

Name of Applicant Type of Certificate	Proposal	Map/Plan Policy	Plan Ref. Expiry Date
Mrs. J. Finch 'B'	Proposed conversion of existing residential barn and replacement of concrete buildings with timber barn to create a rural wedding venue - Redhouse Farm, Shaw Lane, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove	GB	<b>B/2007/1368</b> 28.02.2008

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

Councillor C. J. Tidmarsh has requested that this application be considered by the Committee, rather than being determined under delegated powers.

#### Consultations

WH	Consulted - views received 11.02.2008: Recommend refusal.
CEHO	Consulted - views received 27.02.2008: Noise / amenity concerns.
British Waterways	Consulted - Views received 14.01.2008: No objection.
PROW / RA	Consulted 04.01.2008 expires 25.01.2008: No observations received.
NR	Consulted 04.01.2008 expires 25.01.2008: No observations received.
Stoke PC	Consulted - views received 20.01.2008: Conflicting views - PC consider proposal is well thought out / positive but raise concern at poor access and Green Belt location.
Publicity	Site Notice posted 10.01.2008 expires 01.02.2008. Press Notice posted 10.01.2008 expires 01.02.2008.

#### The site and its surroundings

The application site is located on the western side of Shaw Lane almost opposite the junction with Astwood Lane and consists of a former agricultural barn converted to a residential property in 1984 and a single storey brick / blockwork former piggeries building with shallow sheet steel roof, which is currently used as stables. Other equestrian paraphernalia and several other low rise, dilapidated structures are also present on site. The railway lies to the west of the site and a public footpath runs to the north. The site is within the Green Belt.

#### Proposal

Planning permission is sought to convert the existing residential barn and demolish and replace the piggeries building to create a rural wedding venue.

#### Relevant Policies

WMSS	QE3
WCSP	CTC.1, CTC.21, D.28, D.29, D.38, D.39, D.40, SD.2, SD.4, T.1
BDLP	DS2, DS13, C4, C27, C27A, C27B, C27C, TR11, S19, E9
Others	SPG4, SPG5, PPS1, PPG2, PPS7

## Relevant Planning History

- B/2002/1437 Proposed conversion of agricultural store stables into office / light industrial storage and alteration of driveway / access: Permission refused 20.01.2003
- B/1991/0201 Outline application for agricultural workers bungalow: Permission refused 17.06.1991
- B12479 Conversion of barn to residential unit: Permission granted 12.12.1984

## Notes

### **Green Belt Policy:**

Policy DS2 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 notes that permission for development in the Green Belt will not be given for the construction of new buildings except in very special circumstances. Policy DS2 in general accordance with PPG2 provides a list of those new buildings the construction of which is thought to be appropriate including those for the purpose of agricultural and forestry uses, essential facilities for outdoor sport / recreation and cemeteries, limited house extension and village infilling, and limited infilling or redevelopment of major existing developed sites. Furthermore, permission for development in the Green Belt will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the change of use of existing buildings unless, as criteria (e) states, proposals are for the re-use of rural buildings in accordance with policy C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004. Policies DS2 and C27 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 and policy D.29 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001 are in general accordance with national guidance provided in PPG2 in allowing the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt subject to criteria including:

- i) Any re-use should not have a greater impact upon the present use or openness of the Green Belt.
- ii) Buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction, capable of conversion without major reconstruction.
- iii) The form, bulk and design of the conversion is in keeping with its surroundings.

The piggeries is unlikely to be suitable for conversion, as it has a shallow corrugated steel roof; however, permission is sought to demolish this building and replace it with a much larger structure some 5.5 metres higher than the existing shallow pitch 3 metre high piggeries. The proposed use of the building as a wedding venue clearly fails to accord with the set criteria for appropriate development set within policy DS2 and its significantly greater bulk and mass will create greater harm to the openness of the Green Belt. I do not consider the fact that the proposed building is a sympathetic reclaimed rural barn overrides Green Belt policy or presents a very special circumstance to justify what is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. I am content that the existing residential barn is of substantial construction and capable of conversion without major reconstruction; however, the proposed wedding venue will clearly have a greater impact than the present residential use on the openness of the Green Belt and will lead to an intensified use on site. The proposed scheme will therefore be contrary to policy and represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

PPG2 advises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to green belt policy and therefore it is clear that strong arguments may need to be advanced, in terms of the very special circumstances, why that presumption against inappropriate development should be overridden.

## VSC?

The applicant has provided the following information to support the application:

- The barn will be re-instated from its current residential use to a more traditional form, returning the character and basic integrity of the original rural building.
- To complement the restored barn, the former piggery building (now stables), summer house, a brick built garage and workshop building will be demolished (totalling 365 sq. metres) along with fencing and other domestic garden features, which currently all combine to suggest a very urban topography.
- A 17th Century timber framed barn dismantled in the 1980's in Herefordshire will be re-built in its new form and position using traditional building methods (approx. 250 sq. metres).
- The proposal will support the rural economy and local businesses in terms of clothing, cleaners, caterers, florists, photographers, hotels, etc.
- The site is naturally obscured from view by the lie of the land and existing mature hedgerows. It is virtually invisible from any nearby local roads.

