

REPORT TO THE EAST AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report No. 4

Date of Meeting	24 th October 2013
Application Number	13/01852/CAC
Site Address	Ham Cross, Ham, Marlborough, SN8 3QR
Proposal	Demolition of existing barn
Applicants	Mr and Mrs Robinson
Town/Parish Council	HAM
Grid Ref	433120 163136
Type of application	Conservation Area Consent
Case Officer	Ruaridh O'Donoghue

Reason for the application being considered by Committee:

This application is brought to committee at the request of Divisional Member, Councillor Wheeler on the following grounds:

- Visual impact upon the surrounding area

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the recommendation that the application for demolition be refused.

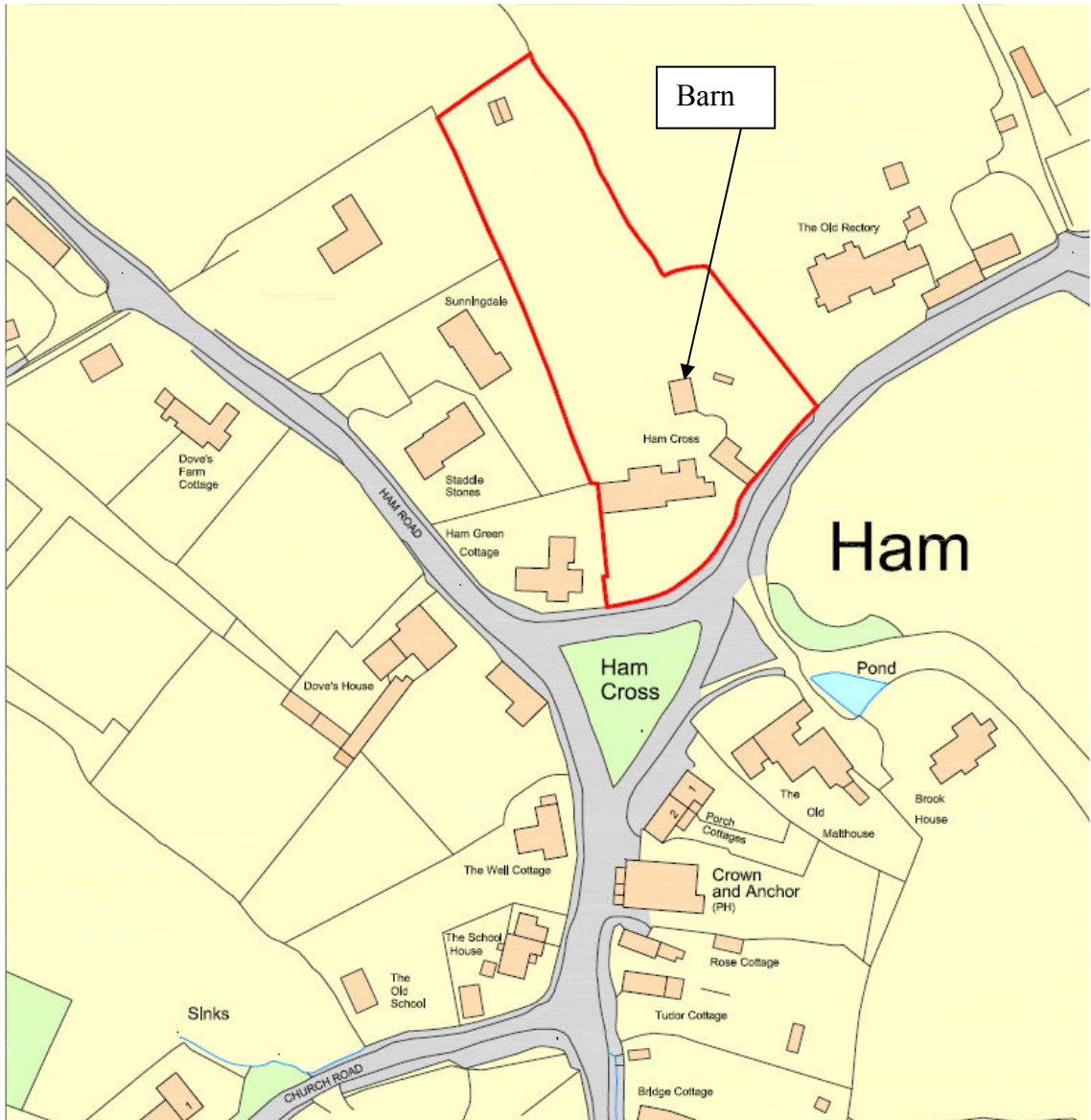
2. Report Summary

The key issue for consideration is:

- Whether the demolition of the barn would have a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the Ham Conservation Area.

3. Site Description

The application concerns a barn within the curtilage of Ham Cross, a former farmhouse with 17th century origins in Ham, lying within the built up area of the village just off the central village green. It is visible in views around and looking into this part of the village. It is situated within the Ham Conservation Area. The Ham Conservation Area Statement, adopted as supplementary planning guidance by the Council in 2005 notes that '*The house, the outbuildings, the trees and grounds are all significant to the character of the conservation Area*' and the house, barn, roadside stable and frontage wall are all positively identified in this document as significant unlisted buildings.



