departure from the development plan, officers advised that there would need to be a "cooling off" period and the referral of the application to the Welsh Assembly Government. The WAG response is expected and will be reported verbally at the meeting.