

REPORT TO THE SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	26 January 2012		
Application Number	S/2011/1790 Full		
Site Address	Bowles Barn and Yard, The Portway, Winterbourne Gunner, Salisbury. SP4 6JL		
Proposal	Convert existing cob barn and reinstate former thatched roof covering and attached stores to provide 2 bed dwelling. Repair existing and rebuild collapsed yard walls to form enclosed garden area		
Applicant/ Agent	Mr Richard Bruce-White		
City/Town/Parish Council	Winterbourne		
Electoral Division	Bourne & Woodford Valley	Unitary Member	Cllr Mike Hewitt
Grid Reference	417580 135297		
Type of Application	FULL		
Conservation Area:	NA	LB Grade:	NA
Case Officer:	Case Officer Mrs J Wallace	Contact Number:	01722 434687

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Councillor Hewitt has requested that the application be determined by Committee as previous applications on this site have come to Committee

1. Purpose of report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission be **REFUSED** subject to conditions.

2. Report summary

The main issues in the consideration of this application are as follows:

1. History of site
2. Policy considerations, principle of residential conversion, scale, design and impact on character of the countryside
3. Neighbouring amenity
4. Protected species
5. Financial contributions towards affordable housing and public open space

The application has generated comments from the parish council; but no comments from the public.

3. Site Description

The site consists of a redundant agricultural yard with partially collapsed walls surrounding a small group of former agricultural buildings; some of which have

collapsed. The site is currently accessed by a narrow unmade lane, which is also a public footpath (FP no.19) to Winterbourne Gunner (approx 250 metres to the south east). The track debouches on to The Portway adjacent to two cottages, (nos.1 and 2 Bowles Cottages) not in the applicant's ownership.

The site lies within the designated open countryside, the Special Landscape Area, and Area of Special Archaeological Significance. To the east of the site is a cricket ground and to the west are open fields.

4. Planning History		
Application number	Proposal	Decision
10/0396	Conversion and extension of existing barn to form two bed dwelling. Repair existing and rebuild collapsed yard walls to form enclosed garden area. Block up existing vehicular access and form new access with improved visibility	WD 10/05/10
10/1015	Conversion and extension of existing barn to form two bed dwelling. Repair existing and rebuild collapsed yard walls to form enclosed garden area. Block up existing vehicular access on to The Portway (C56) and form new access with improved visibility	REF 31/08/10 For the following reasons:- 1 The site lies outside the housing policy boundary, and is not considered to be previously developed land, due to its agricultural use. The guidance in PPS7 (para 10) requires special justification for planning permission to be granted for isolated new houses in the countryside. Whilst the building is identified as being of some historical interest, substantial reconstruction of the existing building is required together with a large single storey extension and an intrusive access across adjacent agricultural land to enable the conversion to residential use. The building is not considered to be sufficiently important to provide the <i>special justification</i> required by PPS7 to support conversion to full residential use. Furthermore, no commercial marketing evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the building

<p>11/138</p>	<p>Convert existing cob barn and reinstate former thatched roof covering and attached stores to provide 2 bed dwelling. Repair existing and rebuild collapsed yard walls to form enclosed garden area. Block up existing vehicular access onto The Portway (but retain footpath access) and form new vehicular access with improved visibility and improved parking/turning area to Bowles Cottages</p>	<p>could not be used for an alternative agricultural, tourism, commercial or community use. The development would therefore be contrary to the guidance in PPS3, PPS4, PPS5, PPS7, and the adopted policies C22, H23, H26 and H27.</p> <p>2. Obtainable visibility from the proposed new access position is considered to be inadequate for the volume and speed of traffic using the "C" class main road, presenting a serious road safety hazard for vehicles exiting the new access and for traffic movement along this important "C" class route, contrary to Policy G2 of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan.</p> <p>3. The proposal, located remote from services, employment opportunities and being unlikely to be well served by public transport, is contrary to the key aims of Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 which seeks to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys and Policy G1 of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan.</p> <p>REF 29/03/11 1 The site lies outside the housing policy boundary, and is not considered to be previously developed land, due to its agricultural use. The guidance in PPS7 (para 10) requires special justification for planning permission to be granted for isolated new houses in the countryside. Whilst the building is identified as being of some historical interest, substantial</p>
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		<p>reconstruction of the existing building is required together with a large single storey extension and an intrusive access across adjacent agricultural land to enable the conversion to residential use. The building is not considered to be sufficiently important to provide the <i>special justification</i> required by PPS7 to support conversion to full residential use. Furthermore, no commercial marketing evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the building could not be used for an alternative agricultural, tourism, commercial or community use. The development would therefore be contrary to the guidance in PPS3, PPS4, PPS5, PPS7, and the adopted policies C22, H23, H26 and H27.</p> <p>2. Obtainable visibility from the proposed new access position is considered to be inadequate for the volume and speed of traffic using the "C" class main road, presenting a serious road safety hazard for vehicles exiting the new access and for traffic movement along this important "C" class route, contrary to Policy G2 of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan.</p> <p>3. The proposal, located remote from services, employment opportunities and being unlikely to be well served by public transport, is contrary to the key aims of Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 which seeks to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys and Policy G1 of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan.</p>
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11/1791	Block up existing vehicular access onto The Portway (but retain footpath access) and form new vehicular access with improved visibility and improved parking/turning area to Bowles Cottages. Repair existing track up to cricket field to form level hardcore surface	Not yet determined
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5. Proposal

