

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
<b>Ms. A. Hawker 'A'</b>	Conversion of barn into living accommodation ancillary to Cornerstone.  Adjacent to Cornerstone, Cofton Church Lane, Cofton Hackett, Rednal, Birmingham, B45 8BB	GB  Curtilage LB	<b>11/1031-SG</b> 03.04.2012

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

### Consultations

WH Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 27.01.2012 - no objection.  
Cofton Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 03.02.2012 - no comments received.  
Hackett PC  
EHM Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 27.01.2012 - no objection.  
SPM Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 27.01.2012 - The site is located outside the residential area of Cofton Hackett and is located within the designated Green Belt and therefore policy DS2 and S9 of the Bromsgrove District Council Local Plan, and PPG2 all apply.

A change of use can be acceptable within the Green Belt where the change in use causes no additional harm to the openness of the Green Belt. As the proposal involves a conversion in a rural setting, PPS7, SPG4 and policy C27 of the Bromsgrove District Council Local Plan are relevant and should be considered.

The views of the Highways Engineer will be of relevance in relation to surrounding highway capacity and sustainability issues, together with PPG13 Transport and policy DS13 Sustainable Development of the BDLP.

TO Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 03.02.2012 - no objection subject to conditions.  
EH Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 03.02.2012 - the applications should be determined in accordance with the national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.  
BCO Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 03.02.2012 -  
A building regulations application will be required for the works.  
1. Structural Engineers report will be required for the existing foundations to check the suitability for the increased load from the roof design.  
2. The foul drainage outfalls to be confirmed.  
3. The storm drainage to be taken to soakaway pits.  
4. Bedroom Windows 5 and 6 need to provide a means of escape area of 0.33m sq. Therefore an unobstructed clear opening of 450 mm x 750mm opening light will be required per bedroom.  
CO Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 27.01.2012 -  
The property comprises a small barn within the grounds of the Grade II\*

listed house previously known as Cofton Hall, and is therefore to be treated as a curtilage listed building.

The guidance on the conversion of barns and other rural buildings is contained in SPG4 'Conversion of Rural Buildings.' Section 2.5 b of the guidance states 'The building should be large enough for the proposed use without the need for significant enlargement or alteration.' Raising the roof to accommodate another floor is a significant alteration. The applicant needs to consider whether a first floor can be created without doing this, perhaps inserting it at the level of the existing hayloft, or just keeping the living accommodation to ground floor level. Raising the roof will significantly alter the appearance of the building. It will be an obvious alteration as it will be very difficult to match the bricks adequately. Section 2.5 states 'Where an existing building is dilapidated, the quality of the original building can be erased where substantial new work is required. It is not the aim of the policy to allow conversion schemes where substantial rebuilding is necessary.'

The main characteristics of Worcestershire Barns are their simple shapes, limited number of openings, solid dominates over voids, and there is an absence of over elaboration. The proposed scheme undermines a number of these characteristics.

It is proposed to insert two dormers in the rear elevation, Section 3.2 of PPG 4 states that 'Large unbroken roof slopes are often a characteristic feature of agricultural buildings. These should be respected especially as they are often seen at a distance and can dominate elevations. New roof openings will normally be opposed; dormers and upstanding roof lights can bring about a significant change in the character of a farm building.' Conservation roof lights have been proposed for the front elevation and these should be as small as possible.

Large patio doors are proposed for the rear elevation where there are currently no openings except for some traditional ventilation holes in a diamond shape. In addition a further window opening is proposed at the other end of this elevation. Section 3.3 of PPG4 states 'Agricultural buildings are characterised by a few window and door openings. The re-use of existing openings is favoured, additional doors and windows should be kept to a minimum and reflect existing patterns. New windows and door openings should preferably be located on the 'inside' elevations away from the public view. Window and door frames should be painted/stained a dark colour to decrease visual impact and should be recessed behind the main face of the brickwork.' The rear elevation is the 'outside' face of the building as this side faces the main driveway, while the other side faces neighbouring farm buildings. The insertion of patio doors would be inappropriate, resulting in a domestication of the building. Possibly a window could be inserted here instead, there is already one window opening, but the applicant has proposed an opening at the far end of this elevation. I consider three windows on this elevation would be unacceptable and should be kept to two.

The window on the south east gable should be replicated if it cannot be repaired.

