



Mr J Hibberd
c/o Mr Stephen Webb
64 North Row
London
W1K 7DA

Date: 31 July 2023
Our Reference: 23/06057/PMINMT

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Dear Mr Hibberd,

Conversion of existing outbuilding into 3 bed dwellinghouse, replacement and reduction of 2x polebarn into 2 x 3 bedroom dwellinghouses and conversion of existing polebarn into detached garage with associated amenity space, communal space, parking and landscaping at Land East Of Courtyard Barn Horseman Side Navestock Essex CM14 5SS

I refer to your enquiry concerning the above proposal and our site meeting. My comments are based solely on the following information that you have supplied in order to form a view on the principle of development at Courtyard Barn. The submitted documents within the pre-application and discussed at the meeting:

- PP-00 AREA SCHEDULE;
- PP-00 PROPOSED POLE BARN 2 SITE PLAN REAR ELEVATION;
- PP-00 PROPOSED POLE BARN 3 SITE PLAN;
- PP-01 PROPOSED POLE BARN 1 GROUND FLOOR;
- PP-01 PROPOSED POLE BARN 2 FLOOR PLAN;
- PP-01 PROPOSED POLE BARN 2 ROOF PLAN;

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- PP-01 PROPOSED POLE BARN 3 FLOOR PLAN;
- PP-02 PROPOSED POLE BARN 1 GROUND FLOOR;
- PP-02 PROPOSED POLE BARN 3 ROOF PLAN;
- PP-03 PROPOSED POLE BARN 1 FRONT ELEVATION;
- PP-03 PROPOSED POLE BARN 1 ROOF PLAN;
- PP-03 PROPOSED POLE BARN 1 SIDE ELEVATION;
- PP-03 PROPOSED POLE BARN 2 FRONT ELEVATION;
- PP-03 PROPOSED POLE BARN 3 FRONT ELEVATION;
- PP-04 PROPOSED POLE BARN 2 REAR ELEVATION;
- PP-04 PROPOSED POLE BARN 2 SIDE ELEVATION;
- PP-04 PROPOSED POLE BARN 3 SIDE ELEVATION;
- PP-05 PROPOSED POLE BARN 3 REAR ELEVATION;
- PP-06 PROPOSED POLE BARN 1 REAR ELEVATION;
- PP-00 BLOCK PLAN ;
- PP-00 EXISTING SITE AND BLOCK PLAN;
- PHOTOS;
- HERITAGE COMMENTS;
- COVERING LETTER

Principle

The Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033 was adopted as the Development Plan for the borough on 23 March 2022. As the same time the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan was revoked. The new Local Plan is the starting point for determining planning applications. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 is also a material consideration.

The application site is located on the northern side of Horseman Side, occupied by a Grade II Listed converted barn, and to the east of the dwellinghouse an ancillary building to the main dwellinghouse and former storage barns all single storey and low-level buildings. The main dwellinghouse is accessed from its own access to the west of the dwelling and the low level buildings are accessed by a separate access to the east of the main dwellinghouse. The site is set within a rural location, with sporadic development along Horseman Side. The site and surrounding area is washed over by the Metropolitan Green Belt which is one of the main considerations of the pre application assessment, alongside the adjacent heritage asset.

Policies relevant to any redevelopment requiring planning permission are:

- BE14 – which seeks to create successful places ensuring new development meets high design standards (including materials) and delivers safe, inclusive, attractive and accessible places. Buildings should be sustainable including the surrounding places and spaces capable of adapting to changing conditions. Proposal should respond positively and sympathetically to their context building upon existing strengths and characteristics and, where appropriate, retain or enhancing existing features which make a positive contribution to the character, appearance or

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significance of the local area (including natural and heritage assets). The integration of the natural environment to enhance biodiversity should be incorporated into designs and seek to incorporate trees into development. Proposals should also protect the amenities of future occupiers and neighbours living conditions, provide suitable parking provision and refuse/recycling points whilst mitigating the impact of air, noise, and other pollution.

- BE16 – seeks development within the Conservation Area to be of a siting, design and scale that will preserve or enhance its character or appearance and important views into and out of the area, and where possible to enhance the significance of the assets and its settings. The policy requires development to be supported by a Heritage Statement providing sufficient information on the significance of the heritage asset, the potential impacts of the proposal on the character and significance of the asset, its setting and how the proposal has been designed to take these factors into account. The statement should make an assessment of the impact of the development on the asset and its setting and the level of harm that is likely to result (if any) from the proposed development. Clear justification should be provided for any works that would lead to harm.
- Policy BE13 is also relevant and requires new development to meet the standards set out within the adopted parking standards are set out in the EPOA Parking Standards document and require 1 parking space per bedroom to be provided off-street; this may be relaxed within highly sustainable areas and formal advice will be sought from the Highway Authority at application stage.
- HP06 Standards for New Housing policy is also relevant and has incorporated the nationally described space standards for internal and external spaces. This should be a consideration when developing future proposals to ensure the future living conditions of occupiers are protected.
- Policy BE02 Water Efficiency and Management; Policy BE04 Managing Heat Risk; Policy BE11 Electric and Low Emission Vehicles are also relevant and require new development to meet certain standards of sustainability to help emit carbon emissions and provide sustainable living conditions for the future occupiers.
- Policies MG02 Green Belt and MG03 Settlement Hierarchy are also relevant and require development coming forward in non-allocated Green Belt locations will be assessed in accordance with Strategic Policy MG02 Green Belt and national policy on Green Belt. Development will be considered inappropriate and refused unless very special circumstances are demonstrated and/or where the exceptions apply.