The proposal is to change the use of the redundant agricultural buildings to a two bedroom dwelling. The existing main barn building would be repaired, the corrugated iron roof removed and the thatched roof re-instated. The associated cob stores would also be re-instated to create a single storey extension roofed with natural slate.

The collapsed walls around the former yard would be repaired and re-built. The walls would be of mixed character of brick and flint, with chalk cob, lime and rendered blockwork. The former yard would form an enclosed private amenity space for the dwelling. A parking area is proposed adjacent to, but outside the yard area.

The site would continue to be accessed from the narrow, unmade lane which is also a public footpath. (FP no.19)

6.Planning Policy

Adopted Salisbury District Local Plan saved policies, including the saved policies listed in Appendix C, of the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy:

G1 and G2	General Principles for Development
R2	Public Open Space
C2, C22, C24	Countryside
C6	Special Landscape Area
H23, H26 and H27	Housing in the countryside
C12	Protected Species
TR11	Off street parking
<i>SPG</i>	The Conversion of Historic Farm Buildings in the Countryside

<i>Draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy</i>	Settlement strategy
Core policy1	Affordable housing
Core policy 3	

National Planning Policy	
PPS7	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPS4	Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS3	Housing
PPS9:	Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.
PPG13.....	Transport

7. Consultations

Parish council

Support

Highways

Object. Recommend refusal as contrary to Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 which seeks to reduce growth in length and number of motorized journeys.

Conservation

No objection to principle of conversion, subject to provision that if the existing fabric is unsalvageable, the permission is not implementable. Barn is of some interest.

Building control

Likely that extensive structural works required to conserve the existing structure and make it habitable. Concerns regarding thermal performance of structure, resistance to damp and means of escape. To avoid means of escape windows, a protected route may be required.

Environmental Health

No adverse comments.

Ecology

No objections subject to conditions relating to implementation of conclusions of the Environmental Assessment

Wessex Water

There are foul sewers and water mains within the vicinity. A point of connection can be agreed at the detailed design stage

Wiltshire Fire and Rescue

Comments regarding access to site for fire engines and adequate supplies of water for fire fighting as well as the need for domestic sprinklers

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice and neighbour consultation, with an expiry date of 29 December 2011

No third party observations were received

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 History

This revised application seeks to overcome the reasons for refusal of the previous applications (S/2010/1015 and S/2011/0138). These objections related primarily to the creation of new residential development in the open countryside, the limited visibility of the new access and the encouragement of motorized journeys contrary to government guidance.

In seeking to overcome the reasons for refusal of the previous applications, the applicant has sub-divided the proposal into two parts. This application seeks to convert/rebuild an isolated redundant and dilapidated barn to a residential use, whilst a second application (S/2011/1791) seeks to create a new vehicular access to replace the use of the existing narrow lane which is footpath no.19. Therefore this proposal differs from the previous applications in that the improved access is only for the existing two Bowles Cottages, the cricket field and the adjacent agricultural land. All reference to the conversion of Bowles Barn is omitted in that application, though the drawings and plans submitted with the application show the proposed new dwelling. This application refers only to the conversion/rebuilding of the barn and proposes that it continues to use the existing vehicular access

The report below, considers the relevant issues.

9.2 Principle of residential conversion, and impact on character of the countryside

The national policy guidance relating to this proposal has not changed since the previous applications were determined. PPS3 still sets out the government's criteria for housing development and defines previously-developed land as follows: 'land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.' The definition excludes gardens and land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings, and therefore, this site is still not considered to be previously developed or brownfield land for policy purposes. PPS7 also gives priority to the development of brownfield land in preference to green field sites. Paragraph 20 of the PPS states: 'The replacement of non-residential buildings with residential development in the countryside should be treated as new housing development in accordance with the policies in PPG3 and, where appropriate, paragraph 10 of the PPS'. Since this guidance was issued, PPG3 has been superseded by PPS3, but the aims and objectives of the guidance are unchanged. Paragraph 10 states that isolated new houses in the countryside will require special justification for planning permission to be granted. Furthermore it states that 'where the special justification for an isolated new house relates to the essential need for a worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside, planning authorities should follow the advice in Annex A in the PPS'.

