

Application No: 14/3306N

Location: RIDLEY HALL FARM, WREXHAM ROAD, RIDLEY, CW6 9SA

Proposal: Conversion of existing Barns into 10 No Dwellings. Demolition of outbuildings sheds. Listed archway - Minor remedial work externally. Internally - removal of timber floor/ wall and installation of Bat Roost

Applicant: Mr Steve Gildea, Goldcrest Finance Ltd

Expiry Date: 10-Oct-2014

#### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approve with Conditions**

#### **MAIN ISSUES:**

- Principle of development/alternative uses
- Amenity
- Design
- Impact upon the Grade II\* Listed Structure and its Setting
- Highways
- Protected Species
- Archaeology

#### **REFERRAL**

The application has been referred to Southern Planning Committee as it relates to the conversion of an existing barn complex to form 10 dwellings.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

Ridley Hall Farm is located to the north of A534, the Nantwich to Wrexham Road between the A49 and the village of Bulkeley. The application area comprises the brick buildings which formed the farm outbuildings to Ridley Hall, although the Hall itself, outbuildings immediately to the north of it and the dwelling to the front of the site are excluded from the application area. The farmhouse has relocated to a new dwelling with modern farm outbuildings some 300 metres north of this group of buildings. Access is along the existing drive to the farm outbuildings and passes immediately adjacent to the existing farmhouse to the front of the site. The access passes into the courtyard through a stone and brick Gatehouse which is a Grade II\* Listed Building.

The Gatehouse is a structure located centrally within the southern range of brick buildings rather than a separate building. The single access point on the highway splits into two

separate accesses, one to the Hall and a second to the application site, part of Ridley Hall, the dwelling to the front and the new farm located to the north. This access which serves the majority of buildings then subdivides into two separate accesses some 50m back from the highway.

The site is located in open countryside as represented in the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan.

## **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

This application comprises the conversion of the outbuildings to ten dwellings on three sides of the courtyard with Ridley Hall (now split into two dwellings) forming the fourth side of the courtyard. A sandstone enclosure in the centre of the courtyard would be retained and eight of the proposed dwellings would incorporate garages. A timber structure has been constructed as garaging to units 9 and 10. Dwellings would be three or four bedroomed properties with rear garden areas arranged to the outside of the courtyard.

Landscaping is proposed either side of the access to the new dwellings and also hedging around the edge of the development site.

This application is very similar to the scheme which was approved as part of applications 10/1477N and P05/1529 which have now expired. This application includes the following amendments to the previously approved schemes:

- North West Elevation (south range) – 1 set of additional garage doors, 3 new windows, 1 door increased in width, 1 window changed to a door
- South West Elevation (South Range) – Removal of 1 door
- North East Elevation (North Range) - 1 window changed to a door

Listed Building Consent application 14/3312N accompanies this application.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

10/1477N - Extension of Time to Approved Planning Permission P05/1529 - Conversion of Redunda10/1477nt Detached Farm Buildings into 10 Residential Units – Approved 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014

P05/1529 - Conversion of Redundant Detached Farm Buildings into Ten Residential Units – Approved 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007

## **POLICIES**

### **National Planning Policy**

National Planning Policy Framework

### **Local Plan policy**

NE.2 Open Countryside

NE.5 Nature Conservation and Habitats

NE.9 Protected Species

NE.16 Reuse of a Rural Building for Residential Use

BE.1 Amenity

BE.2 Design Standards

BE.3 Access and Parking

BE.4 Drainage, Utilities and Resources

BE.9 Listed Buildings Alterations and Extensions

BE.10 Change of Use to Listed Buildings

TRAN.9 Car Parking Standards

### **Other Legislation**

EC Habitats Directive

Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994

ODPM Circular 06/2005

### **Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version**

SD 1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD 2 - Sustainable Development Principles

SE 1 - Design

PG 5 – Open Countryside

### **CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

**Environmental Health:** Conditions suggested in relation to construction hours, dust control and contaminated land.

**Highways:** The Strategic Highways Manager has no objection to this planning application subject to the following condition.

- The approved development shall not be occupied until details of vehicular access through the Drift House have been submitted and agreed with the LPA.

**Archaeology:** The application is supported by a project design for a programme of archaeological work, which has been prepared by Earthworks Archaeological Services on behalf of the applicants. This document was, in fact, submitted in support of the previous applications for this site and it outlines an appropriate scheme of works which will allow the recognition, excavation, and recording of any archaeological deposits present. There is, therefore, no archaeological objection to the start of the development although there should be no final discharge of the archaeological condition until fieldwork is complete and the archaeologist is able to advise that a satisfactory report has been received.

