



Report to Wycombe Area Planning Committee

Application Number:	20/05378/FUL
Proposal:	Change of use from Office (B1(A)) to Residential (C3) with internal alterations and erection of 1.4 metre high brick and flint wall
Site Location:	The Barn Cutlers Court Copyground Lane High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP12 3HE
Applicant:	Mr Smith
Case Officer:	Sarah White
Ward(s) affected:	Previous Oakridge and Castlefield Ward
Parish-Town Council:	High Wycombe Town Unparished
Date valid application received:	26 February 2020
Statutory determination date:	22 April 2020
Recommendation	Approval

1.0 Summary & Recommendation/ Reason for Planning Committee Consideration

- 1.1 In this instance, whilst the proposed development would result in the loss of a scattered employment site, it would:
 - provide a good living environment for the future occupiers,
 - preserve the internal open spaces within the designated heritage asset without undue subdivision,
 - protect the amenities of the neighbouring properties,
 - protect the character and appearance of the area, and,
 - protect the safety and convenience of users of the adjacent highway.
- 1.2 On balance therefore having regards to all of the material planning considerations in this case, the proposal is considered to be acceptable.
- 1.3 The application falls to the area planning committee for determination as the applicant is a Buckinghamshire Councillor.
- 1.4 Recommendation – approval.

2.0 Description of Proposed Development

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of building from office use (class B1a) to residential use (class C3). Associated internal alterations and the erection of 1.4 metre high brick and flint wall are also proposed.
- 2.2 Internally the accommodation would be comprised of a sitting room, 4 double bedrooms, each with en-suite facilities, and a plant/store room at ground floor level, and an open plan living, dining and kitchen area, with separate utility and toilet at first floor level.
- 2.3 The application relates to a Grade II listed former barn, situated within Cutlers Court, on the junction of Copyground Lane with Sharrow Vale and Lyndsay Avenue. The barn and adjoining farmhouse are the oldest buildings in the area, residential development having grown up around them.
- 2.4 The two storey barn was converted to office use as part of a larger development proposal at the end of the 1980s/early 1990s, along with the Grade II listed farmhouse, which has subsequently been converted back into a dwelling.
- 2.5 The list description refers to the building as a seventeenth or eighteenth century weatherboarded timber frame barn. Located in close proximity to the Cutlers Farmhouse, and a traditional agricultural building. The three buildings make up a compact vernacular farmstead, reflecting the rural character of the area prior to the twentieth century expansion of High Wycombe.
- 2.6 The application is accompanied by:
- a) Design and Access Statement
 - b) Ecology and Trees Checklist
- 2.7 The application has been amended through the submission of drawing Nos. 002A 003A, and 004A. Further information was also submitted electronically via email in relation to the heritage records/history of the site.

3.0 Relevant Planning History

Application Site		
20/05379/LBC	Concurrent Listed Building application for change of use from Office (B1(A)) to Residential (C3) with internal alterations, fenestration changes and erection of 1.4 metre high brick and flint wall	Pending Consideration
W/88/6407/LBC	Refurbishment and conversion of buildings to offices and covered car parking (including demolition and recreation of an existing boundary wall)	Permitted

Immediate Area		
13/07107/FUL	Change of use from Class B1(a) (offices) to 1 x 3 bed dwelling at The Cottage, Cutlers Court	Permitted 21.11.2013

W/88/6339/FF	Erect 28 apartments and convert existing listed building to offices	Permitted
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4.0 Policy Considerations and Evaluation

Principle and Location of Development

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP1 (Sustainable Development), CP3 (Settlement Strategy), CP4 (Delivering Homes), DM33 (Managing Carbon Emissions, Transport and Energy Generation)

DSA: DM1 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development),

4.1 The site is located within the High Wycombe settlement boundary, a Tier 1 Settlement.

4.2 Given this policy context, the proposed conversion of the building to form a 4-bed dwelling is considered acceptable in principle, providing the development complies with the Development Framework and all other material planning considerations

Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM22 (Housing Mix), DM24 (Affordable Housing), DM41 (Optional Technical Standards for Building Regulations Approval)

Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (POSPD)

4.3 The proposed development falls below the threshold for an affordable housing contribution in this location.

Employment issues

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP5 (Delivering Land for Business), DM28 (Employment Areas)

Delivery and Site Allocations Document (DSA): DM5 (Scattered business sites)

4.4 The application relates to a former barn situated in a small business centre known as Cutlers Court.

4.5 The buildings were converted to office use as part of a redevelopment under planning permission 88/6339/FF. One of the buildings, the former farmhouse, was granted permission for conversion from offices to residential in 2013.

