

Case Officer: John Gale

Recommendation: Refusal

Applicant: Mr Blackwell

Proposal: A single storey, connecting link between the garage and the original barn conversion dwelling.

Expiry Date: 8 February 2021



1. Relevant Features of the Site

- The application site comprises of a dwelling (barn conversion) and garage located in a field accessed off the B4035. The site sits in a remote rural location in open countryside. The wider field which the site sits in is bounded by existing hedgerows along all the field boundaries with some existing

mature trees. There are no notable site constraints relevant to planning and this application

- Whilst the building itself is not listed given the age, materials and local vernacular design of the barn the building is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.
- Windfarm Development, Development Consultation: Consult NATS On ANY Windfarm Development (All District) - Distance: 0
- Water Utility Company, Water Utility: Severn Trent Water - Distance: 0
- Aquifer, Details: Groundwater Vulnerability (Aquifers) - MINOR - Distance: 0
- Best and Most Versatile Land, Category: 3 - Distance: 0
- Radon, Percentage Chance: Percentage of homes at or above the Action Level (Class 5) 10-30% - Distance: 0

2. Description of Proposed Development

The proposed development is for a flat-roofed linking building between the existing barn and garage block. The proposals would have a footprint of 7.5m in width, between the two buildings, and a 4.6m depth. The height varies across the site of the link as the land the garage block on is higher than the converted barn, with a maximum height of 3.5m at the barn end and a minimum height of 2.6m at the barn end. The proposed linking structure would house a corridor with two rooms of it containing a study and a boot room/utility.

The roof is proposed to be a sedum covered green roof. The proposed design is largely glazed on the south elevation and would be constructed with oak framing and a vertical tongue and groove oak board cladding.

3. Relevant Planning History

The following Planning History is considered relevant to the current proposal.

Application: 12/00141/F Permitted 29 March 2012

Conversion of barn to dwelling

Application: 13/01552/F Permitted 14 November 2013

Resubmission of 13/00865/F - Alterations/extension to approved garage 12/00141/F.

Application: 14/00892/F Permitted 8 August 2014

Retrospective: Variations to approved planning consent 13/01552/F

Application: 20/01748/F Permitted 21 August 2020

Retrospective - Change of use of land and associated works to form a vehicular access and extension to residential curtilage associated with Heath Barn

The barn was converted to a dwelling following a 2012 permission, with two subsequent applications to vary the plans in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

Crucially the decision for the conversion of the barns included conditions restricting the further enlargement of the building and for the insertion of any additional opening in the building. This was done to '*safeguard the character and appearance of the existing building to comply with Policy H19 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan*'.

4. Pre-application Discussions

Application: 18/00122/PREAPP	Detailed Pre-App response sent	18 June 2018
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Extension to existing domestic dwelling

A proposal for a link between the two buildings was assessed under a pre-application in 2018. The proposals were larger than those under the current assessment, with a glazed corridor and two rooms in the gap between the two buildings.

The officer's assessment of the proposals concluded that they could not be supported because they entailed extension to the form of the barn and that this would be contrary to policy H19 of the saved Local Plan 1996.

5. Response to Publicity

This application has been publicised by way of a site notice.

The final date for comments was **27 January 2021**, although comments received after this date and before finalising this report have also been taken into account.

No comments have been raised by third parties.

6. Response to Consultation

Below is a summary of the consultation responses received at the time of writing this report. Responses are available to view in full on the Council's website, via the online Planning Register.

CDC CONSERVATION: Raise objections, with the following detailed comments;

Non-designated Heritage Asset

Barn in the countryside

Application Site: Heath Barn, Sibford Gower Banbury OX15 5HQ

Understanding the heritage assets affected:

Whilst this barn is neither listed or in a conservation area, it is a non-designated heritage asset. Isolated barns in the countryside are considered an important part of our visual landscape and they also help to tell the story of land ownership in the district. This barn can be seen from the B4035 road between Sibford Gower and Brailes on the brow of a hill in a rolling landscape with hedgerows looking west and is also visible looking east. It is also seen from Pound Lane in views to the north.

The historic cart barn is of simple linear form with a lower open shed to the east which was converted under 12/00141/F. Two-thirds of the existing large garage also dates from this time (the southern part which comprised a garage bay and a car port bay with storage) and was allowed on the basis that this would contain all associated domestic paraphernalia to avoid any overtly suburban features in the landscape. The garage block was subsequently extended to provide additional domestic accommodation comprising alterations to garage to provide home office/biomass boiler and wood pellet store under 13/01552/F and this also omitted the screening proposed as part of the 2012 application. In 14/00892/F retrospective variations were regularised which included reducing the space for the boiler, inserting a stair for two bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs and a much larger home office at ground floor with a 2-bay garage and no storage which was the primary purpose of the permission.

A subsequent Preapp was submitted in 2018 by the current applicant and whilst this also included for a long corridor along the south elevation and a link to fill the gap between the barn and the extended garage, the advice contained within is also relevant for this application.

Significance - Evidential, Historical, aesthetic and communal.

