

Planning Statement

for

**Change of use of barn to dwelling
(revised scheme to 13/00930/F) and
erection of agricultural barn**

at

Haynes Barn, Sibford Gower

for

Mr and Mrs Finding

1. Development Proposal

1.1 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of a traditional barn to a dwelling. This is a revised application to that approved under 13/00930/F. Permission is also sought for the erection of a barn to serve the surrounding agricultural land that is within the ownership of the applicant. A separate statement relating to the barn accompanies this application.

2. Description of site and site constraints

2.1 The application site is in an isolated open countryside location and is within an area of high landscape value. A public footpath runs to the south and north east of the site.

2.2 The existing site comprises an existing redundant stone built traditional barn. The barn has two elements – the main threshing barn and a lean-to to its eastern side which is in a state of disrepair. The main threshing barn is of stone construction with a corrugated (not original) fibre cement sheeting. Dry stone walls provide some of the boundary treatment to the courtyard, although it is in various states of repair.

3. Planning history

3.1 Permission was granted under application reference 13/00930/F for the change of use of the barn to a dwelling with an attached timber garage. Conditions were subsequently discharged under 14/00269/DISC and 14/00285/DISC. This permission could be implemented and is a material consideration in the determination of the new application.

3.2 Since this approval the site has been purchased by the applicants. In reviewing the approved scheme and the details approved by condition, there are a number of elements which are considered to be undesirable, both in terms of meeting the applicants needs but also in terms of preserving the integrity of the existing traditional barn. A revised scheme is now proposed. The key external change compared to that previously approved is the design modification to the eastern wing.

4. Principle of development

4.1 Saved policy H19 of the 1996 Adopted Cherwell Local Plan relates to the Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside. This states that in such locations, the conversion of traditional rural buildings will be favourably considered provided certain criteria are met (i) – (iv). These are considered further below. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF also states that one circumstance where new isolated homes in the countryside will be permitted is where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancements to the immediate setting. Regard has also been given to the informal planning guidance titled 'Design Guidance for the Conversion of Rural Buildings'.

(i) The building can be converted without major rebuilding or extension and without inappropriate alteration to its form and character;

As part of the previously approved scheme, the case officer considered that the barn was in a good structural state. The previous application was supported by a structural statement which concluded that no major reconstruction was required. In the two years since this previous survey, there has been little material change in the condition of the barn. The previous approval recognised that some rebuilding was needed to the west gable, and this remains the case. It also recognised that the roof should be replaced, which is proposed in this scheme and would enhance

the character of the barn, back to resemble its original form. On the east side of the barn are the remains of a lean to. It was accepted in the previously approved application that this area of the barn should be demolished and should be rebuilt. This area of the barn is again proposed to be rebuilt as part of the now proposed development, and the design takes a slightly different form.

As approved, the east elevation was a new build element (replacing a former lean to). The design was a lean to with oak post detail and rooflights. In the north eastern corner the rear breakfast area wing stepped down. The stepping down of the ridge created a more domestic feel to the development. As part of the revised design, the ridge height is continuous and an oak framed pitched roof detail is also proposed. This still remains subservient to the main threshing barn, but it creates a more agricultural form with a pitch to better resemble the main barn. In overall floorspace terms, there is little change. The small additional area of infill covers the footprint of a previous piggery, the remains of which can be seen on site.

Having regard to criteria (i), it is therefore considered that, taking into account the previously approved scheme, the development would result in no greater rebuilding than that previously approved. Moreover, the eastern wing which has been approved to be rebuilt is now proposed as a more sensitive design and does not represent an inappropriate alteration to the form and character of the barn.

(ii) The proposal would not cause significant harm to the character of the countryside or the immediate setting of the building;

The overall changes proposed in this scheme have little material impact on the character of the countryside compared to the previously approved scheme. The proposed curtilage remains as previously approved and would have no greater impact on the character of the open countryside and landscape. The site is visible from nearby public footpaths, and

therefore the immediate setting of the building is publically visible. The stone courtyard walls are proposed to be retained/rebuilt as previously approved which retains the historic boundaries associated with the barn.

As part of the approved discharge of conditions, drawing 5569-08 (approved as part of the DISC application) approved a vast swathe of gravel both to the south and north of the barn. The extent of the gravel was excessive and although the barn is sited at a lower level than the footpath to the south, it does create a poor setting to the barn. As part of this revised scheme, the parking/turning area has been reassessed and consolidated to its logical position to the west of the barn, in order to provide access to the garage at the rear. This is considered to result in a visual enhancement to the immediate setting compared to the previously approved scheme.

(iii) The proposal would not harm the special character and interest of a building of architectural or historic significance;

Careful regard has been given to the Design Guidance for the Conversion of Rural Buildings. As part of the previous approval, existing openings were retained in order to respect the historic character of the barn. This included retaining the main wagon door opening. As part of this application, existing openings are retained and the historic integrity of the existing barn is therefore considered to be preserved. The design alterations to the eastern wing remove previously approved rooflights and create a simple addition which reflects the footprint of the original barn extension.

The previous case officer concluded that the retention of existing openings, along with the re-use of the original footprint to the east of the barn meant the scheme complied with this criteria and also paragraph 56 of the NPPF which requires good design. The same conclusion is reached with regards to the now proposed development.

(iv) the proposal meets the requirements of the other policies in the plan.

One of the key policies within the Plan, and key issues in the previous application, related to the ecological sensitivity of the site.

Pre-application advice was sought from Charlotte Watkins, Ecologist at Cherwell DC. On 20 October 2015, she advised that the approved mitigation (approved through various discharge of conditions) should be incorporated on the revised plans. She considered that it is unlikely that there would be much change on site with regards to barn owls and birds. With regards to badgers, Charlotte was satisfied that pre-commencement conditions to require a further survey to be carried out could be sufficient. It is the case that a further survey would be needed in relation to badgers 3-6 months before carrying out the development in any case and the applicants intend to carry this out at that stage. As can be seen from their statement supporting the agricultural barn, the applicants are extremely sensitive towards ecological preservation and enhancement.

On the basis of this pre-application advice, mitigation for bats can be carried out in accordance with condition 14 of the previously approved application. With regards to barn owls, the previously approved mitigation (condition 15) has been shown on the plans (14/00285/DISC). This includes the provision of a barn owl nesting box on a nearby mature tree. A barn owl nesting area has also been shown within the eastern gable of the barn. With regards to breeding birds, enhancement is proposed, as already approved (14/00285/DISC), with the siting of 3 nesting boxes on trees in the vicinity.

5. Other Matters

5.1 It is noted that County Highways raised no objections to the previously approved development. In this instance, there is no net gain in dwellings compared to 13/00930/F and no material change in terms of traffic likely to be associated with the proposed dwelling.

Access arrangements also remain the same. As such, it is considered that the development is acceptable in highways safety terms.

5.2 There are no nearby neighbours to be affected by the development.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Permission has already been granted under 13/00390/F for the conversion of the barn to a dwelling. The development would make use of a redundant barn and preserve its historic interest for the long term. The revised application continues to respect the agricultural form and character of the barn and preserves the character of the local landscape. The Council considered the previously approved scheme to be a sensitive conversion. The revised scheme represents an improvement to 13/00390/F and an enhancement to the immediate setting by the removal of large areas of gravel. The east wing design reflects the historic footprint of the barn and its design is simple and agricultural in form with the use of high quality materials. The development continues to make adequate provision for ecology and there is no material change with regards to highways safety or impact on neighbours.