In this case, as before, the proposed development is not stated to be either 'affordable', for local needs, or for an agricultural worker. The proposal therefore still fails to comply with this aspect of national guidance.

PPS4 which replaced large parts of PPS7 in relation to sustainable economic growth discusses guidance for the reuse and replacement of rural buildings for tourism or employment use. However, this is not relevant in this case. The proposal is not for an economic, tourist or other commercial use. It is for a residential development. Within that national guidance document policy EC12.1 is relevant as it states that the re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, though residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations and for some types of building. Planning Authorities are encouraged to approve planning applications for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside for economic development, particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns or villages, where the benefits outweigh the harm. In this case evidence has been provided that the building (in its current dilapidated state) was marketed for a commercial use for at least 6 months. Reference was made to the landlord being willing to undertake conversion works and cover the costs of such works. The level of response was considered disappointing by the Agent, but was considered to be a reflection of the current demand for commercial property. The building was considered to have significant physical constraints when being considered for a commercial use, and there is on the market at the present time, similar accommodation, of good quality has also been available for a considerable time.

The other main issue on which there is government guidance to consider is the historic value of the building and whether because it is worthy of retention; its conversion to residential contrary to the above policies should be supported. PPS5 sets out criteria for consideration of heritage assets and this issue is considered below in section 9.4.

The above government guidance is considered to be the most up to date national policy guidance for the proposed development. The adopted Salisbury District Local Plan policies have been included into the draft Core Strategy and are therefore still material. Additionally two of the Draft Core Strategy policies are also relevant.

Policy H23 of the Local Plan states that undeveloped land (see PPS3 above) outside a Housing Policy Boundary and not identified for development in the Local Plan will be considered to be countryside where the erection of new dwellings will only be permitted where provided for by policies H26 (affordable housing) or H27 (housing for rural workers). Neither policy H26 nor H27 applies in this case, nor the guidance of the current Local Plan policy is totally consistent with current national guidance as expressed in PPS3 and PPS7. The draft core strategy refers to the Winterbournes as a location where limited growth may occur in the future, but the details of this have not yet been considered and in the meantime the site is in an isolated position, outside the Housing Policy Boundary and surrounded by open countryside.

Local Plan policy C2 states that development in the countryside will be strictly limited and will not be permitted unless it would benefit the local economy or maintain and enhance the environment. The applicant has not suggested that the proposal will benefit the local economy and the enhancement of the local environment apparently relies on the impact of the rebuilding and conversion of the existing dilapidated and partially collapsed structures. Policy C24 sets out the criteria for extensions in the countryside, which must be sympathetic in scale and character with the existing

building and surroundings, and fall within the existing curtilage and this aspect is discussed below. Policy C22 discusses the criteria for the change of use of buildings. It states, "Where the proposal is for full residential use, the council will require the applicant to demonstrate that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable business or community reuse. This is usually demonstrated through a commercial marketing exercise, and in this case, evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the building has been marketed by a commercial agent for a non-residential use. It would appear from this exercise that in the current economic climate there is no demand to use a dilapidated former agricultural building (with no electricity, water or foul sewage) for an economic enterprise.

In considering the previous applications there was concern that the former agricultural building was not capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction and that there was insufficient information and drawings to demonstrate that the resultant building would actually be a conversion.

The applicant has sought to reassure the Council by providing substantive reports from qualified persons. Accompanying this application, (as for both the S/2010/1015 and S/2011/0138 applications) is a report from Paul Tanner Associated (dated 18 Nov.2008) and a subsequent letter from Geoff Crawford of Witcher Crawford dated 15 June 2010 which states 'whilst the previous assessment regarding the amount of work involved in the project is true' i.e. there is a fair amount of work involved in reinstating and repairing the barn to make sure it is structurally sound and that the fabric of the building is free of decay; *this by no means suggests that the walls cannot be repaired or have to be rebuilt. The careful sequencing and correct methodology will minimise the loss of the building fabric.* The letter then sets out a sequence of work which it is stated, if followed would require only the repair and conservation of the existing structure.

