

BRIDGE FARM, BITTELL FARM ROAD, HOPWOOD, ALVECHURCH B48 7AF

1) Site

The site located on the northern corner of Bittell Farm Road and the A441 in Hopwood.

Approximately 1 mile north of junction 2 of the M42 and within 1¾ of Alvechurch and approximately 2¼ miles east of Barnt Green (see Appendix A).

The site within the client's ownership extends to approximately 0.69 hectares of which the area of the site upon which there are buildings is 0.35 hectares (see Appendix C).

The buildings on site are a single "large" dwelling constructed circa 1975, together with 3 remnants of the original farm buildings which have been converted into residential accommodation.

Details of these existing buildings are part of this application together with a topographical survey of the site as existing.

It has been confirmed by Severn Trent that there are no adopted sewers within the site (all services available within adjacent highway).

2) History

The Planning history of the site will be dealt with separately by the Planning Consultant's statement. However, it would appear from research that there was an existing building on the site of 3 storeys which was demolished, presumably to make way for the widening of the road and the improvements to the bridge over the canal (see appendix B).

On the other side of the canal (south) is the Hopwood House public house and restaurant, which was originally the Wharf Inn and together with Bridge Farm it would seem from research was the terminus of the Birmingham Worcester canal prior to the construction of Bittell reservoir and the Tardebigge locks to the south.

There would have been stabling for horses evidence of a smithy and a shop, together with accommodation for boaters. Loading and off loading of goods to be carried by road to their destination prior to the continuation of the canal.

3) Brief

The design team were instructed to focus on adding value to the community.

Client research has indicated there is a demand within the Bromsgrove District Council area for accommodation for senior citizens, retired couples and even young married couples.

With an ageing population the shortage will inevitably increase.

We have been therefore instructed to prepare an outline application, taking into account these requirements and bearing in mind that the existing converted buildings are to be retained as they comply with current demand.

The client is also aware of Green Belt policy and this is of a major factor in the influence of the proposals.

4) Design Concept

Taking the criteria outlined above, it was decided to demolish the existing house which in our view is not appropriate to its location, nor does it contain accommodation which meets local demands.

Taking the Green Belt factor and the retention of the existing buildings into account, we propose a single storey development with a “farmyard” idiom. The current design standards, variation in accommodation was provided to suit demand, ie all 2 person units, some of which are 2 single bedrooms and others a single double bedroom. Research shows that there is a mixed demand for not only retired couples to have separate bedrooms, but also there may be a requirement for same sex couples.

There is also a social complimentary factor in younger people being able to aid more elderly in activities such as shopping etc.

The majority of the landscaping and access would be dealt with by a communal maintenance scheme with small private patio areas where appropriate.

5) Design and Materials

The farmyard concept is continued with a reflection in a contemporary way of the traditional Worcestershire farmyard outbuildings employing local red brickwork and tiles together with natural larch boarding/with hardwood doors and windows.

All materials obtained from a sustainable source.

6) Highways

The existing access to the site is to be improved by relocating to provide adequate visibility within the 40mph area on Bittell Farm Road.

The initial access is to be gated with electrically operated access and manoeuvrability off road for a refuse vehicle and the occupants are provided with a communal bin store as shown (at present the occupants are accessed by refuse vehicle to each individual property). There is an emphasis for disabled parking and 20 parking spaces have been allocated for 12 dwellings.

A cycle store is also provided for those eager to continue their health regime.

Electrical charging point for cars

7) Access

All dwellings apart from the existing are disabled access level thresholds and single storey.

There is regular bus transport to local shopping areas and to the city of Birmingham.

The nearest rail stations are Barnt Green and Alvechurch shown on the location plan (see appendix A).

8) Landscape/Biodiversity

It is appreciated that whilst the total gross floor area of the proposed development is does affect the carbon footprint. Accordingly, this has been compensated by additional planting of indigenous species including broad leaf trees and reinforced hedge.

9) Conclusion

The client and design team are eager to provide accommodation to satisfy a local need at the same time respecting local vernacular and Green Belt policy (the proposed new building approximates to the area of the buildings demolished).

Indeed we are of the view that the impact on the Green Belt will be less than that which exists, particularly with regard to massing and visual approach incorporating the traditional converted buildings with the new/designing the site as an integral development rather than its present random configuration.

The client confirms that he has met with the occupants of the existing retained buildings and discussed fully the proposals contained in this application.