

Design & Access Statement

Treworlas Farm, Treworlas, Ruan High Lanes, Truro, TR2 5LN.

Proposed Conversion of Farm Outbuildings To Single Residential Dwelling

General Proposal

Proposed conversion of redundant agricultural outbuildings to single residential dwelling and associated landscaping and drainage works.

Siting

The property and site area lies within the hamlet settlement of Treworlas and within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The existing Farmhouse is located next to the main road (A3078) which runs along the east boundary and a side road to the north which provides access into the current domestic curtilage and to the south there is an extensive range of redundant agricultural outbuildings. There are residential cottages to the east on the opposite side of the main road and to the west along the side road there are residential properties of various age and styles and to the north and south there are open agricultural fields.

The existing Farmhouse building is visible from the main and side roads but the outbuildings to the south which this planning application relates to are well screened from the immediate adjoining main road by the topography of the land, existing hedgerows and boundary fence and as the land falls to the south there are distance views from the main road.

Within the agricultural field to the south of the outbuildings which is also in the ownership of the applicant there is a public footpath (No 315/2/1). This footpath is approximately 30m away from the relevant outbuilding which is also located right on the west boundary line which adjoins modern semi-detached residential properties.

General Background

Within the site area there is the original main farmhouse dwelling which is of traditional construction and has a raised garden amenity area on the south side and parking within the open courtyard area.

To the south west of the main Farmhouse there is a traditional two storey stone Barn which has implemented planning permission as a full time Holiday Unit and to the south east there is implemented planning permission for a new double Garage and Garden Workshop.

Planning permission has also been granted (PA20/07303) for a new vehicle access off the main road (A3078) at the bottom of the agricultural field and a driveway up through the field into the application site area as detailed on the plans.

To the south of the existing two storey Barn there is an extensive range of redundant agricultural barns constructed in the 1960's totalling 650 m2 in floor area and which are now mostly empty and currently used for some general storage and Garaging.

These outbuildings buildings were originally used for the rearing of chickens and pigs together with butchery when the farm was last active which ceased in the early 2000's and have since stood unused.

Existing Building

The existing barns are a formation of a number of structures which over time have been extended and stepped down with the sloping site with interlinked shallow pitched roofs over each structure keeping the ridge heights down.

The buildings are of solid concrete blockwork construction with external render finish painted in selected areas, built off standard concrete foundation with solid concrete floor and metal portal frame roof trusses supporting sheet roofing. The windows are mainly the original metal units with some new replacement timber windows and external doors.

The building is located directly on the west boundary which adjoins a domestic garden area and to the west there is an access drive from the main farmhouse to the north and the new access drive to the south.

There are no foul drainage facilities within the outbuildings and rainwater discharges to surface water on site soakaways or direct onto the adjoining ground and there is mains electricity supply.

The existing structure has been inspected by local Structural Engineer Richard Holbrook Ltd who have confirmed the building is suitable and capable for conversion.



Proposal

The proposal is to adapt and utilize the existing structure of the barns to form a new single residential dwelling.

The building will be formed with the retained existing solid masonry walls where possible, infilled and adapted with new solid walls, which will all be lined internally with a highly insulated timber frame structure. The existing concrete floor structure will be left in situ and a new insulated solid floor constructed over and the roof structure will be adapted to suit the new design, but maintained as low level interlinked shallow pitch structures with sheet covering.

The external appearance of the converted building is to look agricultural / light industrial in keeping with the existing and it is proposed to clad the exterior with dark coloured vertical corrugated metal sheeting to the walls and similar on the roof and the windows and external doors will be aluminium units.

The new property will have a large open plan Living area, together with 4 Bedrooms, Bathroom and En Suites and a large Garage / Workshop area. Externally there will be a main Terrace area to the front where a former building has been removed and to the side a new private Terrace off the Master Bedroom.

Externally the converted building has been set in from the west boundary, but the existing wall which runs along the boundary will be retained and the window openings infilled to maintain the existing screening between the existing and proposed properties. To the north a new boundary wall / fence will be constructed to separate the new property from the Barn with consent for a Holiday Unit and the Main Farmhouse. Access to the converted dwelling will be via the recently approved access road from the south which links with the existing side access drive which provides general guest parking and access to the rear Garage area.

Sustainability

The converted dwelling will adopt a fabric first approach to maximise the amount of insulation in the floor, walls and roof to reduce energy use, and there are several other measures that will be incorporated to further reduce CO2 emissions.