Finally the applicant has proposed to replace the main barn doors on the rear elevation with a door and wood panel, therefore maintaining the opening itself. Again I consider this will result in a domestication of the barn. There is no specific guidance on barn doors in the guidance, but there is guidance in respect of wagon arches which I think can be applied here. Section 3.4 states that 'wagon arches should be fully glazed..... If glazing is used, the vertical dimension should be emphasised with no obvious signs that the conversion forms two floor levels.' The glazing of wagon arches can often provide illumination to the main internal spaces of the building and borrowed light to other rooms.

In addition to considering applications against local guidance, local authorities need to consider them against national guidance, and in particular PPS5. HE 7.5 of PPS5 states that 'Local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. The consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use.' As this proposal would appear to undermine much of the barn's recognised character, I do not consider that it will make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.

I would therefore have to recommend that this application is refused.

ENG	Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 27.01.11 - no objection subject to conditions.
RA	Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 27.01.2012 - no comment.
WCC(PROW)	Consulted 13.01.2012, expired 03.02.2012 - no comment.
WCC(CA)	Comments received 06.02.2012 - no objection subject to conditions.
Publicity	8 letters sent 20.01.2012 expires 10.02.2012. Site notice posted 18.01.2012 expire 08.02.2012. Press notice 27.01.2012 expire 17.02.2012.

3 objections received -

- This barn conversion will allow further multi occupancy property in the area it is not for use as ancillary to a residential house.
- The proposal will increase the transitional population in the local area affecting its character.
- The large post mature beech trees adjacent, and so close that they could pose a risk to the inhabitants of the conversion.
- The barn is within the curtilage of a listed building, raising the roof of the barn and putting dormers will change character of the barn.
- Concerned that adjacent barns may request similar dormers and raising of roof once precedent is set leading to change in character of the area.

- Proposed changes to the barn are out of keeping with its location; in particular the significant increase in elevation of the roofline would be unsympathetic to its listed character and the surrounding area.
- The intended use of the building is not viable regarding the impact on the fabric, setting and character of the building.
- The proposed height of the building and windows on its north elevation will have a negative impact on my privacy and enjoyment of my property.
- The residential use would have a significant negative impact on the surrounding trees.
- The proposal would fundamentally alter this historical setting especially with regard to the elevated roof line.
- A dwelling would have a major, deleterious impact on this fairly unique wildlife habitat.

### The site and its surroundings

Cornerstone, formally Cofton Hall, is a detached manor house located at the end of a long drive, south-east off Cofton Church Lane. It sits within a 1.98 hectare site which includes a large number of mature trees adjacent the drive. The house was Grade II\* listed in 1952. The present owners of Cornerstone are the Jesus Fellowship and the building is used as a Christian Community. There is a small brick built barn located within the grounds of the listed house which is the subject of this application. By virtue of its siting within the ground of Cornerstone, the barn constitutes a curtilage listed building. The barn consists of three rooms with a hayloft over the middle room. There is an informal track between the main house and the barn. According to the Design and Access Statement the barn is indicated on the 1884 map of Worcestershire. Adjacent the barn is a timber shed with a roof structure supported off timber posts and enclosed with makeshift infill walls. The nearest residential properties to the barn are Cofton Hall Farm 32 metres to the east and Beech Coppice, a converted rural building, which is 21 metres to the north.

### Proposal

It is proposed to convert the barn into living accommodation and raise the height of the building to include a first floor. A kitchen, lounge and w.c. are proposed on the ground floor with 2 bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor. The height of the building would be increased by 0.75 metres by raising the walls of the barn with new brick. A new slate roof is proposed to replace the existing tin and asbestos roof. It is proposed that the living accommodation would be used for ancillary accommodation to Cornerstone, which is a community house. Cornerstone is classed a house in multiple occupancy and the barn conversion would be used for permanent residents linked to the main community house providing some independent facilities.

### Relevant Policies

WMSS	QE1, QE5, QE6
WCSP	SD.2, CTC.1, CTC.19, CTC.21, D.16, D.38, D.39
BDLP	DS2, DS13, C27, C10A, S39, TR11, ES4, ES5

### Relevant Policies (cont'd)

DCS2 CP3, CP16, CP17, CP20

Others PPS1, PPG2, PPS5, PPS7, PPS9, Circular 06/2005, SPG1, SPG4

### Relevant Planning History

None relevant to the barn.

