

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22/03033/F

LOCATION: The Stables, College Farm, Main Street, Wendlebury, Bicester, OX25 2PR

PROPOSAL: The conversion and infill extension of equestrian stables to create a single residential dwelling

CASE OFFICER: Rebekah Morgan

ORGANISATION

NAME: Julian & Linda Pounds

ADDRESS: 7 Farriers Mead, Wendlebury, Bicester, OX25 2QB

TYPE OF COMMENT: Objection

TYPE: Neighbour

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

We have several concerns and strong objections to this planning application for converting the stables to a residential property.

Several of these we raised when the original proposal to convert the stables into a residential dwelling was first mooted a year ago and these have not been addressed by this revised planning application.

Our concerns and objections are as follows.

- **WHO IS THE BENEFICIARY OF THIS PLANNING APPLICATION IF IT WERE TO SUCCEED?**

EDGARS in their supporting documents clearly state that their client is The Thames Group, yet on the Application Planning Permission form the applicant details are Mr & Mrs Lewis.

As far as we can establish Thames Group is a dormant company (the latest company accounts stated no business activity took place in the previous year) which is wholly owned subsidiary of Health Transport Group SLU a limited company registered in Spain, which provides transport services to the healthcare sector. The Lewis's do not appear to be connected with The Thames Group (not currently listed as directors).

Our concern over this confusion is that the revised planning application contains provision for parking for 10 vehicles far in excess of what would be considered necessary for a 5-bedroom residential property and that the Health Transport Group provides transport services. The proximity of the major road networks North/South and East/West exacerbates this concern.

A serious concern is that we are aware that a building developer holds options on the land to the East/South East of the stables, and that this planning application is a Trojan horse to circumvent the planning rules and set a precedent for future developments.

- **FACTUAL ERRORS & INCONSISTENCIES.**

The application contains several factual errors and inconsistencies.

The supporting document refers to Wendlebury having a small number of facilities - retail shop, vehicle repair shop - which do not exist. In fact, we are aware that the village shop closed almost 40 years ago as it happened as we were in process of moving into Farriers Mead

The planning application document section on 'Ownership Certificates and Agricultural Land Declaration' shows that the site is not part of an Agricultural holding, however we believe would still be classified as agricultural use.

With reference to the supporting document Section 5 Proposed development
"5.11 In the west elevation the existing windows are retained and the existing large openings in-filled with full height glazing as is typical for such openings in a conversion. A garage is also created using timber doors.
5.12 There are minimal changes to the west elevation with the insertion of two new roof lights and a close boarded door"

The above issues lead us to the conclusion that either the applicants are not fully conversant with their planning application - which would be consistent with the assertion above that it may have been prepared with a third party in mind - or it has been prepared by someone with little knowledge of the Wendlebury community, which gives a lie to various assertions in the supporting documents about enhancing that community.

Although we have been able to identify these errors we are worried that there may well be other errors of a more technical nature in the submission which we are unable to identify.

- **BREACH OF STRICT PLANNING CONDITIONS IMPOSED ON THE ORIGINAL COLLEGE FARM DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

We moved into Farriers Mead prior to the College Farm development, and at that time there were stringent planning conditions placed on our property. We could not exceed the building line with any garden landscaping and the vast majority of the land was to be retained as paddock and could only be used for animal husbandry. Because of these restrictions we were extremely interested in the planning controls placed on the College Farm Development.

When consent was given for the development of farm buildings in College farm (the Stable Block, Cattle Byre and Tithe Barn), the Willows Court new residential properties and a new residential property between the Tithe Barn and the Stable block the conditions were extremely stringent.

The permission to develop the site for residential properties was SPECIFICALLY NOT GIVEN TO extend properties any further than the rear line of the new house's development.

In addition no access onto the agricultural land beyond Willow Court was permitted. This last condition was to ensure that no further residential development on this land would be allowed.

In EDGARs supporting documents for the application point 3.10 states
"... this application proposal is materially different because the proposal is to convert an existing building within the built-up limits of the settlement rather than within open countryside and therefore is compliant with policy Villages 1".

This is a totally spurious argument as planning permission would not have been granted for the original stable block without the undertaking and guarantees by the owners that the stables would not be converted to residential use.

As such this application should not be considered as an infill but as a new build of a residential property outside the built limits of the village.

The view expressed above is enhanced by the position of the case officer on the original planning application which stated that the application "could not be considered as limited infill and conversion"

The proposed conversion of the stables to a residential property totally flouts these conditions.

- **RENEGE ON UNDERTAKINGS**

Part of the conditions of the revised planning application for the stable block being granted was that the applicant was required to give an undertaking that the grossly over-specified stable block would not be used for any residential/business purposes. In hindsight this new application suggests that the original plan was a cynical means of circumventing planning regulations.

It is only 6 years since the stable block was constructed, this current application reinforces our belief that the stable block's construction was a 'Trojan horse' to bypass planning regulations.

It also casts doubt over the validity of any further undertakings given by the applicant regarding future developments on the site.