4.6 The site represents a scattered employment site. Scattered employment sites are identified in the Delivery and Site Allocations document (2013) as sites; which are not part of an existing or designated employment area and which accommodate B uses or employment generating sui generis uses.

4.7 These sites are a valuable part of the employment land portfolio in the District. Because there are a large number of these sites scattered across the district, and often they are very small, they are not shown on the Policies Map.

4.8 Under Policy DM5 of the Delivery and Site Allocations document, planning permission will only be granted for residential uses where it has been clearly demonstrated that the re-use of the site for employment generating uses, or community facilities, is no longer practicable.

- 4.9 According to the design and access statement submitted with the application, the barn was used as a furniture design office by PJP Interiors Ltd for a period of approximately 10 years until voluntary liquidation in February 2019. The statement goes on to say that the building has been available for sale/rental since that time, but has failed to find a tenant. The design and access statement suggests that the building was offered/advertised below Market rate (£9.95 per square ft).
- 4.10 The Barn currently benefits from a total of 8 on-site parking spaces; 2 within a car port, 2 to the front of the building, and a further 4 laid out as two pairs of tandem parking spaces. According to the Buckinghamshire Parking Guidance (BCPG) an office of this size in this location would require an optimum of 11 parking spaces.
- 4.11 The site is located on the outskirts of Desborough, approximately three quarters of a mile from the bus station and car parks, with opportunities for on-street parking extremely limited within the immediate vicinity. A lack of available convenient parking is a known constraint in relation to the attractiveness of, and demand for, business premises outside of the town centre.
- 4.12 The provision of community facilities across the district, by ward, was assessed under the Community Facilities Strategy Update in 2011. Three different standards were used and the results of the analyses show that the Oakridge and Castlefield area had no deficiencies in community facilities. In any event as a listed building this limits its attraction to such uses.
- 4.13 The applicant states that the building has been unoccupied for approximately 16-18 months. Given the limited potential for the site to continue in business use, or indeed of a suitable community use coming forward, consideration must be given to the heritage status of the building and the benefits of bringing the building back into active use, to ensure its continued maintenance.
- 4.14 Conversion to a single dwelling is considered to be the most compatible use for this particular listed building barn. On this basis the loss of the scattered employment site is considered acceptable.

Transport matters and parking

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP7 (Delivering the infrastructure to support growth), DM33 (Managing Carbon Emissions, Transport and Energy Generation)

Buckinghamshire Countywide Parking Guidance (BCPG)

- 4.15 The site is located within Residential Zone A, where a 4-bed dwelling with 7 habitable rooms would typically be expected to provide 2 on-site parking spaces and a 5-bed dwelling with 8+ habitable rooms would be expected to provide 3 parking spaces.
- 4.16 The BCPG notes that where a dwelling is open plan, parking should be based on the number of bedrooms. The application drawings indicate that 2 parking spaces would be provided within the existing carport.
- 4.17 The Highway Authority have been consulted. The comment that as the proposal would meet the parking standards, and the proposed development would generate fewer vehicular movements than the permitted use, it would not be considered to raise any concerns in respect of the safety and convenience of users of the adjacent highway.

Raising the quality of place making and design

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP9 (Sense of place), DM34 (Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development), DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality)

- 4.18 The site plan indicates the subdivision of the site to create a private amenity area with soft landscaping for the proposed new dwelling.
- 4.19 The fencing originally proposed was considered to dissect the farmyard and harm the legibility of the farmstead, with the proposed use of close boarded fencing being out of keeping with of the character and materials expected within a historic farmyard.
- 4.20 The application has been amended to adjust the alignment of the amenity area boundary, as well as the height and form of the boundary treatment. The proposal now includes a lower brick and flint wall with a metal pedestrian gate.
- 4.21 The amended proposal is considered to represent a more sympathetic conversion which would respect the character and appearance of the existing building and the layout of Cutlers Court as a whole.

Amenity of existing and future residents

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality), DM40 (Internal space standards)

Adopted Residential Design Guidance

Neighbouring properties

- 4.22 Consideration has been given to the residential nature of the area, the layout of the adjacent properties, and the level of overlooking which is to be expected in an area such as this. On the basis of the above, whilst the nature of the occupation of the building would change, the proposal would not be considered to have a detrimental impact upon the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties due to noise, loss of privacy, etc.

