

Parish: Wattisham

Location: Bay Tree Farmhouse, Bildeston Road, Wattisham, Ipswich

Proposal: Planning Permission - Conversion of existing barn/cart lodge to form a single dwelling; erection of detached cart lodge to serve existing farmhouse and erection of 1.8m brick wall.
and
Listed Building Consent - Conversion of existing barn/cart lodge to form a dwelling

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Clements

Case Officer: Graham Chamberlain

Date for Determination: 04/06/08

This application is reported to Members at the request of Cllr Keane.

THE SITE

1. Bay Tree Farmhouse is a listed farmstead to the west of Wattisham, a low density settlement to the north of the district. Wattisham is a rural settlement which is relatively isolated with few facilities.
2. The farmstead is located along a narrow country lane. The farmhouse and barn are located to the north of a large plot adjacent to the road and are fully visible from the public realm, particularly from the west; views from the east and south are obscured by trees. To the rear of the site is a barn and caravan in the applicant's ownership but not within the site area. The site is located within the Countryside.
3. The barn is currently a domestic outbuilding which is being used for domestic storage, garaging and workshop. The cartlodge did not appear to be in use. The cartlodge is of modern construction with block work walls and modern tiled roof. The barn has had a number of alterations including an extension to the front, a new roof, work to the walls and new window openings. The original form of the building is however visible.
4. The farmhouse is listed (Grade II) and the barn is deemed part of the "listed building" being a curtilage structure associated with Bay Tree Farmhouse.

THE PROPOSAL

5. The application can be split into a number of elements:-
 - The barn and cartlodge conversion to a three bedroom dwelling. The Design and Access Statement refers to the cartlodge being an annexe. The agent has been asked to correct the Design and Access statement to accurately reflect the proposal as the drawings and the description do not refer to an annexe. It is the drawings which must be considered; planning permission and listed building consent are likely to be needed for any alterations required to convert the building.
 - A glazed link between the cartlodge and barn 4m in height.
 - Removal of a car port/garage attached to the barn.

- The erection of a new double garage/cartlodge to serve Bay Tree Farmhouse. The cart lodge would be 5.8m high by 7.8m in width. The depth would be 6.5m. the building would be finished in dark stained weatherboard with a brick plinth and pan tiled roof.
- The erection of a 1.8m high brick wall between the barn and house and a post and rail fence on the western boundary (permission is required as it is within the curtilage of a listed building).

6. The application is supported by:-

- an engineer's assessment indicating some of the works, and what further investigation would be needed to convert the building.
- an historic architect's assessment of the building confirming there are historic timbers in the walls.
- a Design and Access Statement.
- an email from a member of Suffolk Preservation Society supporting the applications.

(These documents can be viewed in advance of the meeting by prior arrangement with the Case Officer).

RELEVANT HISTORY

7. Permission was granted in the early 1980s (B/81/00452) for a two storey extension to the farmhouse. In 2000 permission was granted for a detached open fronted cart shed and amenity building to the rear of the site (B/00/00169). This building is outside of the red lined site area. An application to convert the barn was withdrawn last year.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

8. **PPS1** Delivering Sustainable Development
9. **PPS3** Housing
10. **PPS7** Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
11. **PPG15** Planning for the Historic Environment
12. **PPS9** Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
13. **PPG13** Transport
14. **PPG17** Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation

PLANNING POLICIES

15. The Development Plan comprises the East of England Plan, adopted 2008, saved policies in the Suffolk Structure Plan, adopted 2001, and the Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No. 2) adopted 2006. The following policies are relevant to this proposal:

East of England Plan (EEP)

- **SS1** (Climate Change and Sustainable Development)
- **ENV7** (Quality in the Built Environment)

Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No.2) 2006 (BDLP)

- **HS03** (Non Sustainable Villages)
- **CR01** (Development in the Countryside)
- **HS04** (New Housing)
- **CR19** (Buildings in the Countryside)
- **CN06** (Listed Buildings)
- **CN01** (Maintaining Local Distinctiveness)
- **HS32** (Public Open Space and Play Areas in New Development)
- **EN03** (Protected Species)
- **EN05** (Biodiversity Mitigation)
- **CR07** (Countryside Landscaping)

The relevant documents can be viewed via the internet. Please see Page 4 for details.

OBSERVATIONS

16. Wattisham Parish Council – No comments received.
17. Natural England – No objection subject to the recommendations of the Landscape Planning Ltd report (regarding bats) being implemented.
18. County Archaeologist – There are no grounds to refuse the application on archaeological grounds.
19. Local Highway Authority – No objection.
20. Suffolk Fire and Rescue – No objection.
21. Suffolk Preservation Society – A workshop use would be far more appropriate here.
22. Suffolk Wildlife Trust – Bats are likely to be present in the barn, particularly if the building is listed. They note that Natural England have been consulted and are happy to defer to their judgement.
23. Environment Agency – No objection, requests an informative be added to any permission.