### Notes

The main issues in the consideration of this application are whether the proposal is appropriate development in the Green Belt, the design of the scheme and its impact on the Listed Building, the structural condition of the building, ecological and parking issues and the impact on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

### Green Belt

Policy DS2 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 is in general accordance with the provisions of PPG2: Green Belts in setting out the instances where development may be considered appropriate in the Green Belt. One such instance is proposals for the re-use of rural buildings in accordance with Policy C27. Policy C27 sets out a number of criteria against which proposals for the re-use of rural buildings are assessed. Criterion a states that proposals must not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green belt and the purposes of including land in it. Criterion b states that extensions to any re-used rural building and associated land surrounding the building will be strictly controlled, where this would conflict with the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it.

The conversion scheme involves an increase in the height of the roof across the length of the barn by 0.75m. The heightening of the barn would accommodate 2 first floor bedrooms and a bathroom. As a result of the conversion scheme, there would be an additional 45m<sup>2</sup> of useable floor space or 69% at first floor level, and the volume of the building would be increased by 43m<sup>3</sup>. As such, I consider the proposal would harm the openness of the Green Belt and would have a materially greater impact than the present use. For this reason I consider the proposal represents an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt. No very special circumstances have been put forward or have been found to exist that would outweigh the harm to Green Belt openness.

There is an existing lengthy track that extends North West from the main house towards the east side of the barn. Access to the track is gained via the main entrance to Cornerstone. It is proposed to upgrade the track to a driveway with a gravel finish providing a new parking and turning area, covering an area of approximately 200m<sup>2</sup>. A small paved patio has also been proposed to the rear of the barn covering an area of 10.8m<sup>2</sup>. The laying of hardstanding constitutes an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt. On this basis, it is now for me to consider whether there are any very special circumstances for allowing the proposal. In view of the fact that gravel has been proposed for the access and parking area, and that the materials of the patio could be stipulated to ensure a rustic appearance; it is considered that the proposal would

safeguard the countryside from encroachment and retain the visual amenities of the Green Belt.

### Design Issues and Listed Building Impact

The barn is divided into three sections by full height brick walls; a full height room at the lower end (room 1), a central room with a timber hayloft above (room 2) and the higher end room (room 3) which contains an old chimney. The main opening to the barn into the central section is a modern garage door on the front elevation. Room 1 is a separate area accessed by a timber door in the south-east end elevation. There is an original oak window above this door in the end elevation. Room 3 has an original window with timber shutters on the front elevation and room 2 has a window at the rear which has been in filled with glass. The roof is a mixture of asbestos and tin which has been repaired and replaced over the years. The barn is currently used as storage ancillary to Cornerstone.

Policy C27 of the BDLP and policy D.16 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001 (Re-use and conversion of buildings) states that the form, bulk and general design of a conversion scheme should be in keeping with its surroundings and respect local building styles and materials. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4: Conversion of Rural Buildings (SPG4) notes that one of the reasons for allowing conversion schemes is to preserve the character and integrity of the original building. Paragraph 3.0 states that a building should be capable of conversion to its new use without loss of those characteristics which make it worth keeping. Section 2.5 b of the guidance states 'The building should be large enough for the proposed use without the need for significant enlargement or alteration.' The raising of the roof to accommodate another floor is considered to be a significant alteration. In addition, raising the roof of the barn would significantly alter the appearance and integrity of the building. In my opinion it would be an obvious alteration since it would be very difficult to match the bricks adequately. Section 2.5 also states that 'Where an existing building is dilapidated, the quality of the original building can be erased where substantial new work is required. It is not the aim of the policy to allow conversion schemes where substantial rebuilding is necessary.'

The main characteristics of this barn, and Worcestershire barns in general are their simple shapes, limited number of openings, solid dominates over voids, and their absence of over elaboration. The proposed scheme undermines a number of these characteristics.

Section 3.2 of SPG 4 states that 'Large unbroken roof slopes are often a characteristic feature of agricultural buildings and that these should be respected, especially as they are often seen at a distance and can dominate elevations. The proposal would introduce two dormers in the rear elevation and 3 roof lights on the front elevation. I consider the proposed dormer windows would bring about a significant change in the simple and utilitarian character of a farm building. Conservation roof lights have been proposed on the front elevation, which would be less harmful.

