

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
A. E. Beckett and Sons Ltd. 'A'	Demolition of two chicken sheds; conversion of the remaining two chicken sheds to provide 14 dwellings; creation of new access; creation of car parking area; provision of play area and other associated works - Rose Cottage, Seafield Lane, Portway, B48 7HN	Green Belt	11/0025-DK 21.03.2011

RECOMMENDATION: that permission be **REFUSED**.

Consultations

WH	<p>Consulted 18.02.2011. Response received: 15.03.2011. Recommends that the permission be refused for the following reasons:- The application site is inaccessible to the public transport network and does not make any attempt to provide alternative access to the site other than by car. The County Councils Development Control (Transport) Policy requires all new developments to be accessible to the bus networks and suggests that this should be within 250m walking distance and this application does not comply with this policy. The application does not provide for any cycle storage which is a requirement in the adopted design guide. The site is also located significantly far away from any local amenities. The accumulation of the lack of alternative means of access and distance to amenities will result in the development being unsustainable and reliant of car access. The applicant fails to comply with adopted policy and therefore should be refused.</p>
Wythall PC	Consulted 18.02.2011. No response to date.
WCC Minerals and Waste	Consulted 18.02.2011. No response to date.
WCC PROW	Consulted 18.02.2011. No response to date.
Ramblers Association	Consulted 18.02.2011. No response to date.
NE	Consulted 18.02.2011. Response received 21.03.2011. No objection.
WCC Education Services	Consulted 18.02.2011. Response received 21.02.2011. Contributions towards education services in the area are required. The schools affected by the proposal are Beoley First School, Alvechurch Middle School and Bromsgrove High School. The contribution for each of the 3 bedroom dwellings amounts to £3,310 and the total amounts to £46,340.
LP (Open Space)	The provision of 14 x 3bed properties generates a play space requirement of 1358m ² . The submitted plans show that the full amount of play space can be provided on-site in accordance with SPG11. However, I would recommend seeking the views of the Parks and Recreation Officer as to whether the Council would be willing to adopt this area. There may be maintenance issues associated with this play

space that is in a relatively isolated location. It should also be noted that the play space is not particularly well overlooked from the proposed dwellings with only one ground floor window located on the side elevation of the buildings. The Parks and Recreation Officer may also wish to comment on this matter.

If it is agreed that the open space will be provided on site then maintenance costs of £47,802 will be required. If no play space was provided on the site a commuted sum of £304,192 would be required for off-site provision.

Head of Leisure Services
BC

Consulted 17.03.2011. Response received: 18.03.2011.
An off site contribution is the most appropriate solution in this instance.

Consulted 18.02.2011. Response received: 04.04.2011.
Having reviewed the structural report and going on my experience of similar conversion works, it is my opinion that to convert the chicken sheds into dwellings will take a substantial amount of structural alterations and almost complete new inner structural form.

ENG
EDO

Consulted 18.02.2011. No response to date.

Tree Officer

Consulted 18.02.2011. Response received: No comment.

Consulted 18.02.2011. Response received: 02.03.2011.

1. There are no currently protected trees or trees worthy of protection that will be affected by this proposal.
2. The proposal requires the removal, repositioning and re-planting of 200m of mature native hedge line to create sympathetic sight line splays for the new access off the narrow feeder lane. This length of hedge would provide considerable habitat and amenity value and is an important feature within the landscaping of the area. The replanting should be like for like of native hedging species to ensure the new hedge establishes to again provide good habitat value and is in keeping with the nature of the area.
3. Due to the length of hedge to be removed it may well be worth advising / consulting Natural England to make them aware of the proposal.
4. This proposal offers ample opportunity within the landscaping for the planting of new tree stock which would both enhance and soften the development. Therefore I would request a full landscaping plan is submitted and every consideration is given for the planting of as many native trees as possible is made.

Although initially 200m of mature native hedge line will be lost it is in an area where there is other extensive hedge line cover. The hedge line should be replaced like for like species planting.

A full landscape planting plan needs to be submitted and the designer encouraged including as much tree planting of native species as possible.

This proposal is acceptable in relation to its impact on the exiting tree stocks.

Publicity

Site Notice posted 04.03.2011.
Press Notice posted 24.02.2011.

27 Comments received, summarized as appropriate:

- Intrusion into the precious Green Belt.
- There is no consistency in having a 40% rule for Green Belt extensions and then consider that 14 more homes are acceptable and less intensive.
- Erection of a residential estate in a rural area.
- There has been no consideration for local residents or the wider countryside.
- Loss of crop growing area to sewage and drainage.
- Significant increases in traffic levels and attendant pollution.
- Seafield Lane is incapable of taking additional traffic. There are no footways for pedestrians. The transport statement provided is not satisfactory.
- Increased risk of accidents and injuries. There have been a number of serious accidents both on Seafield Lane and the surrounding lanes. There are insufficient passing places on Seafield Lane.
- The structures are not capable of conversion. The roof height will have to be raised.
- Loss of the employment capability of the buildings.
- There are no nearby bus routes so all future residents will have to travel by car.
- The local schools are over-subscribed.
- There would be a negative impact in terms of highways and drainage.
- The suggestion by the applicant that the future residents will be able to find work at Oaklands Farm is without substance as the work available is often low paid and seasonal.
- The application refers to 'Twin Oaks' Billesley Lane which was only for 6 dwellings and in a better location in respect of the highway network. The applications are not comparable.