Additionally there is a statement by Robert Nother (Conservation Architect) dated Nov 2010, who also considers that the building is in a 'poor state of repair' but who concludes that it is not currently beyond repair. He suggests that some of the cracking of the cob walls can be resolved by gentle treatment of the plinth, that the outward lean of the south facing wall 'is no more than that seen in many historical vernacular buildings' and that the stability of the wall could be achieved through the addition of wall plates and a modification of the proposed roof structure to take account of the lean. It is also stated that the vertical cracks in the building are not due to differential settling at ground level but due to the inadequate eaves projection of the tin roof (in comparison with the original thatch) and the consequent exposure of the walls to the weather.

It would appear, therefore, that though the building appears in an 'alarmingly poor state of repair' it may currently be repairable rather than require re-construction. However, the architect advised that without the undertaking of a scheme of repairs during the early part of 2011, the structure is at an increased risk of major deterioration and possible collapse.

It would appear that since that previous application in February 2011 that such a scheme of repairs has not been undertaken and that the structure has continued to deteriorate. Therefore, there is still considerable doubt, especially in view of the

applicant's Conservation Architect (Robert Norther)'s conclusions regarding the state of the building, and the concerns of the Council's Building Control officer. The concern is that the building may actually not be capable of conversion and that any proposal to create a new dwelling on this site would be tantamount to being a replacement building in the countryside for residential purposes. On this basis, the proposal is considered to still be contrary to Local Plan policy C22.

9.3 Scale and design of proposed building

The proposal involves the re-instatement and rebuilding of an existing structure and the erection of a new extension. The two bedrooms are to be provided within the taller of the two buildings by the creation of an upper floor, which will provide one bedroom, the other to be on the ground floor. The living accommodation (a kitchen, sitting/dining area and a bathroom) will be provided within the new single storey extension adjacent. The new extension is proposed to be over the footprint of previously existing buildings; though little of these currently remain as the drawing W1198/PO2 and the photographs/plans attached to the Historic Buildings study demonstrate. However as the design and access statement and other information provided indicates; the applicant has sought to replicate a single store building shown in an old photograph.

In overall terms, the scale and design of the proposal, is considered to reflect what was apparently on the site in the past and though the development including the extension still substantially increases the impact of the current building upon the surrounding countryside, the overall design concept is considered acceptable in this location.

9.4. Heritage Asset

PPS 5 sets out the criteria for considering proposals affecting heritage assets, or buildings that have significance because of their historic or architectural interest. The statement covers assets that are not designated but are of heritage interest and thus it is a material planning consideration. Decisions must be based on the nature, extent and level of that interest and the asset must be put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation. Policy HE7 sets out the criteria for consideration of proposals affecting heritage buildings.

A report by Paul Tanner Associates dated November 2008 provides a visual inspection and report on the condition of the building. It states that the building would be repaired and reroofed in appropriate materials. The structural repair requirements section of the report identifies works and repairs that would need to take place to the building. The repairs required would appear to be substantial, including rebuilding some 10% to 20% of the flint work plinth, replacement of missing cob sections, reinstatement of structural connections between the gable and main elevation, possible use of stainless steel corner reinforcement, removal of cement render and replacement with lime, removal of the existing concrete slab and its replacement by a new concrete screed floor on a waterproof membrane and insulation layers over a new re-enforced concrete ground bearing slab, stabilise the walls, addition of new first floor and strengthening of beams with central fitch plates, new embedded tie

timbers for the roof with temporary propping of to the gable ends to maintain stability, and strengthening of the roof structure to support a new roof structure.

It is clear from this report that a substantial amount of repair and replacement work would be required to bring the barn up from agricultural to residential standards. The Building Control Officer also considers that there is likely to be a requirement for extensive structural works to conserve the existing structure and make it habitable. He also has concerns regarding the thermal performance of the existing structure and its resistance to damp and the upgrading which will be required to bring the structure to modern standards. In view of the submitted evidence the officers have concerns that it would be extremely difficult to prevent the total demolition or even collapse of the barn during the conversion process.

However, accompanying this application is a letter from Geoff Crawford of Witcher Crawford which states 'whilst the previous assessment regarding the amount of work involved in the project is true' i.e. there is a fair amount of work involved in reinstating and repairing the barn to make sure it is structurally sound and that the fabric of the building is free of decay; *this by no means suggests that the walls cannot be repaired or have to be rebuilt. The careful sequencing and correct methodology will minimise the loss of the building fabric.* A sequence of work is then outlined which it is stated, if followed would require only the repair and conservation of the existing structure.