**Natural England:** Statutory Sites – No objection. Protected Species refer to the standing advice.

**English Heritage:** The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of your expert conservation advice.

### **VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL:**

**Bulkeley and Ridley Parish Council:** No comments received at the time of writing this report.

#### **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:**

No representations received.

#### **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION:**

Management of Dust and Emissions (Produced by Kitwe Developments Ltd)  
Schedule of Works (Produced by Kitwe Developments Ltd)  
Conservation Method Statement (Produced by Kitwe Developments Ltd)  
Heritage Statement (Produced by Kitwe Developments Ltd)  
Bat and Barn Owl Survey (Produced by Ecologically Bats)  
Design and Access Statement (Produced by Kitwe Developments Ltd)  
Ground Report (Produced by Platt White)  
Nesting Bird Survey (Produced by Dunelm Ecology)  
Newt and Water Vole Appraisal (Produced by CES Ecology)  
Archaeology Report (Produced by Earthworks Archaeology)  
Structural Survey (Produced by Hodkinson Mallinson)

#### **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

##### **Principle of development/alternative uses**

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas and take a positive approach to new development. One of the core principles is that planning should '*encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings*'.

Policy NE.16 of the Replacement Local Plan allows for the re-use of rural buildings to residential use where the applicant can demonstrate either that the building is inappropriate for commercial, industrial or recreational use by virtue of its character and/or location and that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a business re-use, or that the residential use is ancillary to a business use.

In this case the residential re-use of the barns has been accepted as part of two previous applications (10/1477N and P05/1529) which have both expired. Given the previous approvals on this site the principle of residential use is still considered to be acceptable.

Furthermore in this case the development would provide housing units which would assist with the Council's 5 year housing land supply. This is a requirement of the NPPF and adds significant weight in favor of the principle of development.

As part of this application a Structural Survey has been provided and this states that the buildings '*can be converted into residential accommodation*'. There would be some repair work to the roofs and strengthening of walls. The results of this survey are accepted.

##### **Amenity**

The proposed conversion is not so close to the two existing dwellings at Ridley Hall or the dwelling to the front of the site as to adversely affect residential amenities at these properties. The proposed layout would retain appropriate open space and separation distances for the new dwellings.

## **Design**

Policy NE.16 states that the reuse of rural buildings is permitted provided buildings are capable of being converted without major or complete reconstruction and any conversion work respects local building styles and materials.

The proposed works generally relate to works to open a series of currently bricked up openings, insert additional rooflights, alter the approved window glazing bar design, insert horizontal boarding in areas previously bricked up or open.

The alterations proposed to the buildings have previously been approved under two separate applications (10/1477N and P05/1529). Under both applications the development was considered to be compliant with Policies NE.16, BE.2, BE.9 and BE.10 of the Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. In this case the proposed development seeks to secure approval for the following additional alterations;

- North West Elevation (south range) – 1 set of additional garage doors, 3 new windows, 1 door increased in width, 1 window changed to a door
- South West Elevation (South Range) – Removal of 1 door
- North East Elevation (North Range) - 1 window changed to a door

It is considered that the proposed development including the additional alterations still complies with Policies NE.16, BE.2, BE.9 and BE.10 as well as guidance contained within the NPPF.

## **Impact upon the Grade II\* Listed Structure and its Setting**

The barns include a Grade II\* Listed gatehouse and the listed description states as follows:

*Gatehouse, circa 1530 (Leland's Report). Stone and brick with roof of large slates. Archway with floor above. Front and rear walls mainly coursed stonework, passageway walls between the arched openings mainly brickwork. The facade (south) has projecting plinth, ovolo moulded quoins to archway, plain imposts and ovolo moulded segmental arch with scotia hood mould. The stonework is separated from the brick section above by a slender ogee cornice. At the crown of the arch the cornice supports a carved stone achievement of arms consisting of the Egerton escutcheon flanked by term pilasters, with heads, and scrolls supporting horn players and animals. This is set in a brick wall with quoins which supports the roof. The rear (north) archway is similar to the facade but the imposts are moulded and there are no arms in the brick area above the stone cornice. Interior: The ceiling, between the two arches, has ovolo moulded beams front and rear, an ovolo moulded main beam, and large section stop chamfered joists supporting the oak boarded floor above. The pitched roof over the gatehouse has been retimbered but some chamfered purlins remain. Later farm buildings flank*

*the archway east and west. This structure may be all that remains of the "fine Ridley Hall" mentioned in Leland's Itinerary of 1530, in which case it is among the earlier Classical Structures of the region.*

It is not considered that the proposed conversion works would have a detrimental impact upon the listed gatehouse or its setting. This view is supported by the comments made by the Councils Conservation Officer and English Heritage.