REPRESENTATIONS

24. No third party representations received.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

25. As the proposal is for a barn conversion with associated works in the countryside, the planning considerations are as follows:-
 - Whether the barn is appropriately located to deliver sustainable development (Policies HS03, CR01).
 - Whether alternative uses have been considered (Policy CR19).
 - Whether protected species are present in the barn (Policy CR19, EN03).
 - The impact on the provision of facilities for open space and recreation (Policy HS32).
 - If not appropriately located, whether the barn is of historic/architectural merit and capable of conversion without significant rebuild or extension and therefore worthy of an exception being made to countryside policy (Policy CR19).
 - The impact on the setting and the needs of the listed building (Policy CN06).

Location and Sustainability

26. Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) states that new housing development should be delivered in suitable locations where there is access to local services and infrastructure in (Paragraph 10). It goes on to state that new housing development should be directed towards rural service centres so that future occupants would not be reliant on their private car, and existing village facilities would be sustained by the increase in population (Paragraph 38).
27. Planning Policy Statement 7 echo's this by stating that the accessibility of service centres will in part determine the suitability of a location for residential development (Paragraph 17). This approach is reflected in PPG13 and Policy SS1 of the East of England Plan.
28. Policy HS04 of the Babergh District Local Plan directs new housing development in the district towards the towns and villages unless it is a rural exceptions site (Policy HS06) or an essential dwelling for an agricultural worker (Policy CR12), otherwise housing in the countryside is not permitted.
29. The Babergh District Local Plan states that residential development in the countryside is the least preferred option for a rural building and is only acceptable if it essential for preserving a rural building of historic/architectural merit (Paragraph 6.66 of the Local Plan/Policy CR19).
30. Following this policy analysis the following points are of relevance:-
 - The barn is located outside of a Built up area Boundary and is therefore located in the countryside.
 - The barn is located in an isolated position, 600m from the centre of Wattisham, an unsustainable village as set out in Policy HS03.
 - A new residential unit in this location would represent an unsustainable form of development in the countryside.
31. As is demonstrated below, the barn is not of sufficient merit to be converted to a dwelling, has already been significantly altered, is protected via its curtilage listed status and currently has a viable purpose.
32. Consequently there is no justification to override the countryside policies in place to delivery sustainable development (by directing housing to appropriate locations). It is not essential to convert the building to retain it. The application is therefore recommended for refusal for being an unsustainable form of development contrary to Policies CR01 and HS04 of the Babergh District Local Plan and Policy SS1 of the East of England Plan.

Alternative Uses

33. A key test under Policy CR19 is whether alternative uses have been explored prior to a residential use being proposed. Business uses are preferred to residential as an economic use in the right location can assist the rural economy.
 - The applicant undertook a marketing campaign to explore alternative uses. The following issues came out of this campaign
 - The marketing campaign for a storage or B1 (light industry/office) use was unsuccessful;

- The County Highway Authority had concerns regarding the impact on the highway network. The site is unsustainably located, any customers/employees would likely travel to the site by car.

The site is therefore not an appropriate location for a business use.

Protected Species

34. The 2007 applications included a bat survey undertaken in May 2007. The following points are of relevance:-
- The survey identified a small number of common Pipistrelles Bats using the barn.
 - Natural England have identified this species as of low conservation significant
 - A number of mitigation measures were proposed in the report to ensure the colony of bats remains on the site.
35. Natural England had no objection to the 2007 application and has confirmed they have no objection to this application subject to the recommendations of the 2007 survey/report being implemented (bats boxes being placed outside the barn and the retentions of trees and hedgerows).

Open Space and Recreation

36. Policy HS32 requires that developments which will provide 1 unit or more should either provide a financial contribution towards the provision or upgrade of open space nearby (via a 106 Legal Agreement) or provide a public open space equal to 10% of the gross site area. The site is not suitable for a public open space, therefore a contribution is required. The applicants have not submitted either a heads of terms or draft legal agreement. In the absence of this the applicants have failed to comply with Policy HS32 and guidance in PPG17.

Historic Merit/Capable of Conversion/ Use

37. Bay Tree Farmhouse is of timber-frame construction and was added to the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest in 1980 (Grade II). The farmhouse is a single residence which, together with its barn and cartlodge, occupies a forward siting within a large curtilage (about 3 acres). The barn was also of timber frame construction and in an extended form comprises 5 bays. The 3-bay cartlodge sits adjacent to, and forward of, the barn.
38. The documentation submitted with the application includes a brief report on the architectural history of the barn. This survey provides a factual account of the standing structures which are the subject of this application and the accuracy and conclusions of the report are not disputed.
39. What is not accepted in this instance is the condition and interest of the buildings being such as to warrant an exception being made to normal policy for the countryside, where there is a strong presumption against new housing.
40. Policy CR19 provides that proposals for the conversion of barns into dwellings will only be permitted if the building is of architectural or historic interest and is capable of conversion without significant rebuilding or extension.

