

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Date
<b>M Ashwin 'B'</b>	Conversion of existing brick built bull pens to form eleven dwellings at Robin Hill Farm, Stoke Prior with associated parking and access - Robin Hill Farm, Hanbury Road, Bromsgrove, B60 4DW	Green Belt	<b>11/0127-DK</b> 27.05.2011

**RECOMMENDATION:** that permission be **REFUSED**.

### Consultations

WH	Consulted 08.03.2011. Response received: 11.05.2011. No objection subject to conditions.
Stoke PC	Consulted 08.03.2011. Response received: 05.04.2011.  No objections - Councillors are of the opinion that the development will provide a substantial improvement to a currently derelict site. There are concerns regarding the ingress and egress of vehicles on a particularly dangerous and busy stretch of Hanbury Road.
LP (Open Space)	Consulted 08.03.2011 Response received 25.03.2011 Due to the size of the above scheme the proposed development would need to contribute towards play space in accordance with SPG11. The proposal for 2 x 1bed, 7 x 2 bed and 2 x 3 bed properties generates a play space requirement of 803m <sup>2</sup> . The current plans highlight no areas of on-site open space and SPG11 recommends that on-site areas of open space should be a minimum of 1000m <sup>2</sup> in size. On this basis it is recommended that the open space should be provided off-site. The commuted sum for the development would be £179,872. It is recognised that a contribution of this size may impact on the viability of the scheme and therefore it maybe appropriate to negotiate a lower figure if robust justification is provided by the applicant.
WCC PROW	Consulted 08.03.2011. Response received: 23.03.2011. The proposal is adjacent to Stoke Prior Bridleway 511 (SP-511) and the applicant has not identified it in their plans as required in Circular 412/2008. However, it is noted that the section of bridleway is to be constructed to adoptable standards and there should be no detrimental affect on the public right of way as a result of the development.
Ramblers Association	Consulted 08.03.2011. No response received.
NE	Consulted 08.03.2011. Response received: 21.03.2011. No objection.
WWT	Consulted 08.03.2011. No response received.

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CLIMCHG	Consulted 08.03.2011. No response received.		
ENG	Consulted 08.03.2011. Response received 14.03.2011. No objection subject to conditions relating to storm and foul water drainage.		
BC	Consulted 08.03.2011. No response to date.		
EHO (Contaminated Land)	Consulted 08.03.2011. Response received: 25.03.2011. No objection The proposal does not appear to include any groundworks or new build areas. In light of this but considering the sites previous agricultural use I recommend that a condition is attached to any consent granted to deal with the situation should contamination be discovered during the development.		
WCC Education Services	Contributions towards education services in the area are required. The schools affected by the proposal are Stoke Prior First, Shared Aston Fields, St John's Middle and South Bromsgrove High School. The education contribution required on the basis of 9 x 2/3 bed houses is £18,315.		
Publicity:	Site Notice posted 21.03.2011. Expires 11.04.2011. Press Notice posted 17.03.2011. Expires 07.04.2011. 3 letters sent 08.03.2011. Expire 29.03.2011. 4 comments received summarized as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally support the proposal since the existing buildings are a security risk. Two large barns will be taken down and the asbestos sheets will be replaced</li> <li>• Object to the proposals. Conversion to residential accommodation seems to go against every planning policy document about development in the Green Belt, the Draft Core Strategy, SPG Note 4, PPG2 and PPS7. Avoncroft Museum have plans to develop the wildflower meadow as a public amenity. The heightened roof lines, the extensions to blocks 3 and 4 and the incursion of residential gardens into Green Belt land would have a detrimental impact on the setting of the meadow. Bournville Village Trust should have been notified.</li> </ul>		

### The site and its surroundings

The application site comprises a complex of single storey brick buildings with asbestos roofs. The site is on the east side of Hanbury Road The majority of the buildings are the former bull pens with a tack room, office and two agricultural buildings, both of which are largely open. The site is now entirely derelict but

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evidence of the previous use subsists. There is a large detached house to the south and two semi detached properties to the north. There are open views to the south and east and an area of hardstanding leading south from the buildings connecting towards the former vehicular entrance.

### Proposal

The proposal is for the conversion of existing brick built bull pens to form eleven dwellings with associated parking and access. The scheme consists of 4 blocks of development, numbered 1 – 4 with block 2 at right angles to the blocks 1 and 3. Block 1 will contain 4 dwellings, blocks 2 and 3 will each contain 2 and block 4 will contain 3 residential units.

