

R04

F/TH/14/0958

PROPOSAL: Change of use of stables to dwellinghouse with the erection of single storey rear extension

LOCATION: CRABAPPLE FARM STABLES, WOODCHURCH ROAD,
BIRCHINGTON, CT7 0GG

WARD: Thanet Villages

AGENT: Design Plus (Kent) Ltd

APPLICANT: Mr Brent

RECOMMENDATION: **Refuse**

For the following reason:

- 1 The site is outside the built up area boundary of any settlement in an isolated location and, as such, represents an unsustainable and inappropriate form of development within the countryside, contrary to Policies H1 and CC1 of the Thanet Local Plan and paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

SITE, LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site lies on Woodchurch Road, accessed down a long driveway which serves Crabapple Farmhouse and the stables used by the equestrian centre. The site is within Woodchurch, located in the countryside to the north of Manston Airport, within a collection of properties with a mixture of Animal centres and kennels, individual dwellinghouses and riding centres. The development in the area is sparse, with no coherent character to the area.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Planning permission was granted for the erection of equestrian centre comprising indoor school, stables, barn and associated office, with the erection of a single dwelling where the occupation was to be limited to a person solely or mainly employed at the equestrian centre (94/0720). A subsequent application for amended details was refused, on the grounds that the size of the house proposed was excessive.

In 2004 an application for the erection of a detached dwelling to the rear of the stable buildings was refused on the following grounds:

"The application site lies outside the confines of existing villages and built up areas and as such the development of a detached dwellinghouse, barn, stable and garage would constitute development of fresh land in the open countryside, unrelated to local need, without agricultural or other rural justification, contrary to Policy CL1 of the Isle of Thanet Local Plan and Policies ENV1 and RS5 of the Kent Structure Plan, which seek to

concentrate development at appropriate locations within the confines of existing urban areas and rural settlements, therefore conserving and enhancing the special character, quality and functioning of the countryside."

A subsequent application was made in 2007 for a smaller 2 storey dwellinghouse with detached garage, barn and stable block which was refused by Thanet District Council and the subsequent appeal dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate as it did not respect or enhance the character and appearance of the surroundings, and was contrary to national and local policy to control development in the countryside.

Minor applications for single storey extensions to the dwelling on the site were approved in 2008 and 2013.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development would change the use of part of the stables to a three bedroom dwellinghouse with the erection of single storey rear extension. The proposal includes the delineation of a private garden area with a fence to the rear of the building. The dwelling would utilise the existing vehicular access, with off-street parking available in front of the stable buildings.

The applicant has submitted a supporting statement outlining that the dwelling is to be utilised by the applicant's daughter and family, who would also look after the privately owned horses within the stables.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Thanet Local Plan 2006

CC1 - Development in the Countryside
CC2 - Landscape Character Areas
H1 - Residential Development Sites
H4 - Windfall Sites
D1 - Design Principles
D2 - Landscaping
TR12 - Cycling
TR16 - Car Parking Provision
SR5 - Playspace
EP13 - Ground Water Protection Zone

NOTIFICATIONS

Letters have been sent to neighbouring properties, a site notice has been posted and an advert has been placed in the local newspaper. No comments have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

Environment Agency - Application has a low environmental risk, no comments to make.

Kent County Council Biodiversity Officer - "No ecological information has been submitted with this application. As a result of reviewing the data we have available to us (including aerial photos and biological records) and the information submitted with the planning application and the few photos provided by the planning officer we advise that the proposed development has limited potential to result in ecological impacts. Our main concern was the potential for bats to be roosting within the building which is proposed to be converted into a residence. However the photos with the design and access statement indicate that the building is in good condition reducing the potential for suitable features for roosting bats to be present. As such, on this occasion, we are satisfied that no ecological information is required to be submitted prior to determination of the planning application".

COMMENTS

This application has been brought to Planning at the request of Cllr. Roberts to allow Members to consider the individual characteristics of the proposed development and planning merits of the proposal.

It is considered that the main issues to consider in this application are the principle of the development and its impacts on the character and appearance of the area, the living conditions of neighbouring and future residents and the highways implications.