The site and its surroundings

The application site comprises a complex of four large poultry houses at Rose Cottage Farm. All of the former sheds are now redundant. Seafield Lane lies to the west of the application site and there is open countryside to the east. All of the buildings are oriented on an east west alignment with service structures such as feed hoppers present. Each of the buildings have two levels, the lower one was used for the collection of chicken waste and the upper one was for housing the chickens themselves. The lower level still contains ventilation holes which have wooden covers.

Proposal

The proposal is for the demolition of two chicken sheds; conversion of the remaining two chicken sheds to provide 14 dwellings; creation of new access; creation of car parking area; provision of play area and other associated works. The proposal is accompanied by a Bat Survey Report, Transport Statement and Structural Report.

11/0025-DK - Demolition of two chicken sheds; conversion of the remaining two chicken sheds to provide 14 dwellings; creation of new access; creation of car parking area; provision of play area and other associated works - Rose Cottage, Seafield Lane, Portway, Birmingham, B48 7HN - A. E. Beckett and Sons Ltd.

Relevant Policies

WMSS	QE1, QE3
WCSP	CTC.1, CTC.7, CTC.13, CTC.21, D.16, D.38, D.39
BDLP	DS2, DS13, C4, C27, C11, C27B, TR11
DCS2	CP22
Others	SPG1, SPG4, PPS9, PPG2, Circular 06/2005

Relevant Planning History

BR/545/1973	Erection of four poultry rearing houses. Granted.
B/2007/0101	Conversion of former chicken shed/barn to enable storage of historic/preserved vehicles relating to a registered educational trust. Withdrawn 02.04.2007.

Notes

The main issues to be considered in this application are the following:

- (i) whether the proposal would amount to appropriate development in the Green Belt;
- (ii) overall impact of the scheme and suitability of the buildings for conversion;
- (iii) the highway and sustainability issues associated with the proposal;
- (iv) the impact of the proposal on trees and biodiversity; and
- (v) Residential Amenity.

(i) Green Belt

The site is located in the Green Belt and therefore I consider that policies DS2 and C27 and BDLP and the advice of SPG4 and PPG2 are most relevant in determining the application.

The development is for the conversion of rural buildings and falls to be considered as acceptable in the context of policy DS2, provided that it meets the requirements of policy C27. It may be appropriate development in the Green Belt provided that the criteria for the conversion of rural buildings are fulfilled.

(ii) Suitability of the buildings for the proposed use and overall impact

Policy C27 states that any re-use of an existing rural building must not have a materially greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and that the building is of substantial construction, capable of conversion without major works or complete reconstruction. The form, bulk and general design of the scheme must be in keeping with its surroundings.

The scheme proposes the demolition of two chicken sheds and the retention and conversion of the remaining two into 14 three bedroom dwelling houses. The remaining buildings will have a greater separation than is presently the case. Members should note that the provision of 28 car parking spaces is proposed on the site of the removal of one of the sheds, but the additional access onto Seafield Lane is over undeveloped land. The proposed provision of public open space to the east side of the site will occupy land that

is currently agricultural and amounts to a strip 15m in width. I consider that the equipped play area and provision of public open space to have limited utility such that it could be described as 'public' in the ordinary sense of the word. I consider that this aspect amounts to the equivalent of a large curtilage extension in the Green Belt in direct conflict with criterion (a) of policy C27. The supporting statement prepared on behalf of the applicant (which is available for Members to view) cites the removal of the two poultry sheds as amounting to an enhancement which overrides any negative impact. I note that agricultural buildings can be built, usually without permission under Part 6, Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) as amended and are not counted as previously developed in Annex B of PPS3. I thereby consider that there is less planning gain in terms of enhanced openness than that referred to by the applicant. Members should consider the overall cumulative impact of the development comprising public open space, equipped play area, private gardens, car parking and attendant domestic apparel which amounts to significant urbanization to the detriment of Green Belt openness than would be expected of a conventional agricultural use.

I do not consider that the building to be converted is of considerable architectural merit. One of the clear objectives of SPG4 is to maintain the character and integrity of the original rural building. I would refer to paragraph 3.0 which states that a *'building should be capable of conversion to its new use, without the loss of those characteristics which make it worth keeping and conversions are least likely to be successful where:*

- Excessive original fabric is lost by the introduction of new openings;
- Unbroken walls are disrupted with new doors and windows;
- Interior walls are sub-divided by the introduction of floors and partition walls.