- **NEED FOR STABLE BLOCK REPLACEMENT**

The over specification of the stable block is borne out by the fact that we believe the maximum number of horses present has never been more than 3, normally there appears to be only one horse and a pony on site. There also appears to be only one dog on site, therefore there was never any need such an extensive stable block including stables, kennels, feed storage and horse box garaging.

Our concern is that there is no current application for a new stable block to replace the existing stable block if it is converted to a residential property. If the original (over specified) stable block was considered essential for the wellbeing of the animals kept by the applicant, it must be assumed that, if the change of use application is approved, at some stage in the near future there will be a further planning application for a new stable block of a similar size to the current block which will further intrude beyond the village envelope.

Based on the applicants current 'form' if such an application was granted it is not inconceivable that in 5 or 6 years or so time a further planning application to be submitted to convert that stable block into a residential property.

- **DANGEROUS PRECEDENT**

Although not our area of expertise, we believe this attempt to circumvent the planning policy represents a dangerous precedent.

If this development were to be approved it would create a precedent for others to also build outside the village envelope, and thus we would see a continuing creep of housing developments which would not be infill as the current planning regulations allow.

For example, all the houses across the top of Farriers Mead have more than enough land to support animal husbandry, our land exemplifies this. If this application is approved what is to stop us obtaining some livestock, applying for planning permission for housing for the livestock and, after a period of time, applying for planning permission to convert the building to residential property.

We have been approached on several occasions over the years by property speculators to sell them the land. If they were to obtain planning permission this would enable to build at least 6 residential properties on the land.

The granting of planning permission for the stables could lead to this being a possibility.

This especially worrying as we believe that a property developer already holds an option on the land to the East/South East of the College Farm development

- **CONCERNS OVER CONSULTATION PROCESS:**

Given that this application is so fundamental in the precedent that it creates for the whole of Wendlebury we are concerned that the application has not been widely opened for consultation
Indeed we are aware that notifications have not even been issued to certain properties directly affected by the application.

- **RUN-OFF, FLOODING, SEWERAGE.**

There are two issues here – one relates to Sewerage and the other to flood. Wendlebury village is in a flood area and its sewerage system is at full stretch. **Sewerage** – the sewerage system in Wendlebury is a gravity system eventually leading to the Pumping station close by the access lane from the proposed development. Most of Wendlebury is relative low lying and a rise in the water table has been known to cause a back-up in the sewerage outflows from residential properties causing effluent flooding. Although our property is on some of the highest ground in the village we still suffer from occasional blockages and back-ups due to the very shallow fall rate of the gravity sewerage system
The proposed conversion of the stables to a residential property has provision for 5 en-suite bathrooms and a cloakroom. Therefore there will be 5 baths and 6 toilets feeding into an already overstretched sewerage system. Since the proposed development is some 1.5 to 2 metres above the other properties in the College farm development and therefore the sewerage outflow will have a significantly higher flow rate than the sewerage outflow from the lower properties. The rules of Flow Mechanics are such that the effluent from the proposed development would have precedence over the effluent from the lower lying properties causing a potential back up.

Run-Off /Flooding. Although our property and the proposed development are not in the flood area the run-off from our land eventually drains into Wendlebury Brook which is prone to flooding, the proposed conversion of the stables to a residential property is on the roughly the same level as our property and thus will produce the same level of run-off. One area of significant flooding in Wendlebury is by the Pumping station which is adjacent to exit lane from the College Farm development. The level of flooding at this point is such that the main street is impassable. The proposed development will concrete over 361sqm of currently porous ground - approximately 45% of the footprint of the existing stable block - and as such will greatly exacerbate the risk of flooding/excessive run-off into Wendlebury Brook.

- **IMPROVING HOUSING SUPPLY.**

The submission states that “...the dwelling will make a small but valuable contribution to the current housing supply”. This is a spurious agreement one five-bedroom house probably selling for over £700,000 will make no difference to the desperate need for housing in Cherwell when what is needed is affordable housing for key workers and young families to prevent them having to leave the locality where they families live/commute significant distances to their workplace.

- **CAR PARKING/INCREASED TRAFFIC.**

The proposal for the conversion of the stables to a residential property includes a provision for car parking for 10 vehicles, which for a 5 bedroom property seems excessive to say the least.

In a time of a global warming crisis caused by the excessive production of CO2 and a government trying to reduce the amount of car use this seems to fly in the face of the claim in the submission that the development will have no adverse ecological impact.

The submission states "...the dwelling would only generate a low level of traffic along Wendlebury road". Ten vehicles would produce a significant amount of additional traffic on the lane leading from the Willows/College Farm development onto the Wendlebury Main Street.

Access onto Wendlebury main street is via a narrow (one car width) bridge over Wendlebury Brook.

Wendlebury main street is frequently used as a 'rat run' in the morning and evening. Such a relatively high number of additional vehicles attempting to join the morning/evening traffic could cause a serious tailback for the existing residents of the Willows/College Farm development causing them significant inconvenience.

- **WASTE COLLECTION.**

In response to the planning application form question "Has provision been made for the collection and storage of recycled waste" the answer was no. This is an issue since Cherwell DC provides for 4 distinct waste collection wheelie bins/containers – Garden/Green waste; waste for recycling; food waste and general waste