

MJ PLANNING CONSULTANCY

PLANNING STATEMENT rev B

Project: Conversion of existing outbuilding to annex
Site Address: Orchard House, High Street, Stretham, Ely, CB6 3JQ.
Client: Mr C & Mrs L Roberts
Report prepared by: Meghan Bonner BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI
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Project: Extension

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to consider the proposed development against national and local planning policies and assess whether the scheme achieves compliance.
- 1.2. The proposed development relates to a householder and listed building consent application in respect of the conversion of an existing outbuilding to an annex within the grounds of Orchard House, Stretham.
- 1.3. The statement is prepared by Meghan Bonner BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI, Director of MJ Planning Consultancy. Meghan is a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. Meghan has worked in the industry for nearly 15 years and has extensive experience of working within the district to secure planning permissions for a variety of developments. She is therefore well placed to prepare the required Planning Statement.

2. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1. **Paragraph 79** of the NPPF notes that *'Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services'*.
- 2.2. The provision of an annex within the village will allow the Applicants' son, friends and family to visit more often and for longer periods resulting in indirect benefit to the local services such as the public house and shops.
- 2.3. **Paragraph 82** of the NPPF notes that policies should support the need to build a strong, competitive economy. One way in which this should be achieved is by Council's being *'flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances'*.
- 2.4. The COVID-19 pandemic has generated an unprecedented shift in the way that people work. Many people, including the Applicants' son, now require space to be able to work from home, as offices are either no longer available or only available on a rota basis to staff. This shift is exactly the change anticipated by paragraph 82 and the proposed annex offers the Applicants' son the opportunity to have access to a suitable sized home office to carry out his work whilst being based at Orchard House.

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015

- 2.5. The Local Plan 2015 notes that Stretham benefits from a good range of facilities in the village including a shop and Post Office, church, primary school, youth centre, parish hall,

garage, public house and a sports field with an all-weather surface and pavillion. The village has a regular bus service to Ely and Cambridge. These all contribute towards the quality of residents' lives. It therefore has good access to amenities to support residents within the village and can be considered a sustainable location.

- 2.6. The Local Plan makes clear that additional residential uses within the development envelope of Stretham village are likely to come forward and are likely to be supported in principle through Policy Growth 2. Whilst the annex will not be an independent dwelling, it will increase the opportunity for friends and family to visit and stay in the village.
- 2.7. As such, the principle of an annex in the location is considered to be acceptable given the access to amenities for visiting friends and family and the sustainability credentials of the location within the development envelope.

3. HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

National Planning Policy Framework July 2021

- 3.1. **Paragraph 130** of the NPPF sets out how decisions will ensure that developments are of high quality.
- 3.2. In accordance with subsection a), the development will give the outbuilding a functional purpose and will result in an improved aesthetic to the built form following investment in the joinery.
- 3.3. The scheme complies with subsection b) and c) by retaining the existing external appearance of the built form and where modern additions or alterations have harmed the historic importance of the built fabric, reinstating those features.
- 3.4. The scheme proposes no loss to the existing landscaping which will ensure that the setting of the annex, the nearby listed buildings and the conservation area will all be protected.
- 3.5. The internal layout has been determined by the desire to preserve as much of the built fabric as possible, making use of existing partitions and openings wherever possible.
- 3.6. The scheme complies with subsection d) by protecting the existing materials and committing to reintroducing more traditional features wherever possible, such as traditional joinery. This helps to reinforce the importance of the outbuilding and will assist in returning it to a viable use to preserve the future of the curtilage listed building.
- 3.7. Subsection e) is complied with through the provision of the annex within an existing, outbuilding. This will allow investment in the outbuilding and put it to functional use. It will

also ensure that there is no greater impact on the setting of the listed building as a result of the creation of an annex within the curtilage. It will be more sustainable than building a new annex by making use of existing buildings and materials that are already on site.