In the case of the latter point, the structural report states in paragraph 4.2 states that the *'limited headroom at ground floor together with the supports at very close centres would suggest that any alternative use would necessitate the removal of the upper level. The internal timber structure acts to provide support to the roof and removal of the upper level would require resupport to be introduced for the roof structure.* The report talks about frames which need to be erected within the existing structure. Members should note the comments of Building Control which are relevant to these points. The conclusion that the building is capable of conversion without substantial alteration is not accepted. Besides the structural information, it is evident that the roofing material will be changed from asbestos cement roofing to a slate effect roof and the existing timber cladding will be replaced by new timber boarding. There are a large number of windows and doors being inserted. Members should note that the applicant has referred to the 'Twin Oaks' scheme at Billesley Lane (Ref: B/2000/0214). I consider that this scheme is not directly comparable with that under consideration in that the existing roofing and walling material was retained and far more of the existing openings were utilized. The applicant fails to point out that there were subsequent applications at 'Twin Oaks' to 'replace roof sheeting and 2 additional windows in north elevation' (B/2001/0777) and 'alterations to roof including replacement roof sheeting and two new windows in north elevation - Barn nearest to Billesley Lane' (B/2001/0954) which were refused. I am confident that judgment on this application would not conflict with the decisions taken at 'Twin Oaks'.

11/0025-DK - Demolition of two chicken sheds; conversion of the remaining two chicken sheds to provide 14 dwellings; creation of new access; creation of car parking area; provision of play area and other associated works - Rose Cottage, Seafield Lane, Portway, Birmingham, B48 7HN - A. E. Beckett and Sons Ltd.

I conclude that the proposal under consideration would completely remove the characteristics of the existing buildings apart from their shape. The proposal clearly conflicts with policy C27 (c). I do not consider that the design of the conversion is in keeping with its surroundings which comprise a farmhouse and open countryside. There may be limited visibility from Seafield Lane but the design of the proposal would appear incongruent in the farm setting.

(iii) Highway and Sustainability Issues

Members should note that the application is accompanied by a Transport Statement which examines the capacity of the existing highway network and the impact of the proposal on it. There are comparisons drawn between the traffic generated by the previous use of egg production and the proposed residential development which will amount to 6 - 7 traffic movements in the peak hour. A Traffic and Speed Survey (dated September 2010) is also provided. Members should note the comments which have been received from local residents in respect of safety concerns on Seafield Lane, given the number of operating commercial uses in the vicinity. The proposal is not in a sustainable location in terms of services and there is highway objection in this respect. Policy T1 of the WCSP states that development should be located where access is possible by a variety of means of transport. The applicant has provided a response (received 28.03) to the highway objection. It is stated that pre application advice was broadly supportive of the proposal. The status of the 'Development Control (Transport) Policy' is challenged. The additional views of WH have been sought and Members will be updated on the comments received.

Ecological Issues

Policy C11 of the BDLP and the advice of PPS9 seek to ensure that protected species are adequately considered in all development proposals. The application is accompanied by a Bat Survey and there has been no objection from Natural England. Whilst there are no trees in the vicinity of the buildings, a large section of the hedge along Seafield Lane will be removed for the new access and visibility splays. The total length removed is more than 200m. The Tree Officer is not objecting to the proposal and whilst a new hedge of native species could be planted, the effect of the removal of the hedge has a locally negative impact on the amenity of Seafield Lane.

Residential Amenity

The only residential dwelling in proximity to the proposal is Rose Cottage Farm, which is approximately 30m from the elevation of one of the proposed conversions. With the removal of existing sheds, there is 30m separation distance between both of the proposed ranges for conversion which is adequate in the context of SPG1.

Conclusion

Members should note that the applicant has agreed to a Unilateral Undertaking to provide the education contributions and the management arrangements for the proposed public open space. It complies with policy DS11 on that basis.

11/0025-DK - Demolition of two chicken sheds; conversion of the remaining two chicken sheds to provide 14 dwellings; creation of new access; creation of car parking area; provision of play area and other associated works - Rose Cottage, Seafield Lane, Portway, Birmingham, B48 7HN - A. E. Beckett and Sons Ltd.

Whilst the removal of two chicken sheds would enhance openness, the planning benefits arising are otherwise limited. The site is not in an accessible location and the buildings do not lend themselves to conversion without substantial structural intervention and alteration. I am mindful of the appeal decision on Lea End Farm (Ref: B2007/0546) in which the Inspector considered that the building was structurally capable of the conversion but the alterations proposed were extensive. This applies equally in this case and the proposal does not accord with the development plan.

RECOMMENDATION: that planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. The buildings are not suitable for the residential use proposed without significant structural and material alteration. As such, the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Very special circumstances do not exist to outweigh the harm that would be caused. Thereby the proposal is contrary to policies DS2 and C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan (2004) and the advice of Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4 (Conversion of Rural Buildings).
2. The proposed development would be located outside of the urban area in an isolated position which would not be well related to existing public transport links. It is likely that residents of the site would be highly dependent on the private car to travel to and from the site. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies SD4 and T1 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan (2001) policy DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan (2004) and the provisions of PPG13 (Transport).