Discussion

A meeting was held on site with the Historic Buildings officer in attendance. During the meeting the proposal was discussed in terms of its potential impact upon the heritage asset and scope for changes to be made to improve the initial proposal. The following comments are supplied by the Council's Built Heritage Officer:

Thank you for consulting Built Heritage in respect of this preapplication which pertains 'Conversion of existing outbuilding into 3 bed dwellinghouse, replacement and reduction of 2x polebarn into 2 x 3-bedroom dwellinghouses and conversion of existing polebarn into detached garage with associated amenity space, communal space, parking and

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landscaping'. In terms of information supplied, a baseline of drawings and initial heritage note have been supplied.

Looking at the site, the main matters are impact upon setting, the adjacent listed building of Courtyard Barn, Grade II listed, early C17. Timber-framed, weatherboarded, half hipped and peg-tiled roof. The Barn (formerly listed as 'Barn at Waterhales Farm') has group value with the adjacent listed building, 'Waterhales Farmhouse' which is under another ownership and curtilage listed buildings within the immediate setting.

This is a rural context with vernacular buildings, as such the prevailing character is not urban and this extends to landscaping and boundaries, all must be wholly considered within any future application and not a later consideration for Conditions. I raise no objection to the demolition of the existing buildings and new vernacular led style architecture to form residential use. The future architecture must be well detailed and refined not exude an urban language from shape of form, arrangement and details such as fenestration. In terms of arrangement of the site, I am supportive of a farmstead vernacular style being adopted, given the context, this should be informed by an appreciation of setting and views with articulation of massing; not an 'estate' like approach.

A courtyard/farmstead narrative usually works well when keeping a much tighter arrangement of buildings (this can however trigger overlooking so a granular approach to placement of rooms and fenestration must be considered) and scales of a subservient nature with variation in roofscape and attention to details for fenestration, open eaves, casement windows, hips and gablets etc. Not repetition which is uncommon on farmstead developments but common in estate development.

Guidance which may be of assistance is located on the Historic England website, this is not meant as a prescriptive set of rules, more that it explains the hierarchy of farmsteads to inform modern design.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/rural-heritage/farm-buildings/>

I request evidence of any existing structures being demolished, ecology landscape and boundaries, alongside NZC or Fabric first construction information. The arrangement of buildings as proposed, have limited hierarchy in scale and architecture could be framing views as defined by any assessment of setting; setting is more than a visual judgement and other paraphernalia associated with this level of intense residential spread will without doubt have a negative impact upon this rural setting. Please refer to <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/h eag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets/> A Heritage Statement must clearly conclude impact upon both Heritage Assets affected by way of development.

I trust this advice is of assistance.

Principle

National Planning Policy relating to new development in the Green Belt is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework chapter 13. The current local development plan is also relevant, in particular policies MG02 and MG03 which are compliant with the Framework.

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Local Plan policies MG02 and MG03 aim to control development and that development will be considered inappropriate unless very special circumstances are demonstrated or where exceptions apply in line with paragraphs 149 and 150 of the NPPF.

The proposal seeks to reuse one of the buildings, and redevelop the remainder of the plot in replacing the three buildings with two dwellings and a car port.

Proposals for new buildings in the green belt can be acceptable in a limited number of circumstances. Turning to the proposal, most relevant is National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 149 (g) and 150 (d)-: i.e.

149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

The proposal does not relate to affordable housing so the last bullet point can be discounted.

150. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

The re-use of the 'Barn 3' as labelled on the submitted block plan, would not result in any extensions, only fenestration alterations as discussed. The part of the proposal would fall within para.150 d) of the NPPF.

The replacement and redevelopment of Barn 1, Barn 2 and potentially parking port, would fall within the para.149 g) which allows the redevelopment of previously developed land, provided the development would not have a greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

There is no official measure to assess openness and the NPPF even in its revised form does not suggest a method to compare existing and proposed development or judge openness. This issue was addressed to some degree in recent National Planning Practice Guidance (001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722) published in late 2019. That guidance is based on caselaw and indicates that assessing the impact on openness:

“requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the *visual impact of the proposal may be relevant*, as could its volume;
- the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and
- the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.”

