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East Cambridgeshire District Council

Via The Planning Portal

Your ref:
Our ref: J0043953

18 May 2021

Dear Sir Madam

DEMOLITION OF TWO BARNs AND ERECTION OF FIVE DWELLINGS ALONG WITH ACCESS, CAR PARKING, LANDSCAPING AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE FOLLOWING THE GRANTING OF PRIOR APPROVAL 21/00753/ARN IN AUGUST 2021

LAND AT FROLIC FARM, LODE FEN, LODE, CAMBRIDGE, CB25 9HF

This letter supports a Full Planning Application for the introduction of five new dwellings on the above site following the demolition of two existing agricultural barns. The application is submitted following the granting of Prior Approval 21/00753/ARN on the site in August 2021 and is submitted on behalf of the land owner ECH Wright.

LOCATION/ THE SITE

The application site is located within Frolic Farm and is located approximately 2.5 km north east of the village of Lode and accessed from Lode Fen. The application site comprises of two barns as well as hardstanding and an area of grassland to the east of the easternmost barn. It forms part of a wider farm complex which includes a farm holding, agricultural barns, equestrian uses, pond/ reservoir and farm land. The application site falls within a larger farm holding extending to 89Ha and has been owned by the applicant since 1995. The existing two barns on the site are accessed independently from Lode Fen. Both barns are constructed from steel frames with the northernmost barn clad in corrugated aluminium and the other timber boarding. The Site is located outside of the defined settlement boundary for Lode and is within Flood Zone 2.

SITE HISTORY

As outlined above, an application for Prior Approval in accordance with Schedule 1 Part 3, Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 was granted on 10 August 2021. This was to '*convert two barns to five dwellings*'.

The existing barns are no longer required for their current use and, as a result have been subject to a Prior Approval Application under Class Q (Schedule 2, Part 3) of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). This has established the principle of residential development at the site.

THE PROPOSAL

The two existing barns on the site which benefit from the recent Prior Approval are to be demolished as part of the proposals with five new residential dwellings to be introduced. Plots 1-3 will consist of a terrace containing three 3xbed dwellings. These will be located to the east fronting Lode Fen and positioned to the north east of the existing barn to be demolished as part of the proposals. Plots 4 and 5 will be located to the north of the site and will occupy a similar footprint to the existing barn at this location. All five new dwellings to be provided will be traditional 'barn-like' in appearance and very similar to the dwellings granted permission under Prior Approval 21/00753/ARN. All five new dwellings will exceed the residential internal space standards with each unit also provided with a generous rear garden area. Revised access arrangements onto Lode Fen are proposed as part of the proposals with Peppers Cottage also served from this new access point. This will ensure that the agricultural and residential uses to be provided at the site will be accessed independently. All five dwellings will be provided with two car parking spaces with bins and cycles accommodated in the rear gardens.

As outlined, the recent Prior Approval has established the principle of a residential use at the site and five dwellings could be delivered through the conversion of the existing two barns on the site. Importantly, the scheme is comparable in scale, footprint and massing to the consented Prior Approval scheme. Please see table below:

Measures	Existing Barns	Proposed Development	Percentage Difference % - Existing Barns v Proposed Dwellings
Footprint (Gross) (m2)	561.2	386.6	-31.1%
Volume (m3)	2,696.90	2,592.80	-3.86%

The table above confirms that there will be a significant reduction in building footprint at the site with the introduction of the new development and there will also be a reduction in overall building volume. The proposed development will result in an enhancement at the site, with a higher quality scheme delivered which will have less impact on the surroundings. There will be clear betterment through the new proposal.

PLANNING POLICY

The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan was formally adopted in April 2015.

Policy HOU 8 refers to the extension and replacement of dwellings in the countryside and states the following:

Proposals which seek to extend or replace an existing dwelling in the countryside will only be supported where:

The extension to an existing dwelling is in keeping with the height, scale and character of the original dwelling and does not adversely affect the character and appearance of the locality or its countryside setting. The replacement dwelling is of a scale and design which is sensitive to its countryside setting, with its height being similar to that of the original dwelling. If an alternative height is

proposed, the applicant will be expected to demonstrate that the scheme exhibits exceptionally high quality of design and enhances the character and appearance of the locality.

The proposal is within the existing curtilage.

The residential use of the dwelling has not been abandoned.

Proposals accord with Policy ENV 2 on design and other relevant Local Plan policies; and

Proposals have regard to maximising carbon neutrality (see Policy ENV 4 in Chapter 6)

Policy ENV 2 relates to design and ‘all development will be designed to a high quality, enhancing and complementing local distinctiveness and public amenity by relating well to existing features and introducing appropriate new designs’.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The principle of providing a residential use on the application site has been established through Prior Approval 21/00753/ARN that was granted on 10 August 2021. This provides a realistic fall-back position which would deliver 5no. dwellings. Therefore, the conversion of the buildings through permitted development provides a realistic fallback position that should be attached significant weight in the determination of this application and there is potential for five dwellings to be constructed on site under this position.

Policy HOU8 of the Local Plan supports replacement dwellings in the countryside and states that a replacement will be of a scale and design which is sensitive to its countryside setting, with its height being similar to that of the original dwelling. In summary, the proposals are considered to be acceptable, and the proposed design will be sympathetic and appropriate to the countryside setting with the appearance of the dwellings very similar to that approved under the recent Prior Approval on the site.