### Relevant Planning History

P10/0022 Proposed conversion of existing Bull Pens. Pre application advice.

B/2003/1169 Conversion of existing farm building into changing rooms, construction of two football pitches and associated car parking (as amended by plans received 20.11.03). Refused 26.06.2004.

### Relevant policies

WMRSS	QE1, QE3.
WCSP	T1, CTC1, CTC7, CTC13, CTC21, RST3, D16, D38, D39.
BDLP	DS2, DS13, C4, C27, C11, C27B, TR11.
Others	SPG1, SPG4, PPS9, PPG2, Circular 06/2005.
Draft CP2	CP22

### Assessment

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 protected species
- (v) Residential Amenity

#### (i) Green Belt

The site is located in the Green Belt and therefore I consider that policies DS2 and C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan (BDLP) and the advice of Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4 (SPG4) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (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 (largely open) agricultural buildings and the conversion of the remaining buildings in the complex into 11 dwellings. The material impact on the Green Belt needs to be considered against the current situation on the site. The existing and proposed block plan would appear to indicate that there would be a substantial improvement to the openness of the site arising from the removal of two large agricultural buildings on the existing block plan. However, Members should note that both of these buildings are corrugated open sided structures and their removal does not have as significant an impact as the existing block plan would indicate.

The buildings will be accessed from Needle Mill Lane where there is an existing access between blocks 1 and 2. The rear gardens serving block 1 are located in a position enclosed by the western boundary of the site and the same is true of those serving block 2. However, in the case of blocks 3 and 4, there are gardens proposed 15m and 26m in depth. In the case of the latter, this will occupy the area of hardstanding currently occupied by the open hayshed. The rear gardens proposed for block 4 will result in an encroachment into an area that is currently undeveloped. Members need to take a balanced view and for the most part the scheme will occupy the footprint of lands already with concrete hardstanding. On that basis, I do not consider that there is significant conflict with criterion (a) of policy C27, provided that the remaining criteria of the policy can be fulfilled. I take into account the removal of the hardstanding leading to the south of Robin Hill and consider that this is a modest enhancement of the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

Members must carefully consider whether the buildings are capable of conversion *without major works or complete reconstruction* (emphasis added) as required in policy C27 (c). There is a structural report to support the application. All of the blocks are covered in cement fibre corrugated sheet roofing on steel purlins and latticed roof trusses. The survey concludes that the walls are capable of carrying the loads required for residential accommodation. Paragraph 3 on Page 4 of the survey states that the corrugated cement fibre sheeting, with intermittent translucent roof lights *will have to be replaced*. I would concur with this view following the site visit.

The existing buildings have a linear form and generally low height and are reasonably well positioned in respect of each other to make a proposal for residential use feasible. However, besides the issue of the roof structures, the existing buildings have limited openings and apertures which mainly consist of doors in pairs interspersed by narrow windows. Crucially, the elevations opposite these openings is almost always free of any openings.

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

The proposed development would breach all of these requirements. In the case of Block 1 (SW Elevation), there are 9 openings where only two exist at present. There appears to be no evidence of pre-existing blocked up openings on this elevation. In the case of block 2 (SE elevation), there are 7 new openings proposed on the range closest to the boundary with Robin Hill. The pattern is repeated on the NE elevation of block 3. Block 4 currently has a high wall enclosing it on the NE side which would have been outdoor pens for the cattle and date to a later time than the rest of the complex. The pens are still partially enclosed with gates and there is access to the covered bull pens. The proposed development seeks to provide three projecting wings into this space from the covered bull pens. I consider that this amounts to substantial rebuilding and could not accord with policy C27. The applicant has been advised of these points and whilst amended plans have been received, there are very limited amendments and none which overcome the objections raised.

Members should note the representation received which referred to the increase in the pitch of the roofs of the buildings. The increase is from approximately 1.7m as existing to 3.2m in the proposal represents a substantial increase taking the scale and number of blocks into account. The introduction of first floors and rooflights further conflicts with the advice of SPG4 as outlined above. The increase in the pitch of the roofs would require building up of the gable walls. In summary, the buildings would require major works to make the scheme possible, especially in respect of the roof structures and the level of alteration required to the rest of the buildings would be extensive.

In terms of criterion (d) of policy C27, I consider that the design, bulk and form of the conversion are generally in keeping with their surroundings which are the open countryside and a number of red brick residential properties. The materials to be used could be conditioned in any event. These points do not overcome the objection in terms of the level of alteration needed. They have been raised with the applicant and a Planning, Design and Access addendum has been received 09.05.2011.