The isolated barn is significant in not having an accompanying farmhouse and is a testament to the enclosure of the land. It is of simple rectilinear form, traditional materials and details, with limited openings including the large former cart entrance.

Proposal: A single storey, connecting link between the garage and the original barn conversion dwelling.

Appraisal of issues:

The issue is extending the existing historic barn in the countryside to the recent garage. This is contrary to policy and Cherwell's guidance on barns. The work would also involve new openings in the gable of the non-designated heritage asset and the light spill from the glazed link would emphasise the physical link.

Cherwell's Design Guide for the Conversion of Farm Buildings:

'the character of a barn is derived from its original function as a working agricultural building, and therefore every effort should be made to retain the original simplicity of scale and form and to alter as little as possible externally and internally' and 'Extensions Most barns are large compared to the size of an average house In order to preserve the integrity, character and features, accommodation should aim to be contained wholly within the existing buildings In the rare cases where extensions are proposed they should be of traditional form such as simple lean-to outshots, continuing the downward slope of the main roof Domestic features such as porches will not be considered favourably and alternative solutions such as provision of internal draught lobbies should be considered.'

2018 Preapp extract from Conservation Officer's comments:

'The proposed development is considered to cause additional harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset of the original agricultural building and further erodes its character.

The proposed extension does not safeguard the significance of the main structure nor allow the continued use of the property in domestic use (it already has a sustainable use), but instead erodes the character of both the original building and

the new building (with the provision of additional openings). There is not considered to be any public benefit to the proposed development.

It is considered that the construction of the new garage building was the maximum that should be allowed on this sensitive site. Further extensions are not justified on this site and any ancillary domestic space should be contained within the existing footprint of the two buildings.'

Level of Harm: Less than substantial harm.

Recommendation: Refuse

7. Relevant Policy and Guidance

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 - (CLP 2031 Part 1)

- ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment
- ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement
- ESD15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment.

New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high-quality design. Where development is in the vicinity of the District's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that compliments the asset will be essential. *See page 117 of the CLP 2031 Part 1 for full details.*

Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (saved policies) – (CLP 1996)

- H19 – Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside
Proposals for the conversion of a rural building, whose form, bulk and general design is in keeping with its surroundings to a dwelling in a location beyond the built-up limits of a settlement will be favourably considered provided; its form is unaltered; the development would not cause harm to its setting; the special character and historic interest of the building remains; &etc
- C28 – Layout, Design and External Appearance of New Development
New development required to have standards of layout, design and external appearance sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development. *See page 120 of the CLP 1996 for full details.*
- C30 – Design of New Residential Development
Development should be compatible to the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the street scene. Development should also provide acceptable standards of amenity and privacy. *See page 120 of the CLP 1996 for full details.*

Other Material Planning Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Cherwell Residential Design Guide (2018)
- CDC Home Extensions and Alterations Design Guide (2007)

8. Appraisal

Principle of development

In Government guidance contained within the NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF sets out the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice for the planning system. It is clear from this that sustainability concerns more than just proximity to facilities, it clearly also relates to ensuring the physical and natural environment is conserved and enhanced as well as contributing to building a strong economy and sustainable communities.

Saved Policy H19 of the CLP 1996 is relevant in terms of local plan policy. This policy indicates that proposals for the conversion of a rural building whose form, bulk and general design is in keeping with its surroundings to a dwelling in a location beyond the built-up limits of a settlement will be favourably considered provided:-

- i). The building can be converted without major rebuilding or extension and without inappropriate alteration to its form and character;
- ii). The proposal would not cause significant harm to the character of the countryside or the immediate setting of the building;
- iii). The proposal would not harm the special character and interest of a building of architectural or historic significance;
- iv). The proposal meets the requirements of the other policies in the plan.

The principle here is in two parts; the extension of the non-designated barn conversion and the connection to the large outbuilding which would form a large non-linear whole.

The original consent and those that followed have restricted the permitted development rights to extend the converted barn further in order to protect the character and form of the building – in line with local policy H19 (detailed above). The proposals to extend the building by 35sqm (approximately 25% of the original footprint of the barn) would additionally encompass the existing outbuilding – very nearly doubling the original footprint overall. This would be in contrast to both the letter and the spirit of Policy H19.

Impact upon the non-designated heritage asset

The building is neither listed nor does it sit within a designated conservation area. However, as a traditional agricultural barn, it is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by the Council. Policy ESD 15 of the Cherwell Local Plan states that new proposals which affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss.

As noted by the conservation officer on the buildings significance '*the isolated barn is significant in not having an accompanying farmhouse and is a testament to the enclosure of the land. It is of simple rectilinear form, traditional materials and details, with limited openings including the large former cart entrance*'.

Whereas traditional timber cladding/constructed farm buildings in the district have horizontal timber boards, the proposals here are for vertical cladding. Whilst this ties

into the use of a similar style cladding on the existing garage/barn the material choice against the converted stone barn is

The proposed extension does not safeguard the significance of the main structure nor allow the continued use of the property in domestic use (it already has a sustainable use), but instead erodes the character of both the original building and the new building (including the provision of additional openings). No public benefit has been offered to outweigh the identified harm.