Large patio doors are proposed for the rear elevation where there are currently no openings except for some traditional ventilation holes in a diamond shape. In addition a further window opening is proposed at the other end of this elevation. Section 3.3 of PPG4 states 'Agricultural buildings are characterised by a few window and door

openings. The re-use of existing openings is favoured, additional doors and windows should be kept to a minimum and reflect existing patterns. New windows and door openings should preferably be located on the 'inside' elevations away from the public view. Window and door frames should be painted/stained a dark colour to decrease visual impact and should be recessed behind the main face of the brickwork.' The rear elevation is the 'outside' face of the building as this side faces the main driveway to Cornerstone, while the other side faces neighbouring farm buildings. The insertion of patio doors is considered inappropriate since it would result in a domestication of the building. Furthermore, the cumulative impact of three windows on this elevation would damage the utilitarian appearance of the barn.

It is proposed to replace the main barn doors on the rear elevation with a door and wood panel. The dimensions of the replacement door and panel would fail to respect the width of existing opening. A smaller opening would require the infilling of brickwork and the design of the replacement opening would, in my view, result in a domestication of the barn. While there is no specific guidance on barn doors in SPG4, I consider the advice in respect of wagon arches is applicable. This states that 'wagon arches should be fully glazed... [and] if glazing is used, the vertical dimension should be emphasised with no obvious signs that the conversion forms two floor levels.'

Whilst the proposed access and turning area would be large, I am mindful that due regard has been given to the surface material in the form of gravel to minimise domestication. The proposal seeks to incorporate a paved area to the rear of the barn. In my opinion this feature would be out of character next to a converted farm building. However, given that the patio would be to the rear of the building, close to mature trees, and level with the ground, in this instance I consider the patio would create minimal visual harm.

In view of the fact that the barn is a curtilage listed it is important to assess the impact of the scheme on the historic environment against local guidance and national guidance, in particular PPS5. HE 7.5 of PPS5 states that 'Local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. The consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use.' As this proposal would appear to undermine much of the barn's recognised character, I do not consider that it would make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. For this reason I consider the proposed conversion would have a negative impact on the character, historic interest and simple architectural quality on the curtilage listed building and would also be harmful to the setting of the Grade II\* Listed Building. This is contrary to local policy S39 and the provisions of PPS5.

#### Structural condition of the building

Policy C27 requires rural buildings to be converted to be a permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major works or complete reconstruction. Policy D.16 of the WCSP has a similar requirement.

The conversion scheme involves removal of the roof, currently metal sheet profiling to be rebuild with slate, and also a heightening of the existing walls by 0.75m. To my mind, the re-roofing of the entire building and building up of walls represents major works. Since no

structural report has been submitted with the application it is indeterminate as to whether other works are required. In addition, it cannot be demonstrated that the building is of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major works or complete reconstruction. As such the proposal does not accord with criterion c of Policy C27.

### Ecological issues

PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (paragraph 1vi) states that "The aim of planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests." Where a proposed development would adversely affect those interests suitable mitigation measures will need to be secured or, where significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Policy C10A of the BDLP states that the Council will seek to minimise the effects of development proposals on features of nature conservation importance in the District. Policy QE7 of the WMSS requires Local Authorities to encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the Region's wider biodiversity resources giving priority to (among other criteria) the protection of statutory protected species.

Article 12 (1) of the EC Habitats Directive requires Member States to take requisite measures to establish a strict protection of certain animal species prohibiting the deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places. This directive is implemented by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994. Administrative guidance on the application of law relating to planning and nature conservation is provided in Circular 06/2005. Paragraph 116 of the Circular states that under regulation 3(4) of the 1994 Regulations, a Local Planning Authority has a duty to have regard to the Habitats Directive when dealing with planning applications where a European protected species may be affected.

The applicant has not submitted an ecological survey to demonstrate the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development. For this reason I do not consider all relevant material considerations may have been addressed in order to determine the application appropriately and in accordance with Paragraph 99 of Circular 06/2005.

### Parking and access issues

Policy C27 states that traffic generated by a conversion scheme must be able to be accommodated and parking facilities should exist or be provided without detriment to highway safety, the visual amenities of the Green Belt or the character of the local rural environment. A physically suitable access is proposed as an extension of the existing access to the main house off Cofton Church Lane. The access, parking and manoeuvring areas are considered acceptable, particularly since the building is proposed for ancillary living accommodation. The County Highways Officer has not raised any objections. To my mind the conversion scheme for ancillary living accommodation would provide a negligible increase on car journeys to and from the site.