## **Highways**

### Site access

The proposed access is via an existing priority junction with the A534 Wrexham Road. The existing junction which is already in use and is considered suitable as an access for ten dwellings as well as the existing uses on the site.

Beyond the immediate access from Wrexham Road is a private driveway which takes cars towards the development. The applicant proposes a cobbled road towards the proposed access into the development; through the listed gatehouse. Concern has been raised about the width of the gatehouse (2.5m wide). However this was previously accepted as part of the previous approvals and would not raise any safety issues in relation to the A534 Wrexham Road.

Access for refuse, emergency and delivery vehicles is proposed via the private driveway and the open end (west side) of the courtyard.

### Traffic generation

Traffic impact from ten dwellings will be relatively minor with six to eight two-way vehicle trips expected to be generated in any peak hour by such a development in this location. There is not considered to be any issues raised in terms of traffic generation.

### Car Parking

Parking provision is indicated at three spaces per dwelling which is in line with Cheshire East Council's latest parking standards.

## **Protected Species**

### Great Crested Newts

A Natural England license has been secured in respect of the site under the previous consent 10/1477N. The applicant has stated that this license is still extant and is in the process of being implemented.

The EC Habitats Directive 1992 requires the UK to maintain a system of strict protection for protected species and their habitats. The Directive only allows disturbance, or deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places,

- in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment

and provided that there is

- no satisfactory alternative and
- no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in their natural range

The UK implements the Directive in the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 which contain two layers of protection

- a requirement on Local Planning Authorities (“LPAs”) to have regard to the Directive’s requirements above, and
- a licensing system administered by Natural England.

Circular 6/2005 advises LPAs to give due weight to the presence of protected species on a development site to reflect EC requirements. “This may potentially justify a refusal of planning permission.”

The NPPF advises that LPA’s should contribute to *‘protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy’*.

The NPPF also states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by *‘minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures’*.

The converse of this advice is that if issues of detriment to the species, satisfactory alternatives and public interest seem likely to be satisfied, no impediment to planning permission arises under the Directive and Regulations.

In terms of the 3 tests, it is considered that:

- There are no satisfactory alternatives as without conversion the barns and farmhouse would fall into further disrepair which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the site. There would also be the potential loss of a Grade II\* Listed Building.
- The derogation is not detrimental to the protected species recorded on site as a scheme of mitigation and Natural England Licence have been secured.
- There are imperative social reasons of overriding public interest as the development would assist with achieving the Councils 5 year housing land supply, the development would provide a boost to the economy and the buildings would be at risk of further deterioration if the development was not approved.

## Water Voles

The Councils Ecologist states that the proposed development is not reasonable likely to have an adverse impact upon this protected species.

## Bats

An updated bat survey has been completed. The level of bat activity does not appear to have increased since the 2010 survey.

Evidence of bat activity in the form of minor roosts of two relatively common bat species has been recorded within the barns. The usage of the building by bats is likely to be limited to small numbers of animals using the buildings for short periods of time and there is no evidence to suggest a significant maternity roost is present. The loss of the buildings on this site in the absence of mitigation is likely to have only a low-medium impact upon on bats at the local level and a low impact upon the conservation status of the species as a whole.

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- in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment

and provided that there is

- no satisfactory alternative and
- no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in their natural range

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The NPPF advises that LPA's should contribute to '*protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy*'.

The NPPF also states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by '*minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in*



*biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures'.*

The converse of this advice is that if issues of detriment to the species, satisfactory alternatives and public interest seem likely to be satisfied, no impediment to planning permission arises under the Directive and Regulations.

