

Application No: 14/5726C

Location: CLEDFORD HALL, CLEDFORD LANE, MIDDLEWICH, CW10 0JR

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for grade two listed barn to be converted from an agricultural barn into washing and sanitary accommodation for the transit Gypsy and Travellers. Office accommodation is to be provided for the permanent Warden and for the Cheshire East office staff.

Applicant: Cheshire East Council

Expiry Date: 18-Mar-2015

SUMMARY

The site has remained vacant for in excess of 10 years, and the use proposed does facilitate significant investment in the building, that may not otherwise come forward. Waiting for alternative uses leaves the building vulnerable to the type of incident that befell the Hall and led to its de-listing. Whilst works could be secured to halt further decline, this does not resolve finding a suitable end use for the building, nor would it address the security issues. It would remain highly vulnerable and at risk.

The conservation officer advises that, on balance subject to consideration of the additional detail that has been requested, the principle of reusing the site and securing investment of the scale to repair and convert the building is supported.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions and the satisfactory receipt of outstanding information.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks listed building consent to convert an agricultural barn into washing and sanitary accommodation for a Gypsy and Travellers transit site. Office accommodation is to be provided for the permanent Warden and for the Cheshire East office staff.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises the remains of the now de-listed Cledford Hall building and a number of smaller equally dilapidated buildings, a grade II listed redundant agricultural barn, and a wider area of open agricultural land. A large industrial building is located to the north east of the site and immediately adjacent to the west and south of the application site is predominantly farmland with three residential properties located on the opposite side of

Cledford Lane. The site is located within the Settlement Zone of Middlewich as identified in the Congleton Borough Local Plan.

RELEVANT HISTORY

06/1290/FUL - Conversion of existing farm buildings to 5 dwellings. Conversion of farmhouse to 2 dwellings. New garages and sewage treatment plant. Demolition of outbuildings – Approved 21.08.2007

06/1287/LBC - Conversion of existing farm buildings to 5 dwellings conversion of farmhouse to two dwellings, new garages, sewage treatment plant, demolition of out buildings – Approved 21.08.2007

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy

Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is relevant to the determination of the application.

Development Plan:

The Development Plan for this area is the Congleton Borough Local Plan First review 2004.

The relevant Saved Policies are:

- BH3 (Listed Buildings conversion)
- BH4 (Effect on listed building)
- BH5 (Effect on listed building)

The saved Local Plan policies are consistent with the NPPF and should be given full weight.

CONSULTATIONS:

Middlewich Town Council – Initially supported reuse of listed building, but then a supplementary statement raised the following points:

- Like many other Councils, the principle of Cheshire East Council meeting its statutory requirement for allocation of Gypsy and Traveller sites, especially a Transit site, is supported.
- In view of the absence of a highways report there are concerns about access to the proposed site.
- The security of the site and the site boundaries have yet to be addressed, especially with regard to fencing, security and access arrangements.
- There is concern that the site warden can be approached in office hours only, contrary to assurances that the site would be fully manned and staffed at all times.
- The accommodation and arrangements for the Site Warden are neither clear nor defined, as is whether the buildings are to be used for commercial operations or just for the Warden & site tenants.
- It is unclear if the provision is sufficient to ensure that enough Travellers can be accommodated on this site at any one time, and if this is to be only Transit site for the whole of Cheshire East or one of many.
- The effect on the development due to its Listed Building status appears detrimental and against Policy.

- There are concerns that the site is now deemed suitable when it was dismissed early in the Gypsy and Traveller Assessment due to its Listed Building status.

Bradwall Parish Council – Object on the following grounds:

- Access is unsuitable for the proposed use
- Route to the proposed site from Booth Lane crosses an identified weak bridge which has a 7.5 tonne weight limit
- Entrance to Cledford Hall is close to a bend which means that vehicles approaching from the east cannot be seen
- Increased volumes of traffic using the lanes of Sproston and Bradwall
- Not in a sustainable location
- The presence of transit groups will be likely to cause antagonism and conflict both with the different settled groups of the travelling community and the other residents of the area. Members of the settled travelling community in Middlewich have already voiced this concern and registered their objection to the application.

REPRESENTATIONS

A press advert was placed in the local newspaper and a site notice was erected.

Approximately 60 letters, and 2 petitions with around 390 signatures, have been received objecting to this proposal and the associated full planning application (14.5721C) on the following grounds:

- Outrageous cost (circa £4m) to house a few gypsy families
- Number of illegal encampments in Cheshire East (78 last year) would suggest the proposed site is too small to provide worthwhile solution
- Access road unsuitable for HGVs and vans towing caravans – weak bridge with 7.5 ton limit
- Number of occupants would overwhelm the local resident population
- Inappropriate use of Grade II listed building and taxpayers funds
- Middlewich already has the highest % of gypsies in the County
- Proposal does not wholly comply with policy SC7 in emerging local plan
- No net overall economic benefit
- Submission does nothing to reduce tensions between settled and traveller communities
- Remote location restricts occupants ability to integrate with settled community
- Occupants will be reliant on private car
- Visual impact of 2.4 metre high close boarded fence
- Impact upon living conditions of neighbours
- Detrimental to setting of listed building
- Impact upon listed building
- Peter Brett report identifies the site as not being suitable for Gypsy and Traveller use due to impact on listed building
- Cledford lane has no street lighting or footpath
- Guide to designing Gypsy sites advises that they should not be near refuse site or industrial processes – application site is very close to both.
- May result in trouble between rival travelling communities