I am mindful that the piggeries along with a number of small, single storey buildings will be removed from site and while they may not be particularly attractive structures I do not consider that any perceived visual improvement of the site will outweigh the inappropriateness of the proposed development. Existing structures are low rise and fairly inoffensive, appearing as typical rural buildings that assimilate well into the rural landscape. The proposed replacement barn will be 8.6 metres high, significantly higher than any buildings it replaces, and 1.6 metres higher than the existing residential barn, having a materially greater impact upon openness. I note that the artist's impression of the Herefordshire barn prior to demolition shows a linear structure and although it is unclear how much of the proposed L-shape barn is new, I consider this to be irrelevant that the proposal still represents the erection of a 'new' building on site.

The proposed use as a wedding venue is likely to significantly intensify the use of the site and associated coming and goings when compared to the existing residential and stable use. The site's potential for alternative uses such as conferences is also high. Although it is unlikely that wedding guests will travel by public transport, the site is nevertheless poorly located in terms of sustainability and will not represent a good example of sustainable development since the sites rural location would lead to high car dependency.

Although sections of the proposed car park will be a grassed surface reinforced with a cellular recycled polyurethane high load bearing structure (which the applicant states will preserve the grassed aspect, the openness of Green Belt and enhance rainwater filtration), I am mindful that the rows of parked cars will be visible from the footpath, railway and railway bridge when the car park is in use. The development will also

introduce greater amounts of general hardstanding, which all add to the urbanisation of the Green Belt.

Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is *clearly outweighed* by other considerations. I do not consider that the applicant has put forward any very special circumstances for the proposed development, which includes the erection of a new commercial building and associated works that will justify development within the Green Belt.

### **Design and Character:**

Notwithstanding Green Belt issues, the proposed barn building is a sympathetic, agricultural design that will be located within the existing grouping of original farm buildings. Nevertheless, the proposal seeks to erect a commercial building within the Green Belt and appropriateness of design will not override the fundamentals of Green Belt policy.

While I note that the existing buildings on site are well screened they can nevertheless be seen from several points, including parts of the highway, the public footpath to the north of the site, the railway to the west and from the railway bridge to the south of the site. As previously noted, the existing structures are low rise and fairly inoffensive, appearing as typical rural buildings that assimilate well into the rural landscape. The bulk and mass of the proposed building will have much greater visibility and, although I do not consider the building will be obtrusive in the streetscene, it will clearly have a much greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

### **Residential amenity issues:**

Policy S19 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 states that in areas where residential uses predominate the District Council will not allow employment or other land uses which would adversely affect residential amenity whether through noise, smell, safety, traffic or health reasons. I would suggest that in addition to the comings and goings of traffic, which would often be focused to certain times, a wedding venue would also typically generate noise from music and guests using outside areas. It is unlikely that this can be reasonably controlled by an 'hours of use' condition as the wedding venue would be expected to go on until late into the evening, when ambient noise can create the most disturbance.

Redhouse Farm is the closest dwelling to the application site but is within the applicant's ownership. There are also other residential properties located some 60 metres to the east on Astwood Lane. The CEHO has commented that there is concern that there is potential for detriment to the amenity of nearby residential properties from the proposed development due to noise disturbance from live or recorded music at the venue and from guests leaving late at night. As no noise survey has been provided a definitive comment of the likely impact cannot be provided; however, the application is recommended for refusal in its present form.

## Highway matters:

The Highway Engineer has objected to the scheme stating that the visibility splays at the point of access are deficient compared to the approach speeds of traffic. This will result in conflict between motorists exiting the site and vehicles using the serving road. Shaw Lane is a B-class road that is well used and the additional vehicle movements associated with the application will conflict with the existing traffic flows.

In light of these comments, I therefore consider that the application should also be refused on highway safety grounds.

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

1. The application site lies within the Green Belt where strict policies of restraint apply. The erection of a commercial building and associated hardstanding combined with the intensification of use on site within an unsustainable location would represent inappropriate development harmful to the maintenance of the character of the Green Belt and to its openness. Having regard to the nature of this commercial proposal and the Green Belt policies, the Local Planning Authority does not consider that any very special circumstances exist in this case to justify overriding Green Belt policies and the proposal will therefore be contrary to policies DS2, DS13, C27 and E9 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004, policies CTC.1, SD.4, D.29, D.38 and D.39 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001 and the aims and objectives of PPS1 and PPG2.
2. The proposed development would detrimentally affect the level of amenity enjoyed by the occupiers of surrounding residential dwellings by virtue of noise disturbance from live or recorded music at the venue and traffic movements from guests leaving late at night and will therefore be contrary to policies E9 and S19 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004.
3. The visibility splays at the point of access are deficient compared to the approach speeds of traffic, which will result in conflict between motorists exiting the site and vehicles using the serving road. Additional vehicle movements associated with the application will conflict with the existing traffic flows on Shaw Lane. The proposal is therefore considered to contravene policies E9 and TR11 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan 2004 and policy T1 of the Worcestershire County Structure Plan 2001.