Design and impact on character of the area including the landscape

Policy ESD13 of the CLP 2031 states that development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. It goes on to state that proposals will not be permitted if they would result in undue visual intrusion into the open countryside or would harm the setting of settlements.

Paragraph 56 of the NPPF makes clear that: the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. This is reflected in Policy ESD15 of the CLP 2031 Part 1, which states that new development proposals should: be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions...contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness...(and) respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings.

Saved Policies C28 and C30 of the CLP 1996 reinforce this, with Policy C30(ii) stating: that any proposal to extend an existing dwelling (should be) compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the streetscene.

Guidance from Cherwell District Council's Design Guide for the conversion of Farm Buildings (2002) states that '*the character of a barn is derived from its original function as a working agricultural building, and therefore every effort should be made to retain the original simplicity of scale and form and to alter as little as possible externally and internally*', and that '*accommodation should aim to be contained wholly within the existing building...in the rare cases where extensions are proposed they should be of traditional form, such as simple lean to outshots, continuing the downward slope of the main roof.*'

The proposal to link the non-designated barn to the detached outbuilding would alter the layout and form of the existing building. The 2012-14 conversion of the building was sensitively carried out and has largely preserved the special character and linear form of the agricultural barn. Both the double height threshing opening and the formerly open single storey element has glazed units in the openings. Elsewhere the addition of domestic style openings has been kept to a minimum.

Policy H19 Cherwell Local Plan 1996 states that barn conversions should be done '*without major rebuilding or extension and without inappropriate alteration to its form and character*'. The creation of an additional link between the two buildings would in my opinion constitute an unnecessary alteration to the form of the original barn.

The proposals when taken cumulatively would result in a large single building, albeit with a subservient, green roofed linking element. The building would read as a single dwelling and would be distinctly more domestic in nature – as opposed to the current separate buildings of a rural nature and form.

The building is prominent in the landscape – albeit that some views are distant – as the only significant grouping of structures. The addition of the linking element would further tip the building from its origin as a single isolated barn to a conglomeration of domestic structures. It would appear out of character with the rural surroundings and harm the character of the area of high landscape value.

Residential amenity

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF includes, as a core planning principle, a requirement that planning should: always seek to secure...a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. This is reflected in Policy ESD15 of the CLP 2031 Part 1, which states that new development proposals should: consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space.

The Council's Home Extensions and Alterations Design Guide (2007) provides informal guidance on how the Council will assess proposed extensions to houses, including guidance on assessing the impact on neighbours. This includes assessing whether a proposed extension would extend beyond a line drawn at a 45° angle, as measured horizontally from the mid-point of the nearest habitable room window.

Though the extension would be of a significant scale, it is considered that it would not impact on the residential amenity of any surrounding dwellings due to its siting away from any boundaries – with the nearest residential dwelling over 350m away.

Highway safety

Policy ESD15 of the CLP 2031 Part 1 states, amongst other matters, that new development proposals should: be designed to deliver high quality safe...places to live and work in. This is consistent with Paragraph 35 of the NPPF which states that: developments should be located and designed where practical to...create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians.

The proposed extension would add significantly to the floor space at the dwelling, but the site would retain more than adequate parking provision and would therefore not impact on the highway safety of the locality.

Conclusion:

As noted above the extension and linking of the traditional converted barn is considered unacceptable in principle as it would be fundamentally changing the nature of the buildings from their present separate form to a single dwelling unit which runs contrary to Policy H19.

Furthermore, the proposals would harm the significance of the non-designated barn, which has previously undergone a sensitive and high-quality conversion of living accommodation – while preserving the original nature and form of the rural building. The proposals to add a flat-roofed extension in alien materials and design, con

The single large building proposed would add yet another layer of domesticity to the converted barn as viewed in the high value landscape. The cumulative impact of the conversion, the addition and of the large barn outbuilding and the present proposals would, in my opinion, lead to an unacceptable level of development within the sensitive landscape.

9. Planning Balance and Conclusion

The appraisal above, which is informed by the policy and guidance set out in section 7, finds the principle of both extension and linking of the buildings unacceptable in principle, that there would be harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset as a result of the development, with no public benefits to outweigh this harm. Additionally, the cumulative impact of the development to the existing buildings would result in an overly domestic and incongruous form of development which would harm the rural character of the area. The proposal is therefore considered to be sustainable development and, in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, planning permission should therefore be granted.

10. RECOMMENDATION

1. The proposal would result in a significant and adverse alteration to the scale and form of the former agricultural building causing harm to its rural character, contrary to the provisions of saved Policy H19 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996. Furthermore, by virtue of its isolated siting, increased scale and massing, and overly domestic design, the proposal represents inappropriate development in the open countryside contrary to Policies ESD13 and ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1, saved Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and Government guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Case Officer: John Gale

DATE: 08.02.21

Checked By: Paul Ihringer

DATE: 9/2/21