The existing orientation will benefit from passive solar gain in winter month. Solar reducing glazing and exterior canopies and blinds will be used to reduce solar gain through windows in summer months.

Walls will be constructed with existing and new high thermal mass blockwork to act as a heat sink. In winter months the walls will absorb any passive solar gain and emit warmth when the internal ambient temperature drops. In summer excess heat will be absorbed by the buildings fabric to reduce the potential for overheating and reliance on mechanical cooling.

Domestic hot water and space heating will be provided with a high efficiency air source or ground source heat pump. PV panels can be incorporated onto the south west facing inner roof slopes to provide electricity to power the heat pump.

A whole house ventilation system with heat recovery will provide background and rapid ventilation. In the colder months exhaust air will pass through a heat exchanger to warm incoming air.

A log burning stove serving the main living rooms and using kiln dried wood with low emissions will provide a sustainable alternative heating source.

Services

A new foul drainage system to a modern sewage treatment plant discharging into land drains as detailed on the plan is proposed which will be installed fully to manufactures and Environment Agency requirements.

New independent water and electric supplies will be taken from the mains Utility services.

Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and has a low probability of flooding. The site area is less than one hectare and there is no requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment.

Site infiltration testing will be undertaken to establish the size of soakaways. The site is of a sufficient size to provide adequate on-site surface water drainage

Access

Existing access to the main Farmhouse and approved Holiday Unit from the adjoining side road will be retained and not be affected by the new proposal.

Vehicle access to the new dwelling will be via the new approved entrance to the south of the site area.

External parking and access into the new building via the main accessway and entrance together with internal circulation of the open plan layout will be fully compliant with the current Part M Building Regulations.

Ecology

Bat and bird surveys of the existing redundant outbuildings have been undertaken.

The building is assessed as being used by small numbers of bats as a night roost / feeding perch. Bat mitigation measures as per Wheal Grey Ecology report have been incorporated into the new building.

There is no evidence that the building is occupied by Barn Owls and no evidence of the recent use of the building by nesting birds.

In accordance with the Cornwall Planning for Biodiversity Guide, a bat and bird box and bee brick will be installed on the site.

Planning Policies - General

We feel that the proposals are in line with current planning policies and guidance and that the possible impact of the development on the AONB together with the amenity of neighbouring occupiers has been addressed and satisfied.

The existing site area which the new building will be located within is an established brown field site and the proposals do not require this area to be extended into the adjoining agricultural fields.

The new residential building is of matching industrial style and finish to the existing redundant structure and will continue to sit neatly within the existing well screened surrounding landscape and will not be visible from the adjoining public road or in any greater extent than the existing structure from distant public roads.

The nearby footpath to the south will not be affected in terms of its route and the distance of over 30 m away from the reduced converted building will maintain privacy to both parties.

Planning Policies – National Planning, Cornwall Local Plan & RNDP

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in July 2018 provides the Government's framework for delivering sustainable development and facilitating economic growth through the planning process. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The introduction of the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. The Development Plan for the Council covering this area of Ruan High Lanes includes the adopted Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010 - 2030. The Roseland Neighbourhood Plan 2015 has been made and is a material consideration in the determination of this application.

Sustainable Development

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF advises that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where development proposals accord with the development plan, as this development does, it should be approved without delay.

It is considered that the proposal would contribute to **economic role** by the conversion of an existing barns to be used as a dwellinghouse, the income from which would help to support local services and increase the availability income spend within the surrounding and wider areas. In addition, the development would enable the Applicant to provide the barns with a new lease of life, allowing the barns to be more efficiently and effectively used.

Furthermore, the proposal will provide some support for the local construction industry during the construction phase of the development. **Socially** the development would allow the existing barns to be used more efficiently and effectively, which in turn will reduce pressure on the development of green field sites. The future users of this accommodation will support local services, facilities and retail providers. With regard to the **environmental** objectives, the development represents an effective and efficient use of land and buildings. By converting the existing barns which once complete will, due to their scale and appearance, they will not have any adverse impact upon the character of the surrounding countryside within which they are located. The design of the proposal is such that it protects and conserves the character and appearance of the area in which the site is located.