In considering whether this revised application, has overcome the reasons for refusal; consideration has to be given to the evidence produced by Robert Nother regarding the worthiness of the building for retention. It is clearly asserted that in view of the growing appreciation of cob and other earth walled types of structures that they are under-represented in designated heritage structures. The case is made that as historic value of such walling material is increasingly recognised, that this building due to its age, size form and materials of construction is worthy of inclusion as at least a local heritage asset.

However, whilst recognising that the building could be considered to be a heritage asset because of its historic interest, the recognition is severely compromised by the extent of the works required to allow the conversion of the existing building to residential use. Moreover it is as an agricultural building that the building has historical significance. Therefore, whilst the building is considered to be a heritage asset that would be worthy of retention for historical interest, the building is not considered to be sufficiently important to provide the *special justification* required for a departure from national and local policy to create new residential development in the countryside.

9.5. Neighbouring Amenity

The development is approximately 70 metres from Bowles Cottages, and therefore, the proposed residential use would not detrimentally affect neighbouring amenities in terms of dominance, overlooking or undue disturbance. Whilst the increased use of the access lane may cause some noise and disturbance to these properties, the lane is in use for both the cricket field and as an agricultural access to the surrounding land. It would be difficult to argue that the increased traffic created by a single two-

bedroomed dwelling would be sufficiently detrimental to their existing amenities as to warrant refusal of the proposal under Local Plan policy G2.

9.6 Protected Species

An ecological assessment has been submitted and there is no evidence of bats, amphibians or reptiles on the site though extensive signs of barn owls were found. As nesting birds have also used the barn and are likely to be present in the hedgerow which it is proposed be removed adjacent to the Portway in order to create the access, it is recommended that works should take place between September and the end of February so as to avoid the breeding season. Provided the recommendations in the submitted ecological survey are adhered to, through appropriate use of conditions, it is considered that this aspect of the proposal would comply with Local Plan policy C12.

9.7. Highway Safety

The development makes provision for parking for at least two vehicles on a car parking area adjacent to the barn. Currently the barn is accessed off a lane and public footpath which serves nos.1 and 2 Bowles Cottage. No objections have been raised regarding the increased residential use of this access and in considering this application, the Highways officer has only recommended refusal on the grounds that the new dwelling would be located outside housing policy limits and would be distant from services and facilities, contrary to the key aims of Planning Policy Guidance Note 13.

9.8. Affordable housing public open space

A financial contribution towards affordable housing would be required in compliance with Core Policy 3 and a financial contribution towards the provision of public open space would be required in accordance with Local Plan policy R2. The applicant has indicated his willingness to comply with these policies

10. Conclusions

The site is in the open countryside where a new dwelling would not be permitted unless required for agriculture or local need and the applicant has not shown that the proposed dwelling would be either affordable, or that there is a need for a dwelling for an agricultural worker. Furthermore whilst a cob agricultural building would be of some local historic interest, the extent of the works required to stabilise and allow the conversion of the existing building to residential use, reduces its significance in heritage terms and therefore, the building is not considered to be sufficiently important to provide the *special justification* required for a departure from national and local policy to create a new residential development in the countryside.

The Highway Authority is also concerned that the proposed new dwelling would be located outside the housing policy boundary at a distance from services, contrary to the key aims of Planning Policy Guidance Note 13.

11. Recommendation

Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1 The site lies outside the housing policy boundary, and is not considered to be previously developed land, due to its agricultural use. The guidance in PPS7 (para 10) requires special justification for planning permission to be granted for isolated new houses in the countryside. Whilst the building is identified as being of some historical interest, substantial reconstruction of the existing building is required together with a large single storey extension to enable the conversion to residential use. The building is not considered to be sufficiently important to provide the *special justification* required by PPS7 to support conversion to full residential use. The development would therefore be contrary to the guidance in PPS3, PPS4, PPS5, PPS7, PPG13 and the adopted policies C22, H23, H26 and H27 and contrary to the saved policies, C22, H23, H26 and H27, listed in Appendix C of the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy.

2. The proposal, located remote from services, employment opportunities and being unlikely to be well served by public transport, is contrary to the key aims of Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 which seeks to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys and Policy G1 of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan.

3 The proposed residential development is considered by the Local Planning Authority to be contrary to Policy R2 of the Adopted Replacement Salisbury District Local Plan and contrary to Core Policy 3 of the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy as appropriate provision towards public recreational open space and affordable housing has not been made.

Informative

It should be noted that the reason given above relating to Core Strategy Policy 3 of the Draft Core South Wiltshire Strategy and Policy R2 of the Adopted Replacement Salisbury District Local Plan could be overcome if all the relevant parties agree to enter into a Section 106 legal agreement, or if appropriate by condition, in accordance with the standard requirement for recreational public open space.