Principle

Thanet Local Plan Policy CC1 states that within the countryside permission will only be granted where there is a need for the development which outweighs the need to protect the countryside. The NPPF in paragraph 55 states that in rural areas housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and Local Authorities should avoid isolated dwellings within the countryside unless there are special circumstances. The proposed house would constitute an isolated dwelling within the countryside, being over 2.5km from the nearest settlement (Acol), with no public transport links within walking distance of the site and no footpath on Woodchurch Road. No local shops or amenities are available within walking distance of the site, with no shops at Acol, and the new dwelling would rely upon private vehicle use. The nearest centre by road is Westgate, approximately 3.5 kilometres away. Therefore the length of trips created by the new dwelling is significant, and, due to the position of Woodchurch within the district, I do not consider that the development would help to support services elsewhere within the rural area. The location of the site is not acceptable in terms of access to larger settlements, with no services in the surrounding area, and the development would conflict with the NPPF's aim to minimise the need to travel and maximise the use of sustainable transportation modes.

The building to be converted is vacant, however it is not dilapidated and it is set back from the road. Therefore the conversion of the building has no discernible visual benefits to the area, and the conversion to a residential dwelling would not lead to a significant enhancement to the setting of the building or the countryside.

For these reasons, it is considered that, in principle, the proposed development is contrary to Policies H1 and CC1 of the Local Plan. Furthermore, I do not consider that, for the reasons outlined, the development is supported by the NPPF.

Character and Appearance

The proposal would convert the equestrian storage building through new windows and doors inserted on the side and rear elevation, with a single storey pitched roof extension on the rear of the building. The external work to the existing building is minimal, however it would change the building to one of more domestic appearance and the associated residential curtilage and domestic paraphernalia will detract from the rural character of the area, albeit that its impact would be limited by the fact that the property is not highly prominent and is hidden from public view. Overall due to the limited views of the property the proposal would not significantly harm the character of the area, however as stated above the work would also not result in a significant enhancement of the building in visual terms.

Living Conditions

The proposed dwelling would be three bedroomed, with adequate layout and outlook for future occupiers. A garden area would be provided to the rear, offering an acceptable level of private amenity space for the dwelling. The proposed extension would not affect any neighbouring residencies due to the location of the building away from neighbouring properties.

Transportation

The new dwelling would be able to share the parking area for the stables, with the existing access sufficient for use by the new dwellinghouse. It is considered that the parking areas would be sufficient to provide parking for the demand that the development would create.

As detailed above in the principle section of the report, the development would necessitate the use of private motor vehicles for access to facilities and services. The location of the site is not acceptable in terms of access to larger settlements, with no services in the surrounding area, and the development would conflict with the NPPF's aim to minimise the need to travel and maximise the use of sustainable transportation modes.

Other matters

The applicant's agent has provided information of previous appeal decisions in the country where dwellings have been approved in countryside locations. It is an established principle in planning law that each case should be considered on its own merits, however in any event the general matters raised in those appeals have been considered within the principle section of this report, although the particular examples given differ from the proposal in terms of the location of sites in relation to main roads/public transport, distance from town centres and the high quality of new buildings.

The applicant has stated that the proposed dwelling is for family members who already live on site, which reduces the trips generated by the development. However, the proposal is for a new residential property, which could be sold off, rented out or occupied by anyone, in an unsustainable location and, whilst there is also a general need for housing with Thanet, the provision of one new dwelling is not considered to result in a discernible contribution to the Council's housing supply such to outweigh the harm to the countryside from the provision of an isolated home within an unsustainable location.

The applicant's agent has stated that the proposal results in economic benefits from the applicant's family's ability to reside adjacent the stables, to help look after horses. However, no functional need has been proven and no evidence provided to justify a dwelling at this location. Furthermore the main dwelling at the property was granted to serve as the managers accommodation of the equestrian centre in 1994, which satisfied the considered need justified by the application at the time in relation to the creation of the equestrian centre.

The applicant's submission also mentions the problems of operating the equestrian business remotely if the applicants daughter, who runs the business for the main dwelling on site, would have to move away. I have no evidence to suggest that a new dwelling is necessary to assist in the running of the equestrian centre, given that the dwelling on site was granted as manager's accommodation (and conditioned as such), and, as outlined by the Planning Inspector in the 2007 appeal, "just because the current occupier of Crabapple Farm wants to take a less active part in the equestrian operations at the site, but still reside in the house, cannot justify another dwelling".

Conclusion

It has not been demonstrated that there is any specific need for the proposed development to be located within the countryside, outside of the built confines. The site is in an unsustainable location, reliant on private transportation, with no discernible visual or economic benefits to the area. Therefore the application is recommend for refusal in accordance with Local and National policy.