The new block containing Units 1-3 will be located to the north east of the existing barn on site which will be demolished. The new semi-detached block at units 4-5 will be located within the existing footprint of the barn currently present here. The principle of introducing new dwellings is considered to be acceptable and there is case law to support this approach. A “realistic” fallback position has been established at the site with the introduction of the Prior Approval and it is felt that the relocation of Units 1-3 would actually result in less visual harm than the fallback position and push the residential uses further away from the established agricultural uses at the site which is an important safety consideration. An enhancement will be delivered on the site and the relocation of Units 1-3 will ensure that the residential and farm uses would be completely separate. Units 1-3 will also address Lode Fen in a positive manner, picking up on the established building line at this location.

In summary, the principle of introducing five dwellings at this location is acceptable.

DESIGN APPROACH

In terms of its size, the proposed development is smaller than the existing agricultural buildings on site in terms of footprint and volume. The proposed five dwellings would not be materially larger than the two existing barns or the units approved through the recent Prior Approval. The relocation of Units 1-3 to the front of site on Lode Fen is considered acceptable and importantly as outlined there will be an overall decrease in footprint when compared to the existing footprint and existing development on the site which could be developed. Given the cumulative impact of the existing buildings upon the openness of the surrounding countryside, their demolition would reduce this visual impact.

An enhanced form of development will be delivered on site with the relocation of Units 1-3 to front Lode Fen. The introduction of new building forms will also result in a more high-quality built form being delivered and enable more sustainable features to be included. A defined street frontage which follows the established building line on Lode Fen will be introduced and should be viewed favourably. The pushing of this block to the north east will also allow clear separation to be provided between the agricultural and residential uses at the site with separate access points also introduced.

It is relevant to note that the proposed footprint would be less than the established fall-back position established through the Prior Approval. The scheme can be delivered within the footprint and volume of the existing buildings on site albeit Units 1-3 have been shifted forward. The proposed development will result in an enhanced development being delivered on the site and one that will have less visual impact than the existing barns present on the site.

The proposed development will respond positively to context with the approach to scale/ massing reflective of development found locally. The design has taken cue from surrounding development and the dwellings will appear barn-like in appearance with materials found locally again utilised including black stained timber boarding and natural slate roofs. The development will have a negligible impact upon landscape character, views and visual amenity. Importantly the site is still located within the established holding at Frolic Farm and the reduction in both building footprint and volume will ensure that the proposals will have no adverse impacts on the rural character or setting of the area.

Transport and Highways

The site is located on Lode Fen, a no through road that runs north from the village of Lode. The road is infrequently used by agricultural vehicles and vehicles accessing the other residential dwellings on the road. Importantly the road can accommodate the five residential dwellings proposed as part of this application and as a result there would be no adverse transport or highways impacts. The Highways Authority raised no issues with the proposals during the determination of the recent Prior Approval on the site. A new access to serve the residential dwellings proposed and the existing dwelling at Peppers Cottage will be introduced with the existing access closed up. Importantly, the proposals will not detriment highway safety at this location.

Noise impacts

The site is located in the countryside to the north east of Lode and there are not considered to any commercial noise activities that would preclude the introduction of a residential use. The development is also not considered to be at risk from significant noise and disruption from the remaining buildings or uses on site and furthermore there are other residential properties in close proximity to the site. It is not considered that the introduction of additional residential dwellings on the site would create any detrimental noise impacts once completed. Again, no concerns were raised by Environmental Health during the determination of the recent Prior Approval on the site.

Contamination Risks

The site comprises two existing barns where contamination is unlikely. As a result, there is not considered to be any requirement for a site investigation study to be carried out. No fuel tanks have ever been stored on the application site and no chemicals or fertilizers have ever been stored in either barn, nor have they been used for the servicing of vehicles. They have been used for the storage of grain, bales and machinery with both barns having solid floors. The potential for pollution at the site is extremely low and the proposed garden areas are also located within existing areas of hard standing. The reservoir/ pond on site was introduced in 1996 and prior to this the field was farmed for potatoes and vegetables. The applicants are happy for the standard contaminated land condition regarding unexpected contamination to be attached to any grant of permission.

Flooding Risks

The site is located within Flood Zone 2. However, the introduction of a residential use is classified a More Vulnerable development but based on this categorisation of the development it is considered 'appropriate'. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and this concludes that the proposed development site is within Flood Zone 2 and is at a low risk of flooding from all other sources. The proposed developments vulnerability classification is compatible with the Flood Zone and therefore the development is appropriate. With regard to the proposals for dealing with surface water on site, attenuation will be introduced in the form of on-site storage with restricted discharge to the existing watercourse to the south taking place. Foul drainage will be dealt with on-site.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the principle of development at the site is acceptable and the recent Prior Approval Application the site has established the principle of a residential use at the site. Five new dwellings will be introduced on site, however these will appear similar to the units approved under the recent Prior Approval and will appear 'barn-like' in appearance. Units 1-3 are to be relocated on site, however this is acceptable and their relocation would actually result in less visual harm than the fallback position.

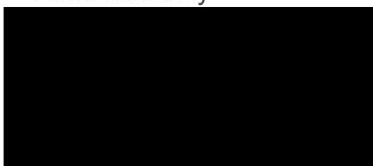
Please note that this planning application is accompanied by the following information:

- Planning Application Forms and Certificates;
- Application Drawings including Site Location Plan;
- Design and Access Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

The required planning application form accompanies this application, and the applicant has arranged for the transfer of the application fee (£2,310) directly to the Planning Portal.

I trust that you now have everything to enable you to favourably determine this Full planning application, however should you require any additional information to be submitted in support of the application please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



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