Moreover, the design and appearance is such that it will provide for the barns which will be entirely sympathetic to the other buildings in the surrounding area. The minor change in massing is adequately accommodated within the site such that there is no harm to the visual amenities of the area. The form of development is in fact a positive improvement of the use of the site in terms of appearance and effective use thus contributing to the wellbeing of the locality.

The Principle of the Development

The NPPF recognises that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions; however, in doing so should also take local circumstances into account, to reflect character, needs and opportunities of each area (paragraph 9). It recognises overall that sustainable development has to be a balance of economic, environmental and social factors with no one factor being dominant. Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states that development should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 78 encourages the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas, on sites where development will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. The development of the application site in this rural location, adjacent to the settlement, will comply with the requirements of this advice.

Paragraph 79 seeks to ensure the re-use of redundant or disused buildings, located in the countryside, where this re-use would enhance the immediate setting of the barns.

Policy 1 of the Cornwall Local Plan – Presumption in favour of sustainable development, states that *‘When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the National Planning Policy Framework’*. The Policy states further that *‘When considering whether a development proposal is sustainable or not, account will be taken of its location, layout, design and use against the three pillars of economic development, social development and environmental protection and improvement’*. It is evident that when considering Policy 1 to the application proposal, the development proposal clearly accords with the criteria as set out.

The proposed development will conform to Policy 2 through the alterations to and re-use of the barns into a traditional, well designed, high quality dwelling; a design which demonstrates a cultural, physical and aesthetic understanding of their location. The proposed development takes influence from the surrounding residential use of the land.

Policy 7 relates to the provision of new houses in the open countryside, which this development proposes. The relevant criteria listed below are applicable to this scheme. The Policy reiterates the advice in paragraph 79 of the NPPF where it presumes in favour of suitable constructed redundant or disused buildings that are considered appropriate to retain and would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting. The Policy requires that the building should have an existing lawful non-residential use and that the building should be ten years old or greater.

The barns are clearly redundant former agricultural barns which have existed on the site for a considerable period of time, much greater than the 10 year period referred to in the Policy. Clearly, the buildings have existed and were being used in accordance with a lawful use for at least 10 years prior to the submission of this application.

A Preliminary Structural Survey is submitted as part of the application, which confirms that the building is suitable and capable for conversion without the need for significant amounts of extensions or alterations to facilitate the residential use proposed.

The proposal will conserve and, indeed, enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside, through the sympathetic and well-considered conversion proposal which retains the simple, functional form and appearance of the barns.

The barns will be finished externally with dark coloured vertical corrugated metal sheeting to the walls. The external finished material is prevalent in the immediate and surrounding area and, therefore, an appropriate range of finished external materials to use. This combined with the fact that the development will not result in any extension to the barns, will ensure that the development does not result in any adverse visual impact upon the character of the sensitive countryside within which the site is located.

For all the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposed development is compliant with Policy 7 of the Cornwall Local Plan and Policy GP2 of the Roseland Neighbourhood Plan, through the re-use of redundant agricultural barns, which are structurally sound and capable of being converted and which will lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity

Section 12 of the NPPF relates to achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 127 of The Framework accepts that the need to secure high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations, and this is clear from the high-quality design, which incorporates both traditional and modern elements resulting in a pleasing appearance. As required in paragraphs 124 and 125 of the NPPF, the proposed development will add to the overall quality of the area for the lifetime of the development; create attractive and comfortable places to live; optimise the potential of the site; respond to local character and reflect the local surroundings; use materials through innovative design and be visually attractive through good architecture and landscaping.

Policy 12 of the Local Plan provides that development proposals will be judged against fundamental design principles of character; layout; movement; adaptability, inclusiveness, resilience and diversity; and process. The policy also requires that development proposals should protect individuals and property from overlooking and unreasonable loss of privacy; overshadowing and overbearing impacts; and unreasonable noise and disturbance.

Policy GP2 of the RNDP requires that proposals for new development must be sited and designed so as to promote, support and develop the distinctive character of the area. Proposals must be of an appropriate scale to the location. Development should not be located on visually exposed plateaus, ridges or skylines or on steep sided valley sides, or any other visually exposed sites.

Clearly there are significant visual benefits to making the existing building more recessive in appearance. The existing building, which as a result of its design and range of external finished materials represents a building that is visible from various public vantage points. The proposed design and range of finished natural external materials along with the appropriate additional landscaping will make the building appear recessive in the landscape. This will result in a development that not only respects the character of the area, but also enhances the site. The development is representative of the scale, massing, design and appearance of other similar dwellings in the area.