Western Elevation



Northern Elevation

4. Site History

Earlier applications in 2012 and this year to demolish the barn were withdrawn

5. The Proposal

The application proposes the demolition of the existing barn location to the north of the main dwelling.

6. Planning Policy

- Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – requires Local Planning Authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.
- The National Planning Policy Framework outlines government policy, including the historic environment (Section 12).
- The PPS5 Practice Guide is still extant, providing guidance on making changes to Heritage Assets.

The Ham Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted as Council policy (Supplementary Planning Guidance) in 2005, following local public consultation.

7. Consultations

Ham Parish Council

No objections to the application

Wiltshire Council Conservation Officer

Strong objection to the demolition of the barn on the grounds that it will cause substantial harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Wiltshire Council Ecologist

No objection – the barn is not used for bats nor does it offer any realistic roosting potential.

8. Publicity

The application has been advertised with press and site notices. No further representations have been received.

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 Significance of the Barn

The barn was positively identified (along with Ham Cross (formerly Doves Farmhouse), its roadside stable and frontage wall) as a significant unlisted building in the Conservation Area Statement for Ham which was adopted by the Council in January 2005. The building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the village. The form and character of the building suggest a date from the mid-late C19 (the building also appears on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey of 1880) and are characteristic of agricultural buildings of this period within the area. It remains reasonably intact, albeit that the original thatched roof has been replaced at some point by a corrugated roof overlain by a thin layer

of thatch, which has now deteriorated. The building is prominent from the adjacent public lane and forms a significant group with the former farmhouse and stable which clearly reflect the historic functions of the site and which reinforce the area's rural and agricultural connections.

The significance therefore lies in it being an historic former farm building and as part of the group of outbuildings that are associated with Ham Cross. It has importance in presenting a reference to the former use of the site as a farm.

9.2 Impact of its Demolition on the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area Statement notes that "*The house, the outbuildings, the trees and the grounds are all significant to the character of the Conservation Area*". The Statement goes on to advise that "*Outbuildings of traditional design and materials should as far as possible remain unaltered*" and that the quality of the environment within the village is potentially threatened by, amongst other things, "*Any further loss of traditional agricultural buildings and community facilities in the village*".

Under the NPPF, loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole. In this case, it would be fair to say that we can consider the proposal as less than substantial harm to the conservation area. In which case, paragraph 134 of the NPPF requires a balanced assessment where the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

It does not appear that any objective assessment of heritage value or of the contribution of the building to the conservation area has been provided in support of the application. A report from a structural engineer suggests that the condition is poor – however, the context of this report and the brief that was given to the engineers is not made explicit. The scope and nature of the proposals which were put out to tender suggest that this opinion was given in the context of a desire for a substantially upgraded/altered building with a new clay tile roof (for which it was not designed). The roof structure is of slender construction, reflecting its original construction for a thatched roof. It is unsurprising that a proposal to introduce the heavier clay tile roof would require very substantial works of alteration and upgrading in order to take the additional weight of the tiles. Associated proposals for full underpinning, for the replacement of all wall and roofing surfaces, introduction of high standards of insulation, dpc etc. all suggest a scheme that is far in excess of that which would be necessary to facilitate the continuing low-level use of the building for its current purposes of ancillary accommodation and storage.

An alternative view is represented within the Bat Roost Inspection which notes that "*despite the neglected appearance of the roof, the building is in very good condition*". Photographs within this report suggest a clean and well maintained building (other than the remnants of the thin overlaying covering of thatch which has a disproportionate impact on the appearance of the building from a distance) which has the potential to continue to serve its current function with only modest investment in maintenance, such as could be expected for any outbuilding.

The Government's new website of planning guidance (currently under consultation) sets out a definition of public benefit: "*Public benefits should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.*" It notes that public benefits may include heritage benefits such as sustaining or

enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting; reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset or; securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset.

In this case the proposals involve the loss of an unlisted building which has been identified as making a positive contribution to the conservation area. Its loss would involve harm to the setting of the similarly considered farmhouse and stable and to the character and appearance of the wider conservation area. It cannot be claimed that **any** public benefit would result from the removal of the building and no convincing evidence has been provided that a continuation of the current use of the building is unviable. As a result the requirements of local and government policy are not met and the application should be recommended for refusal.

9.3 Continued deterioration of the building

It is noted that the applicants have stated that as they intend to restore the building and it will over time just be allowed to gradually deteriorate. However it is worth noting, in recognition of this problem, current government guidance makes it clear (NPPF paragraph 130) that the deteriorated state of a heritage asset as a result of deliberate neglect should not be taken into account in assessing an application.

RECOMMENDATION

The application is recommended for refusal for the following reasons:

The proposed demolition of the barn would result in the loss of a heritage asset identified as a significant unlisted building which positively contributes to the character and appearance of Ham Conservation Area and has strong importance in presenting a reference to the former use of the site as a farm. Therefore, its loss would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of Ham Conservation Area. As the requirements of current legislation have not been met to demonstrate that the public benefits of its demolition would outweigh the harm, the proposal is contrary Central Government guidance contained within Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework and to the aims and objectives of the Supplementary Planning Guidance contained within the Ham Conservation Area Statement