- 3.8. Subsection f) is achieved through the provision of an annex with rooms that exceed the NDSS to ensure healthy living spaces. The provision of a separate study allows the door to be closed on the home working space at the end of the day. This is considered preferable to doubling up a bedroom, lounge or kitchen for home working use as it creates a more healthy live-work environment generating considerable benefit for the mental health of the Applicants' son while he is working at home.
- 3.9. **Paragraph 134** highlights the importance of reflecting local design policies and Government guidance on design. The PS considers the local design guidance in the following section.

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015

- 3.10. **Policy ENV 1** of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan requires that development is sympathetic to the landscape character.
- 3.11. The scheme achieves this by not altering the scale, form, character or materials of the outbuilding and by protecting the existing landscaping. As a result, the scheme does not impact on the historic environment. The annex will fall within the development envelope of the village and will therefore be easily incorporated within the settlement and its boundaries. Whilst the scheme will introduce additional residential activity within the grounds of Orchard House, this activity will be ancillary to the main dwelling and will not affect the tranquility of the area.
- 3.12. The scheme is therefore considered to be **ENV 1** compliant.
- 3.13. **Policy ENV 2** of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan states *'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.*

Design which fails to have regard to local context including architectural traditions and does not take advantage of opportunities to preserve, enhance or enrich the character, appearance and quality of an area will not be acceptable and planning applications will be refused.'

3.14. It sets out criteria for new developments to aspire to. Many of the criteria are relevant to new buildings rather than conversions, however, the scheme still accords with the policy, including through:

- Retaining existing important landscaping and natural and historic features; in this instance Orchard House, the Barn rear of Number 12 and Number 15 and the onsite TPOs and other mature landscaping.
- Protecting important views into and out of settlements and key views of landmark buildings; in this instance Orchard House and wider Conservation Area.
- Ensuring there is no significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers, and that occupiers and users of new buildings, especially dwellings, enjoy high standards of amenity; this is achieved through the sensitive conversion of the outbuilding and the decision not to introduce any new external openings within the built form.
- Having regard to East Cambridgeshire Design Guide SPD as set out below.

3.15. The scheme is therefore considered to be **ENV 2** compliant.

East Cambridgeshire Design Guide SPD

3.16. The SPD sets out design criteria relevant to the developments of all forms. Many elements, such as the section on outbuildings within the curtilage of a property are not relevant (in this case because it only relates to the erection of new outbuildings).

3.17. The design principle for development of heritage assets is the most relevant section of the SPD for the proposed development. It makes clear that most buildings can sustain some sensitive redevelopment but that any alterations should make a positive contribution to the asset and its setting.

3.18. The scheme complies with the SPD guidance as set out, in particular by:

- retaining exposed brickwork,
- limiting new openings,
- replacing modern window frames with traditional timber frames set back within the reveal,
- replacing modern plywood doors with more traditionally designed hardwood doors
- retaining the ridge height of the roof,
- repairing on a like for like basis where relevant,

- 3.19. The scheme is therefore considered to be consistent with the principles of the Design Guide SPD.

4. HERITAGE ASSETS

National Planning Policy Framework July 2021

- 4.1. **Paragraph 194** requires that *'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'*.
- 4.2. The scheme is located in close proximity to two listed buildings and within the Conservation Area. The outbuilding itself is curtilage listed. The application is therefore accompanied by a Heritage Statement.
- 4.3. **Paragraph 197** requires Councils to take into account:
- 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'*
- 4.4. A Heritage Statement accompanies the submission which considers these elements and demonstrates compliance.
- 4.5. **Paragraph 202** of the NPPF (2021) states that *'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'*
- 4.6. As such, in the assessment of the impact of the development upon the heritage asset, it is essential that any public benefits are taken into account. The Heritage Statement sets out the public benefits of the scheme and concludes that *'Given the above assessment, it is considered that cumulatively, the public benefits weigh strongly in favour of the proposed development and outweigh any minimal harm arising from the development to the listed*

buildings and Conservation Area. The scheme is therefore considered to have been fully assessed and the requirements of the relevant planning policies met.