Future residents

- 4.23 The proposal would create a 4-bed 8-person dwelling with a floor area of approximately 270m². The proposal would therefore be in compliance with the Government's internal space standards.
- 4.24 All rooms would be considered to achieve adequate levels of light, ventilation and outlook. The dwelling would also benefit from on-site parking within the adjacent car port, dedicated and conveniently located bin and cycle storage.
- 4.25 It is noted that the proposed wall creates a private amenity area, accessed directly from a doorway created from an existing window opening.
- 4.26 On the basis of the above, the proposal would be considered to create a sufficiently high quality of living environment for the future occupiers of the site, without adversely affecting the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties.

Flooding and drainage

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM39 (Managing Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems)

- 4.27 The site is located within Flood Zone 1, in an area identified as being unlikely to be at risk of ground water flooding. Whilst the site does have a medium chance of surface water flooding, the proposal relates to the conversion of an existing building.
- 4.28 Therefore, having regards to the potential benefits associated with the landscaping proposed as part of the creation of a private amenity area, the proposal would not be considered to result in a material increase flood risk either within or around the site.

Ecology

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM34 (Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development)

DSA: DM13 (Conservation and enhancement of sites, habitats and species of biodiversity and geodiversity importance), DM14 (Biodiversity in development)

- 4.29 Policy DM34 requires all development to protect and enhance both biodiversity and green infrastructure features and networks both on and off site for the lifetime of the development. No assessment has been provided with this proposal so it falls to the Local Planning Authority to consider what would be proportionate for the development proposed.
- 4.30 The proposal relates to the change of use of an existing building and the erection of a new boundary wall to create a private amenity area.
- 4.31 The proposal is considered to achieve biodiversity gains in the form of a reduction in hard landscaping and the provision of soft landscaping. The creation of the private amenity area also brings with it the potential for additional wildflower planting, and the installation of bird feeders, bird houses, etc.

Historic environment (Listed Building Issues)

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP9 (Sense of place), CP11 (Historic Environment), DM20 (Matters to be determined in accordance with the NPPF), DM31 (Development Affecting the Historic Environment)

- 4.32 The barn is a grade II listed building. The list description refers to the building as a seventeenth or eighteenth century weatherboarded timber frame barn. It is located in close proximity to the Cutlers Farmhouse, also a grade II listed building and a traditional agricultural building.
- 4.33 The three buildings make up a compact vernacular farmstead, reflecting the rural character of the area prior to the twentieth century expansion of High Wycombe.
- 4.34 All the buildings within the complex have been altered and put into different uses over the course of their history. The barn has been in office use since the early 1990s but is now vacant. The conversion works that took place at that time, to both the building and its setting, are now somewhat dated and could be improved through the use of more sympathetic materials and detailing. The building requires little further adaptation for residential conversion to a single dwelling.
- 4.35 The modern single storey extension is not of significance and there would be no conservation objection to changing the internal layout within this section of the building.
- 4.36 It was considered that the proposed location of the fence would have subdivided the 'farmyard' and the barn from the farmhouse. Furthermore, notwithstanding the

existing fence enclosing the farmhouse garden, a close boarded fence is not in keeping with of the character or materials expected within a historic farmyard, and as such would harm the settings of the buildings.

- 4.37 During a site visit the Conservation Officer noted that components of the timber frame had been replaced without the original structural joints being replicated, diminishing the integrity of the structure. Overall however the barn retains its impressive original appearance.
- 4.38 The application has been amended to provide further heritage information and to replace the previously proposed close boarded fencing with a more traditional brick and flint wall and metal gate, on a more appropriate alignment.
- 4.39 The location of the wall would now provide for the enclosure of the side garden without extending in front of the barn, thereby avoiding harm to the setting of the listed building
- 4.40 The Council's Conservation Officer has confirmed that the amended plans are now considered to be in accordance with Policies DM31 and DM35 of the adopted Local Plan, and the advice contained in the NPPF, subject to the following conditions:
- the flint panels in the new boundary wall shall be laid traditionally, using unknapped flint closely packed into lime mortar, in accordance with advice in the Chilterns AONB technical Guide: Flint.
 - brickwork to match the type, texture and colour of those used in the plinth of the existing building,
 - joinery details to match existing
 - all disturbed areas to be made good in materials to match the surrounding materials.