It is evident from the treatment of the external materials that the new development will properly reflect the scale and form of the dwelling to the south and will accordingly be an appropriate form of development for the site. The roof is the same shape and has been specifically designed so as to represent a simple uncluttered form. The windows are to be of traditional vertical emphasis, with wall to window ratios comparable with those of other dwellings in the area. It has been demonstrated on the accompanying floor plans and elevations that the proposed dwelling is wholly suitable in terms of preserving and enhancing the essential character and appearance of the area. The proposed alterations to the elevations and internal layout has been specifically chosen so as to keep the light industrial aesthetic of the building and to avoid any unacceptable adverse effects on the character and visual effect of the AONB.

It has been demonstrated on the accompanying floor plans and elevations that the proposed barn conversions are wholly suitable in terms of preserving and enhancing the essential character and appearance of the area. Window and door openings have been designed in such a way that they ensure that there is no loss of privacy that will occur between the occupants of the units and the neighbouring dwellings to the north and the west. suitable amount of amenity will be provided for the barns.

The design is representative of traditional shapes and takes design cues from similar forms of development in the area. The proposed design seeks to provide the barns of a traditional rectangular form which will be finished externally with familiar materials such as a pitched dark coloured corrugated metal sheets, with external dark coloured vertical corrugated metal sheeting to the walls offering a character that is fresh and modern whilst rural in its appearance. The development will result in an enhancement and the conservation of not only the characteristics of the surrounding area, but also the natural beauty of the area. The development is clearly distinctive of good design.

Taking all of the above mentioned into consideration, it is submitted that the proposed development will not harmfully affect the amenities of neighbouring occupiers in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy or overbearing in accordance with Policy 12 or the guidance within the Cornwall Design Guide.

Policy 13 of the Local Plan requires that all new development will be expected to provide sufficient, on- site open (or private amenity) space, car parking provision, and space for storage for domestic activities and recreation, as well as collection of waste, recycling and compostables.

The converted barn will be provided with its own private amenity area, which will be contained within the site. As demonstrated on the accompanying plans and drawings, the application building will provide residential development of high quality and in a manner, which complements its simple, functional form and appearance. Internal accommodation will be provided to a high standard, with suitable living accommodation provided as detailed on the submitted plans.

The converted barn will have a dedicated parking spaces, both for visitors and for the occupants serving the dwelling. Considering the amount of accommodation provided in the barn, the provision of five parking spaces to serve the barn is considered adequate. In light of the above mentioned, it is considered that the development accords with the advice provided in section 12 of the NPPF, Policies 12 and 13 of the Local Plan and Policy GP2 of the RNDP.

Best Use of Land and Existing Buildings

In accordance with the requirements of paragraph 117 of the NPPF the proposed development would allow for the effective and efficient use of the barns and of this site. Policy 21 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure the best use of land and existing buildings. The policy seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from development. The site comprises of a portion of land developed with a range of redundant former agricultural barns. Both the site and the barns are currently underutilised and as such this proposal clearly demonstrates that the development complies with the requirements of this policy.

Natural Environment

Paragraph 170 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils.

Paragraph 172 of the Framework places great weight on conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The proposal seeks to convert these existing redundant former agricultural barns into a dwelling, which will provide these buildings with a new lease of life. The site is not located in an isolated location, but rather is found on the eastern side of an existing residential settlement, which comprises of a number of styles and designs of dwellings. The barns are seen in the foreground of the settlement. Due to the scale of the proposal, together with the finished external materials proposed it is considered that the development will not have any significant visual or landscape impact. In addition to this, the development does not result in the loss of any characteristic landscape to the site or the wider area and as such the development ensures the protection of the landscape and the scenic beauty of the area within which it is located.

Policy 23 of the Local Plan seeks to sustain local distinctiveness and character and where possible to enhance the natural environment and assets. For sites that are located within the AONB the policy requires that great weight be given to conserving the landscape and the scenic beauty within or affecting the setting of the AONB.

Policy LA1 of the RNDP relates to the requirement of development to demonstrate that they meet the objectives of the AONB Management Plan through conserving and enhancing the diverse landscape of the AONB, using materials and being of a scale and design that has appropriate regard to the character, sensitivity and capacity of the protected landscape; and be appropriately sited such that development avoids damage to the natural beauty, character and special qualities of the AONB.