It is to be noted that this is guidance rather than policy and it gives examples of matters which ‘may need to be taken into account’ which it makes clear are not all embracing or necessarily excludes other matters.

As openness is a visual quality normally considered to be the lack of buildings, officers consider the most appropriate method to assess new build elements to be a visual comparison of the massing, spread and position of existing and proposed buildings. This approach aligns with the first bullet point above, taking volume to mean massing rather than a mathematical calculation. While it is not unusual for people to quote numerical data for footprint, floorspace or volume when considering redevelopment proposals in the greenbelt, reliance on mathematical data can be misleading and has no policy basis.

No visual overlays of the existing and proposed development have been provided, as we discussed on site that this type of drawing would be beneficial to see as it allows a comparison to show if the new development would visually and spatially impact upon the openness. During the meeting we discussed that the proposal was a preliminary submission in order to establish the principle and parameters of the site.

Changes to the development have been suggested from a design and heritage view, which would alter the development and the Green Belt assessment. However, in principle the redevelopment of the site within the Green Belt is considered acceptable, and further analysis and details should be submitted by way of massing models, visual overlays, and consideration to the future occupiers needs i.e. storage facilities and accessible and useable parking.

Design, Character and Impact upon Heritage Assets

The application site is within a rural context with vernacular buildings. The prevailing character is not urban which extends to its boundaries and landscaping. No objection is raised by the Historic Buildings Officer to the principle of demolishing existing buildings to provide new vernacular led style buildings within the courtyard, however as discussed at the meeting all details should be considered within the development of the site i.e. boundary treatments, separation from the Grade II Listed Barn, and the landscaping. These elements create a cohesive approach to the development by providing details to show how the new development will relate to the heritage asset, as well as the surrounding landscape.

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The development as submitted was not wholly supported by built heritage or planning due to its form, cramped feel of the siting of the buildings, parking and amenity spaces, location of parking, fenestration pattern and the potential of overlooking and loss of privacy to each other in habitable rooms and amenity space. As such we discussed during the meeting changes and a different approach could be taken to improve the proposal and impact upon the future occupiers as well as the heritage asset.

The HBO concluded that the future architecture must be well detailed and refined not exude an urban language from shape of form, arrangement and details such as fenestration to be included within the submission of a planning application. A farmstead vernacular style arrangement is supported for this site, given the context, this should be informed by an appreciation of setting and views with articulation of massing; not an 'estate' like approach.

Impact upon Neighbour Amenity

The sole immediate neighbour is Courtyard Barn to the west of the application site. The development will retain single storey height buildings and from the initial layout submitted indicates the proposed development would not directly impact upon the existing development on site.

Future Living Conditions

The future living conditions for the occupiers of the new development should meet the standards as set out within Policy HP06, which requires the internal spaces to comply with the nationally described space standards and provide sufficient light and ventilation into each unit.

As discussed on site, the current layout raises concerns in regard to future living conditions and the units inter-overlooking into habitable rooms and not providing an area which is partly unoverlooked. Due to the close proximity of the units it was suggested greater analysis is required to the layout proposed, position of windows and layout of the amenity and parking areas in order to prevent overlooking from and into habitable rooms and providing an area of amenity space which is private and unoverlooked.

Highways and Parking

Two off street parking spaces at a minimum size of 2.5m x 5m, and 7m x 3m if within a garage. The details submitted and area allocated for parking could accommodate two off street parking spaces per unit and to the size required. The highway authority will be consulted during the period of any planning application submitted to comment upon the use of the existing access and the proposed parking.

We discussed the relocation of the parking due to impacts upon the visual amenity and suggestions of design and siting alterations. The parking should be discreet, to the side of the dwellinghouse or within a carport.

Sustainability

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There are a number of sustainability policies (policies BE01, BE02, BE04, BE05, BE07) which would be applicable to the proposal at application stage and a sustainability appraisal of the scheme would be required. Whilst not a prerequisite, the Council encourage 'fabric first' approaches to building design to maximise the performance of buildings. The Council would also be supportive of the provision of sustainable energy subject to being well integrated into the design.

Sustainability principles were discussed during the pre-application meeting and any sustainable measures should consider the adjacent Grade II Listed Building at its setting.

Conclusion

The principle of redevelopment of this site is acceptable. Further context analysis is required to inform an improved layout and siting of the development with some design revisions in order to address the concerns raised from built heritage and provide good quality living conditions for the future occupiers of the site.

The views expressed in this letter are those of an officer, and while given in good faith, will not be binding on the Council when determining an application. Furthermore, please note that this letter was written without views being sought from neighbours which will happen if an application is submitted and may identify further matters not covered in the pre-application documents to date.

I trust that this information is of assistance to you. This correspondence concludes your pre-application submission in accordance with the Council's pre-application scheme.

Yours sincerely

Ms Brooke Pride

Planning Officer
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