41. Acceptability under this policy centres on the structure of the principal range of the barn, i.e. the surviving original components of the timber-frame, the extent of modern replacement that has occurred to this frame, and of the need for further replacement and/or supplementation of this frame (to meet Building Regulations).
42. The local plan policy is designed to preserve, as exceptions to normal housing policy, those barns of traditional construction and good craftsmanship whose future survival is at risk, whereby their timber-frame (walls and roof) are intact or largely intact, and where only very minimal work is required to the structure to meet Regulations.
43. As Members will have noted at their site inspection the following works have taken place:-
 - The main roof to the barn has been replaced in its entirety in the mid-C20. Incidentally the replacement roof structure, which at present carries a corrugated metal sheet roof, is unable to accept a new roof covering of pantiles.
 - The south gable was reconstructed in its entirety at the same period, as was the majority of the north gable wall.
 - At least 25% of the front and rear walls below plate level have been replaced.
 - In the opinion of the Councils Building Control Manager, a further 25% of the front and rear wall structure appears unsuitable as part of any conversion scheme and will require replacement.
44. As replacement work already undertaken in modern times has to be viewed in policy terms as if it was now proposed, any scheme of conversion will now only retain at most the equivalent of a single side wall (below plate level) of historic timber, i.e. less than 20% of the original timber frame (see Fig 1). To this may be added the fact that the walls of the former cartlodge are now of mid-C20 concrete blockwork construction.
45. In this respect alone it can be concluded that the existing buildings do not warrant an exception being made to normal housing policy in the countryside. This can be determined even in the absence of a structural survey (as existing and as proposed) despite one being requested.
46. Members should note that the barn which makes a contribution to both the immediate historic and wider landscape setting is subject to listed building control.
47. Policy CN06 provides that proposals for the change of use or alteration of curtilage structures should retain a setting which is appropriate to the listed building and should respect those features which contribute positively to the setting of a listed building.
48. PPG15 states that the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings is to keep them in active use. It adds that the aim should be to identify the use that is compatible with the fabric, interior and setting of the historic building.
49. Bay Tree Farmhouse is a large dwelling within a substantial plot. Such properties require outbuildings and often sizable ones, for garaging, external storage, workshops and/or annexe accommodation. This is best provided within existing ancillary buildings which are compatible with their setting thereby both securing their future and continuing their positive contribution to the setting, rather than to divorce them from their host building only for subsequent owners of the existing farmhouse to inevitably require new buildings to be erected on the site.
50. The barn at Bay Tree Farmhouse, whilst not meeting the criteria for separate residential use, is not at risk given that it is and will continue to be required as essential ancillary space with the farmhouse for which regular repair and maintenance will be afforded by any owner of the property.

51. The conclusion of the applicant's report on the architectural history of the barn is that 'despite the loss of the original roof structure the walls of the barn have sufficient historic interest to be worth preserving'. As stated earlier the extent of replacement work to the structure of the barn has been much greater than simply the roof, and whilst the proposed scheme may not (without establishing a dangerous precedent) afford support for conversion to a new dwelling, the remaining historic interest of the barn will be preserved within a continuation of its role as a much needed ancillary building compatible with its setting.

CONCLUSIONS

52. The building is located at an unsustainable location and is contrary to Policies HS04 (BDLP) and SS1 (EEP), and Planning Policy Statements 1, 3 and 7 and Planning Policy Guidance 13.
53. The building is of insufficient merit to justify a new residential unit in the countryside, contrary to Policy CR19.
54. The building was and is incapable of being converted without significant rebuilding, given that significant alterations have already taken place and others are required contrary to Policy CR19 (BDP).
55. The works will harm the setting of a listed building, contrary to Policy CN06 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15.
56. No agreement to provide a financial contribution towards open space and recreation has been submitted, contrary to Policy HS32.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for the following reasons:-

- Unsustainable location in the countryside is contrary to Policies HS04 and CR01 of the Babergh District Local Plan Alt 2 (2006), SS1 of the East of England Plan (2008) and Planning Policy Statements 1, 3 and 7 (planning application only).
- Contrary to Policy CR19 of the Babergh District Local Plan Alt 2 (2006) as barn is not of sufficient architectural/historic merit having already been subject to significant alterations. It would also require further alteration as part of any scheme of conversion. (planning application only).
- Detrimental to the setting of the Listed Building by virtue of the associated works and subdivision of the barn from the principal building, thereby no longer making a positive contribution to its setting contrary to Policy CN06 of the Babergh District Local Plan Alteration No. 2 (2006) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15. (planning application only).
- Contrary to Policy HS32 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2 (2006) relating to public open space contributions.
- Detrimental to the setting of the Listed Building by virtue of the associated works and subdivision from the principal building thereby no longer making a positive contribution to its setting contrary to Policy CN06 of the Babergh District Local Plan Alteration No. 2 (2006) (listed building consent application only).