The proposal seeks to convert the existing redundant agricultural barns into a dwelling. It is evident from the proposed plans and elevations that whilst some of the barns will be removed, there are no significant additions to the barns, such that it does not result in the loss of the original agricultural character or form to the barns. The development will not result in a loss to any boundary vegetation, or to any trees on the site, which are key landscape characteristics to the site and in the area.

Whilst the development may have an effect on the AONB, as a result of the fact that the development retains the majority of the existing building, does not provide for any significant extensions and does not extend development into the open countryside to the south, it is considered that the possible effects of the development on the AONB are assessed as being neutral in nature. Whilst the nature of the converted dwelling may result in a slight increase in activity around it, the perception of which is likely to diminish in time as familiarity increases, the change in materials is likely to reduce the prominence of the converted dwelling and, overall, affect an enhancement of the overall amenity of the area with the character of the wider field remaining a settled working rural landscape. Importantly, the value and the integrity of the designation at a local and overall level will not be adversely affected and, therefore are not contrary to the management objective of the AONB Management Plan. On balance, the overall changes resulting from the proposal in terms of landscape character, visual amenity and scenic beauty are small.

In terms of the capacity of the landscape to accommodate the proposals whilst the development will result in the conversion of an existing redundant agricultural building, still perceived by some as a barn, to a private dwelling the development will not extend the building or significantly alter its form, as such the development achieves the conversion with relatively few adverse effects. The conversion will therefore still be a recognisable feature in the view but will be less dominant due to its more recessive appearance, massing broken by planting which reflects that around it and increases habitat value

The final proposals retain the scale and massing of the existing building, reflect the local character of a working agricultural building, reuse an existing building to avoid constructing a new dwelling in the countryside and include sensitive screening to enhance the overall appearance of the site in views from the surrounding AONB landscape. As such they make a positive contribution to the natural environment and comply with NPPF guidance, Cornwall Local Plan, Cornwall AONB Management Plan, and Roseland NDP Policies.

Conclusion

It is considered that this is an appropriate location for the development that is the subject of this application. The development accords with the guidance set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF, which asserts the presumption in favour of sustainable development that is at the heart of the NPPF.

The NPPF establishes the case for making efficient use of land and existing buildings. The Council is committed to achieving high quality buildings and places and ensuring the distinctive character of Cornwall is retained. The proposal is of a high quality and contains elements, which reinforce local distinctiveness, including appropriate local materials. The dwelling reflects a traditional building form, which is characteristic of the area. The development has been sensitively designed, that will result in the effective use of an existing underused resource.

The design acknowledges the constraints and opportunities provided by the site and represents good design, proportionate in scale, respecting the location within which the site is found and providing a high-quality form of development. Furthermore, the design produces a building of a scale, massing and appearance that will not result in an incongruous and unsympathetic development in the area. The scale and height of the development proposed are considered commensurate with the size of the plot. The proposed converted dwelling will reflect traditional forms incorporating the use of external finished materials, which are prevalent in the area. The use of a palette of finished external materials that are present in the location will allow for the proposed development to integrate into the surrounding development. The proposal will not conflict with any of the policies of the development plan, as set out above.

The proposed design acknowledges the constraints and opportunities provided by the site and represents good design, proportionate in scale, respecting the location within which the site is found and providing a high quality form of development with minimal impact on the natural environment.

Safe means of access to the site will be provided through the use of the existing gated access to the site.

The proposal is considered to comply with policies 1, 2, 7, 12, 13, 21, 23 and 27 of the Cornwall Local Plan, through the provision of this replacement dwelling, which will represent a form of development that is of appropriate scale and massing considering the context of the area. The development will also comply with the requirements of Policies LA1, LA2, GP1, GP2 and HO3 of the RNDP. For all the reasons set out above, the proposal would not give rise to significant or demonstrable harm.

By reference to the relevant policies contained in the development plan, and considering all relevant material planning considerations, it is concluded that development the subject of this application is acceptable in all respects.

The proposal complies in all respects with the development plan for the purposes of Section S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Most particularly in terms of guidance contained in paragraph 11 of the NPPF and the policies, referred to above, in the Cornwall Local Plan and the Roseland Neighbourhood Development Plan, because the proposal is beneficial in social, economic and environmental terms and is therefore 'sustainable', planning permission should be granted without delay.

Mr N Savage
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