### Residential amenity

Since the proposed conversion would provide ancillary living accommodation to the main house; an independent residential curtilage has not been proposed. The curtilage area around the main house and barn already constitutes garden land and the proposal would not change this. Since new velux openings have been proposed on the front facing roof slope; it is be important to assess the impact of the proposal on the privacy of adjoining occupiers. I note that the north west end elevation would remain blank.

SPG1 provides advice on acceptable distances in order to safeguard the privacy of adjoining occupiers. Paragraph 8.5 of SPG1 states that 'as a general guide new development with main windows overlooking existing private spaces should be set back by a distance of 5m per storey from the site boundary where it adjoins a private garden area.' The proposed conservation roof lights would be positioned approximately 1.45m above the floor level of the first floor. For this reason these openings would provide opportunities for overlooking towards Beech Coppice and Cofton Hall Farm. The distance between the roof light to bedroom 2 and the rear garden of Beech Coppice would be just 8metres. Consequently I consider the proposal would infringe of the privacy of the occupiers of Beech Coppice when spending time in the garden, particularly since there is no formal boundary treatment. The opening on the front roof slope would look towards the front garden of Cofton hall Farm and there would be a distance of 10.5 from the common boundary. For this reason I do not consider the proposal would have a significantly detrimental impact on the amenities of the occupiers at Cofton Hall Farm.

In order to secure an acceptable level of privacy between the main rooms of new dwellings and neighbouring properties, SPG1 recommends a minimum separation of 21 metres within a 90 degree arc centred about the centre line of the window concerned. The window to window distance between the nearest velux opening and Beech Coppice would be 26m and the distance between Cofton Hall Farm would be 35.5m. For this reason I find the separation distances to be acceptable and do not consider the proposal would have a significantly adverse impact on the privacy of the adjoining occupiers. The openings on the rear and south end elevation would look over the grounds of Cornerstone and would not therefore give rise to any amenity issues.

Since the barn sits within the grounds of Cornerstone within a 1.98 hectare site, there are plentiful amounts of amenity space for the proposal.

### Services

Criterion f of policy C27 states that the provision of necessary services must not adversely affect the environmental character or visual amenities of the Green Belt. The Drainage Engineer has been consulted and has raised no objections subject to conditions requiring details of the disposal of storm and foul water.

### Trees and Landscaping

All the mature trees on the site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. There is a fully mature protected Beech tree at a distance of 7.8 metres from the rear of the barn.

The proposed patio extension to the rear of the building would be directly in line with and towards the Beech tree, falling within the recommended root protection area. The area that would be affected would be below the permissible 20% but as the outer edge of the patio would be close to the main stem. For this reason any excavation work within this area would need to be kept to a minimum to ensure no damage is caused to the root plate of this tree. A ground support system would therefore need to be included in the specification for the construction of the sub base for the patio.

The raising of the roof of the barn would bring the building close to low hanging minor branches of the Beech tree. In windy conditions and as the branches develop further, these branches would have the potential to catch on the roof and cause damage. It would therefore be prudent to lightly lift the outer canopy of this tree on the building side. The Tree Officer considers these works would represent an acceptable level of work subject to a TPO application. Overall the Tree Officer has raised no objections to the conversion subject to suitable planning conditions.

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

1. By virtue of its design, the proposed conversion would have a negative impact on the character, historic interest and simple architectural quality on the curtilage listed building and would be harmful to the setting of the Grade II\* Listed Building. This is contrary to policy S39 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan, policy CTC.19 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan and the provisions of PPS5.
2. The form, bulk and design of the proposed conversion would detrimentally erode the simple form and utilitarian character and appearance of the building contrary to Policy DS2 and C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan; the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4 'The Conversion of Rural Buildings' and Policy D.16 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan.
3. There is insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on protected species and thereby the proposal is contrary to policy CTC12 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001, policy C10A of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 and the advice of PPS9 and Circular 06/2005.
4. There is insufficient information to demonstrate that the building is of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without major works or complete reconstruction. Thereby the proposal is contrary to policy C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004, and Policy D.16 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan.
5. The proposed development would not respect the amenity and privacy of adjoining occupiers contrary to policy DS13 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 and the advice of Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 1: Residential Design Guide.