Pages 6 – 10 of the addendum recognize the conflict with policy C27 in respect of the level of alteration proposed. It is the applicant's view that the changing of the roof materials would amount to a visual enhancement more in keeping with local building styles. In terms of the enclosure of the rear of block 4 with single storey extensions, this is to avoid new openings being visible from the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 3.14 of PPG2. The advantages of the scheme are outlined and include:

- The removal of large areas of hardstanding and the steel barns
- Re-roofing to remove the potentially harmful asbestos cement
- Introduction of native hedgerows
- Preservation of the historic link with the Croft Trust who funded the farm buildings in 1948

The point raised about the removal of the large barns has been addressed previously. I accept the point that the existing roofing material would be potentially hazardous for human occupation but the policy is clear that this level of rebuilding is not acceptable. The point could be raised in many similar schemes. The fact that the roof materials are unsuitable point out that the buildings, as they stand, do not lend themselves to conversion without substantial alteration. Whilst the buildings are in the form of traditional barns (despite the roof materials), I do not consider that they have any significant architectural merit in their own right and are utilitarian in character. There are no amendments provided or no additional information in the addendum report such that the scheme is acceptable in planning policy terms. Thereby, the proposal must be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

(iii) Highway and Sustainability Issues

Members should note that the Planning, Design and Access Statement addendum (Received 09.05.2011) contains additional information in respect of sustainability. The applicant contends that the proposed conversion is wholly in accordance with the principles set out in both policy DS13 and PPS1. The bus stops for the 140 and 141 services are located close by on Hanbury Road. Members should note that whilst the site is located in the Green Belt, and there are more sustainable locations, the site is close to the urban edge of Bromsgrove and the transport links are reasonable for a rural location. There is no objection from WH and I conclude that the proposal would conform to policies T1 of the WCSP and TR11 of the BDLP.

(iv) 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 an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and A Nocturnal Bat Survey; there has been no objection from Natural England. I do not consider that the proposal conflicts with policy C11 or with the advice of Circular 06/2005.

(v) Residential Amenity

There are residential properties to the north and south of the application site, 39/41 Hanbury Road and Robin Hill respectively. There are first floor side windows on both

of the adjoining properties. There is approximately 15m between Robin Hill and the rear windows of Block 2. There is a substantial fence and I do not consider that the window is a main living room; thereby there would be limited impact on residential amenity. There is also a 5m separation distance between block 3 and the private garden at Robin Hill. There are no windows in the gable elevation of Block 1, which would result in a loss of amenity to 41 Hanbury Road. However, the boundary between this property and Plot 1 of the scheme would need to be enhanced. This is achievable and there is no significant conflict with SPG1.

#### Other issues

There is a public bridleway along Needle Mill Lane to the SW of the application site and Members should note the comments of WCC Public Rights of Way on this matter. Overall, there is no conflict with the requirements of policy RST3 of the WCSP. There is no objection from the Drainage Engineer or Environmental Health, subject to conditions.

Members should note that the scheme requires contributions to be provided for education and public open space in accordance with Circular 05/05. In this instance, I consider that an offsite contribution for public open space is preferable. However, the applicant has suggested providing 1000sqm of Public Open Space in the paddock to the NE of the application site and a management company would be created to manage the public open space. The paddock lies outside the application boundary but is in the ownership of the applicant. This is not an ideal arrangement and has the effect of Green Belt encroachment, further conflicting with policy C27. There is a stable identified on the proposed block plan which forms no part of the application and should be discounted in the consideration of the scheme. The applicant has agreed to provide a Unilateral Undertaking to provide the education contribution totaling £18,315. This has not been received to date. The previous application on the site for a recreational use of the land (B/2003/1169) is not directly relevant since it involved the demolition of most of the buildings and their replacement with a car park and was refused because of inappropriate development and inadequate access.

#### Conclusion

The proposed development will provide eleven dwellings through the conversion of existing buildings. It will result in the removal of two open agricultural buildings. Whilst the arrangement of the buildings can be retained, the level of re-building and alteration proposed is extensive and well in excess of what would be considered acceptable as the conversion of a rural building in accordance with policy C27 and the advice of SPG4. The removal of hardstanding and the agricultural buildings do not outweigh the conflict with the development plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATION** that permission be **REFUSED**:

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

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contrary to policy D.16 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan (2001), policies DS2 and C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan (2004) and the advice of Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4 (Conversion of Rural Buildings).