Building sustainability

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM41 (Optional Technical Standards for Building Regulations Approval)

- 4.41 For proposals involving the creation of new residential units it would normally be considered necessary to condition water efficiency in accordance with Policy DM41.
- 4.42 In this instance, however, the proposal relates to the conversion of a Listed Building, and there is a risk that works associated with the installation of water efficiency measures would have an adverse impact upon the special historical interest of the building. As such it is not considered appropriate to include a water efficiency condition in this case.

5.0 Weighing and balancing of issues / Overall Assessment

- 5.1 This section brings together the assessment that has so far been set out in order to weigh and balance relevant planning considerations in order to reach a conclusion on the application.
- 5.2 In determining the planning application, section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In addition, Section 143 of the Localism Act amends Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act relating to the determination of planning applications and states that in dealing with planning applications, the authority shall have regard to:

- a. Provision of the development plan insofar as they are material,
- b. Any local finance considerations, so far as they are material to the application (such as CIL if applicable), and,
- c. Any other material considerations

5.3 As set out above it is considered that the proposed development would generally accord with the relevant development plan policies. Whilst the proposed development would result in the loss of a scattered employment site this is far outweighed by the benefits of securing an appropriate, compatible and viable long term use for this listed building

6.0 Working with the applicant / agent

6.1 In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF (2019) the Council approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way taking a proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions and work proactively with applicants to secure developments.

6.2 The Council work with the applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.

6.3 In this instance the applicant had some pre-application discussion with the Conservation Officer. During the formal application process the applicant/agent was provided the opportunity to submit amendments to the scheme to overcome the issues raised with the proposed scheme. The applicant/agent responded by submitting amended plans, which were found to be acceptable.

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 The proposal is therefore recommended for approval.

Subject to the following conditions and reasons:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (As amended).
2. The development hereby permitted shall be built in accordance with the details contained in the planning application hereby approved and plan numbers 002A, 003A, and 004A unless the Local Planning Authority otherwise first agrees in writing.
Reason: In the interest of proper planning and to ensure a satisfactory development of the site.
3. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the flint work shall be constructed in the following manner, in accordance with advice in the Chilterns AONB technical Guide: Flint:
 - (a) The flint work shall be laid on site, not constructed of pre-made blocks
 - (b) The flints shall be laid in a lime mortar mix with slightly recessed pointing, the joints brushed, rubbed or bagged prior to hardening off to avoid a smooth finish
 - (c) The flints shall be unknapped, random coursed, and tightly packed to avoid excessive mortar proportions

Reason: To ensure the use of traditional building techniques in the interests of preserving the historic character and interest of the site.

4. The brickwork to be used within the new wall shall be of the same colour, type and texture as that used in the plinth of the existing building, unless the Local Planning Authority otherwise first agrees in writing.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory external appearance.

5. Any areas of new or replacement joinery shall be carried out in materials of a size, type, texture and colour to match the existing joinery.

Reason: To ensure a sympathetic conversion that respects that historic character of the former barn.

6. A scheme for the provision of ecological enhancements shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the erection of the new wall surrounding the private amenity area.

Thereafter all works shall then proceed in accordance with the approved scheme and the agreed enhancement measures thereafter retained on site, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a net gain in biodiversity in line with policy DM34.

7. Prior to the occupation of the building, all new or disturbed work to the exterior of the building shall be finished or made good to match the existing.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory external appearance.

8. Details of facilities to be provided for the storage of refuse bins within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before development takes place to the exterior of the building. The facilities shall be provided in accordance with the approved details before the development that they relate to is first occupied and thereafter the facilities shall be permanently retained.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance and in the interests of the amenities of the future occupiers.

9. The approved cycle storage facilities and vehicular parking spaces illustrated on drawing 004A shall be provided prior to occupation and thereafter the facilities shall be permanently retained, unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These facilities shall thereafter be so retained.

Reason: To ensure the continued provision of cycle storage and vehicular parking in the interests of the amenities of the future.

10. The dwelling hereby approved shall not be occupied until the boundary walling and gate have been constructed, and the associated amenity area made available for use as such by the residents of the accommodation. The amenity areas shall thereafter be retained as such.

Reason: In order to ensure the continued availability of external amenity space for residents of the development, in the interests of their amenity.

Informative

1. In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF2 Buckinghamshire Council approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way taking a proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions and work proactively with applicants to secure developments. Buckinghamshire Council work with the applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.

In this instance the applicant had some pre-application discussion with the Conservation Officer. During the formal application process the applicant/agent was provided the opportunity to submit amendments to the scheme to overcome the issues raised with the proposed scheme. The applicant/agent responded by submitting amended plans, which were found to be acceptable.