Case Officer

Iain Livingstone

Title: F/TH/14/0958

Project name: Crabapple Farm Stables, Woodchurch, Birchington

Notes:

Scale: 1:2,500

Author:

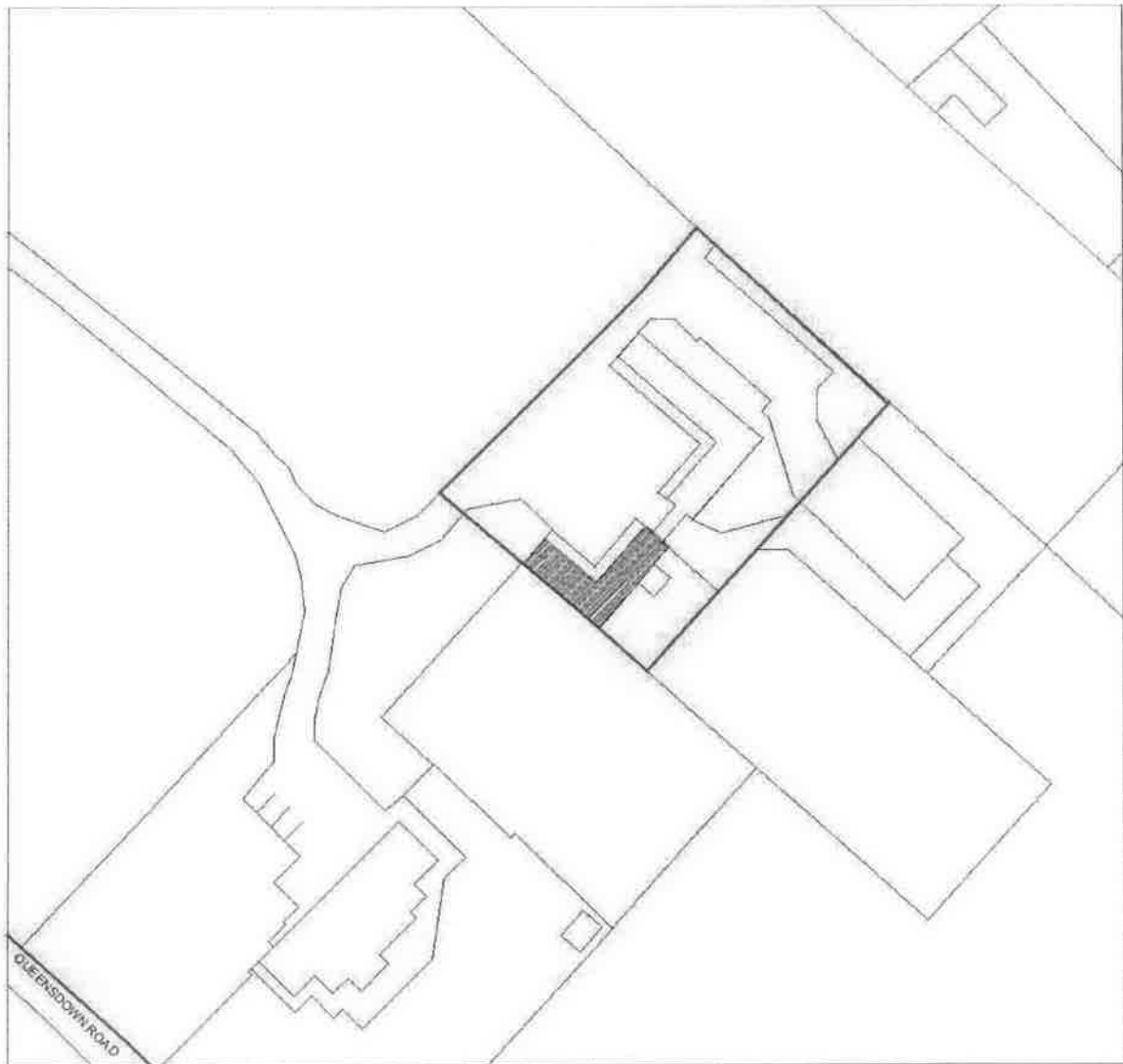


(c) Crown copyright and database rights 2015 Ordnance Survey 100018261

Legend

Crabapple Farm Stables, Woodchurch

F/TH/14/0958



F/TH/14/0958

CRABAPPLE FARM STABLES, WOODCHURCH