- Impact on nature conservation
- When bypass is complete, Cledford Lane will be cut off from A533, resulting in a 5 mile trip to nearest shops and services
- Loss of property value
- Noise and rubbish pollution
- Caravans too close to each other, not required 6m apart
- Inadequate space for entry / exit of pitches
- Travellers prefer to have private toilet and shower facilities rather than communal building.
- HCV parking would be unsightly and would be detrimental to local amenity, a nuisance to neighbouring properties
- Lacks adequate screening and landscaping along boundary of the site.
- Caravans and tarmac are eyesores
- Loss of trees
- Increased traffic, and associated impact upon National Cycle Route 71
- No need for transit site
- Fear of crime
- Already long waiting lists at GP, hospital, etc. Schools are at full capacity.
- Illegally parked Gypsies and Travellers have previously caused trouble in local pubs and shops
- Encroachment into open countryside
- Health risks during demolition due to presence of asbestos

APPRAISAL

Listed Building

The list description for the barns is as follows:

“Outbuildings to Cledford Hall GV II Outbuildings to adjoining farmhouse. Dated 1822 on brick in longer range. Red brick, tile roofs. Long, narrow plan of two halves, the range to south with lower roof and more irregular form. Longer northern range of eleven bays, originally with eleven doors under round brick heads regularly spaced, some later blocked to for windows. Lower range with double doors under relieving arch, open roundels to loft above and with hinged doors under flat lintels below. Ventilation openings in gable end to side. Interiors: not inspected, but believed that the northern half retains contemporary roof structure. Included as a good dated range of outbuildings, with strong group value with Cledford Hall.”

Proposals

The conversion would entail major structural repair, including removal and re-laying of roofing tiles, replacing roof rafters and floor trusses to the first floor. Blockwork cross dividing walls would be constructed at ground floor to support the upper floor in the northern and central parts of the building, whilst the subdivided brick walling of the southern ground floor section would be retained, as would the exposed inner surface of the original outer wall (i.e. a supporting inner skin of masonry is not proposed). A pit in the central section of the building would be filled and significant underpinning will occur in the southern section of the building. A new insulated concrete floor and insulated roof are also proposed.

Externally the building will retain the vast majority of its openings with replacement of windows where those exist, retention of existing timber shutters (where achievable) and replacement as

appropriate and largely solid, plank doors and shutters for larger openings. The proposal is to have a window design to unify the fenestration for smaller and larger openings. Rainwater goods are to be in cast aluminium, whilst roof lights are to be inserted in the rear roof slope to service the upper floor accommodation in the southern part of the building.

Context

The barn reads as part of a group with the previously listed Cledford Hall. The fire at the Hall, and as a consequence its de-listing, have devalued its significance and therefore the potential to repair and bring it back into use; a fate that often befalls listed buildings damaged to this degree by fire. There is little motive or heritage rationale for it to be reconstructed as a consequence of that de-listing decision. From a built heritage aspect, that outcome is extremely unfortunate: the direct consequence and impact of a heritage crime against the asset. Therefore the group value has been lost.

However, the fact that it was listed in its own right with specific elements of significance mentioned, confirms the barn (excluding the largely collapsed smaller outbuilding adjacent to the Hall) is significant as a free standing asset in its own right. Consequently, the overriding objective must be to safeguard the presence of the remaining designated asset at the site for the benefit of future generations. But, the barn itself is in precarious circumstances. The originally intended purpose is no longer viable, given the developed and planned land use in the area and the loss of the Hall itself (and the associated use as a farm). It is also in a very poor state of repair, as is evident from the photos below and is deteriorating.

Principle

National advice indicates that the best and preferred use for the barns is that for which they were designed but this is not viable, as previously noted. Consequently, it is preferable for a Listed Building to have an alternative use provided that it is not unduly harmful to the asset or the contribution made by its setting.

The site has remained vacant for in excess of 10 years, and the use proposed does facilitate significant investment in the building, that may not otherwise come forward. Waiting for alternative uses leaves the building vulnerable to the type of incident that befell the Hall and led to its de-listing. Whilst works could be secured to halt further decline, this does not resolve finding a suitable end use for the building, nor would it address the security issues. It would remain highly vulnerable and at risk.

The conservation officer advises that, on balance subject to consideration of the detail, the principle of reusing the site and securing investment of the scale to repair and convert the building is supported.

Fabric considerations

Further information is required to demonstrate that the extent of work is the minimum necessary and the most appropriate strategy in conservation terms. But, the approach of creating new sub-dividing masonry walls in parts of the building leaving the outer skin of the building exposed and intact, selective underpinning and the repair and strengthening of roof structure and first floor is generally supported by the conservation officer. It is the extent of this, informed by the structural assessment that still needs to be verified.

In terms of fenestration, repair of the outer walls and the approach to the roof and lighting of the upper floor, there was a lot of discussion at pre-application and the approach is supported in general terms. But, it will need to be strictly controlled by condition.

RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

The majority of the comments received in representation are not directly relevant to the listed building consent application, and have been addressed within the report for the associated full planning application (14/5721C), which appears elsewhere on the agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

For the reasons set out above, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the satisfactory receipt of the outstanding information.

Application for Listed Building Consent

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A07LB - Standard Time Limit
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. A02EX - Submission of samples of building materials
4. A05BC - Details of means of support
5. A07BC - Materials to match existing building
6. A10EX - Rainwater goods
7. A17EX - Specification of window design / style
8. A21EX - Roof lights set flush

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