In terms of the 3 tests, it is considered that:

- There are no satisfactory alternatives as without conversion the barns and farmhouse would fall into further disrepair which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the site. There would also be the potential loss of a Grade II\* Listed Building.
- The derogation is not detrimental to the protected species recorded on site as the submitted report recommends the installation of bat boxes and a replacement 'bat loft' as a means of compensating for the loss of the roost and also recommends measures to mitigate the risk of bats being killed/injured when the works are completed.
- There are imperative social reasons of overriding public interest as the development would assist with achieving the Councils 5 year housing land supply, the development would provide a boost to the economy and the buildings would be at risk of further deterioration if the development was not approved.

#### Barn owls

An up to date barn owl survey has been undertaken. The barns subject to this application are considered to support a temporary rest site which is utilised by a single barn owl and there is no evidence to suggest that barn owls are breeding on site. The Councils Ecologist advises that the loss of this resting site in the absence of mitigation is likely to have an adverse impact on barn owls. The significance of this impact is difficult to fully predict but is obviously likely to be lower than if breeding was taken place within the barns.

In order to compensate for the loss of the existing resting place the applicant is proposing the incorporation of two barn owl lofts into the converted building. The submitted updated barn owl report states that the lofts will be provided above units 7 and 10, however the plan included with the report still shows the loft being provided above unit 6. A revised drawing has been provided showing the barn owl lofts in the appropriate locations. The Councils Ecologist advises that the proposals are adequate to compensate for the loss of the existing barn owl rest site.

#### Breeding Birds

Conditions would be used to safeguard breeding birds on this site.

#### **Archaeology**

The Councils archaeologist has considered the application and has commented that the development shall proceed in accordance with the approved scheme of archaeological fieldwork.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The buildings are in good structural and physical condition and can be converted with only minor alterations and repairs. The proposed conversion makes maximum use of existing openings and would retain the rural appearance of the buildings. The use of the buildings for residential use would not have a detrimental impact upon the character of the Open Countryside or the setting of the Grade II\* Listed Building. The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact upon protected species subject to suitable mitigation. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policies NE.2 (Open Countryside), NE.3 (Areas of Special County Value), NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats), NE.9 (Protected Species), NE.16 (Re-use and Adaptation of a Rural Building for Residential Use), BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.3 (Access and Parking), BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources), BE.5 (Infrastructure) and BE.9 (Listed Buildings), Alterations and Extensions and BE.10 (Change of Use to Listed Buildings) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APPROVE** subject to the following conditions

- 1. Commencement within 3 years**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Reclaimed materials to be used to match those existing**
- 4. Implementation of landscaping and surfacing materials shown on plan reference 0673/PL04**
- 5. Boundary treatment in details as shown on plans reference 01A Rev 03 and 13**
- 6. Contaminated land**
- 7. Archaeology**
- 8. Consent for conversion only**
- 9. Compliance with conservation method statement prepared by Kitwe Construction Ltd**
- 10. Treatment of the ventilation bricks as stated in the letter referenced 0673**
- 11. Roof lights**
- 12. Metal rainwater goods**
- 13. All doors and windows to be timber with reveals**
- 14. All new brickwork or timber infill panels in Dutch barn areas to be recessed in accordance with the submitted details**
- 15. Retention of all stone on site for use in enclosure in courtyard. Walled enclosure within courtyard to be retained and repaired**
- 16. No other enclosure within the courtyard or on the western side of the courtyard to separate the site from Ridley Hall.**
- 17. Compliance with scheme for repair of sandstone lean-to the side of the Gatehouse**
- 18. The proposed development to proceed in accordance with the submitted Bat mitigation proposals unless varied by a European Protected Species license subsequently issued by Natural England. In the interests of securing the maximum benefit for biodiversity any variation of the agreed mitigation required by Natural England must not result in the reduction in the quality or quantity of mitigation/compensation provided.**

19. Provision of nesting bird boxes in accordance with the approved details.
20. No works to commence between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August in any year without prior survey. If nesting birds are found appropriate clearance allowed.
21. The proposed development to proceed in strict accordance with the submitted letter from Dunelm ecology dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 2014 and submitted drawing reference Job number 0673 drawing number PL01 produced by City Architectural Ltd.
22. Obscure glass to south east gable first floor window at Unit 6
23. Garages to be retained for parking of cars and not used as part of living accommodation
24. Withdraw PD Classes A, B, C, D, E, G, H and for means of enclosure and Domestic Microgeneration Equipment.

In order to give proper effect to the Board's/Committee's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Strategic & Economic Planning, in consultation with the Chair (or in her absence the Vice Chair) of Southern Planning Committee, to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.

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