East Cambs Conservation Area Appraisal guidance design (appendix c)

- 4.7. **Paragraph 10.1** states the conversion of existing buildings within the conservation area *'will be encouraged provided that:*
- *It can be demonstrated that the current use of the building is no longer viable;*
 - *The appearance of the building will be maintained without the need for significant alteration or extension;*
 - *The amenity of the adjoining residents will not be adversely affected;*
 - *The scheme meets other planning standards for parking, bin storage, etc;*
 - *Any features of architectural interest that have been 'lost' but for which there is clear historic evidence to justify reinstatement and which are considered to contribute positively to the character of the area can be recreated.'*
- 4.8. The existing building is in a poor state of repair and currently has no functional purpose.
- 4.9. The development can be undertaken without an impact on the external appearance of the building.
- 4.10. The development will not harm the residential amenity of the neighbouring residents.
- 4.11. The site benefits from sufficient space for amenities including parking space and bin storage.
- 4.12. The scheme proposes reinstatement of features such as the window frames set back into the reveals and a change in joinery colour to reflect that of Orchard House and to better connect the two heritage assets.
- 4.13. As such, the scheme is considered to fully comply with the requirements of paragraph 10.1.
- 4.14. **Paragraph 11.8** recommends windows be set within reveals. The scheme proposes the reinstatement of this feature which should be considered beneficial. The scheme is considered to be **paragraph 11.8** compliant.
- 4.15. **Paragraph 10.1** *'Garages and other outbuildings such as offices and large sheds / summerhouses, should relate to the style of the main property, but should remain subordinate to it. They should also be subject to the same design principles as any other new building.'*

- 4.16. The scheme does not propose a new building. The external features and scale of the outbuilding will remain unaltered by the proposal (with the exception of the colour of external joinery) and as such, this will ensure that the building remains subordinate to the main property. The proposals have been considered against the design quality policies and are considered to meet these. As such, the scheme is considered to be compliant with **paragraph 10.1**.

5. PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

National Planning Policy Framework July 2021

- 5.1. **Paragraph 11** of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development indicating planning permission should be issued forthwith unless policies indicate that permission should be refused or any adverse impacts of a development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015

- 5.2. **Policy Growth 5** of the Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 makes clear that there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development that accords with the Local Plan will be granted forthwith.
- 5.3. The HS makes clear that the benefits demonstrably outweigh any potential harm. There are no policies within the NPPF that specifically note the type of redevelopment should be refused.
- 5.4. The scheme fully complies with strategic objectives, in particular the requirement to provide a range of housing in appropriate locations, to support the vitality of village centers and to create sustainable development which maximises use of existing built form.
- 5.5. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and in accordance with **Paragraph 11** and **Policy Growth 5**, permission should be granted forthwith.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The scheme has been assessed against relevant local and national planning policies.
- 6.2. The scheme is located in close proximity to two listed buildings and within the Conservation Area. The outbuilding itself is curtilage listed. The application is therefore accompanied by a Heritage Statement.

- 6.3. The proposed scheme has sought to minimise impact on the external fabric of the building and where changes are proposed these are sought to restore original features externally rather than lose historic fabric.
- 6.4. Internally, the scheme complies with NDSS and provides a functional and desirable layout for the Applicants' son to live and work from home. When the facility is no longer needed by the Applicants' son then non-paying visiting friends and family as well as employees will be able to make use of the annex. This is in accordance with standard ancillary residential uses and is considered to comply with relevant local and national policy which supports annexes and generational family homes.
- 6.5. The principle of residential use within the development framework of Stretham is supported and the scheme will comply with the principle of sustainable development to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits. It will also comply with the requirement to deliver housing which reflects changing local need.
- 6.6. In conclusion, the assessment confirms that there are no reasonable planning grounds upon which to restrict the proposed development.