

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

**APPLICATION TO BE DETERMINED UNDER POWERS DELEGATED TO
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER**

PART III REPORT (INCORPORATING REPORT OF HANDLING)

REF : 18/00745/FUL

APPLICANT : Mr & Mrs David & Claire McTaggart

AGENT : R G Licence Architect

DEVELOPMENT : Change of use of steading, alterations and extension to form dwellinghouse
(revision to planning permission 17/00915/FUL)

LOCATION: Steading Buildings Billerwell Farm
Hawick
Scottish Borders

TYPE : FUL Application

REASON FOR DELAY:

DRAWING NUMBERS:

| Plan Ref | Plan Type | Plan Status |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| DCMP01 | Site Plan | Refused |
| DCMP02 | Existing Layout | Refused |
| DCMP03 | Sections | Refused |
| DCMP04 | Existing Elevations | Refused |
| DCMP05 | Existing Elevations | Refused |
| DCMP07 | Floor Plans | Refused |
| DCMP09 | Roof Plan | Refused |
| DCMP10 | Elevations | Refused |
| DCMP11 | Elevations | Refused |
| DCMP12 | Elevations | Refused |
| DCMP13 | Elevations | Refused |
| DCMP14 | Planning Layout | Refused |

NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIONS: 0

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS:

No representations.

Roads Planning Section: advises that the conversion of this building has previously been approved under 17/00915/FUL. No objections were raised providing adequate parking was provided along with the installation of two passing places at an agreed location. Therefore, providing the above two points are satisfactorily conditioned, there would be no objection to the current proposal. Conditions and informatives are recommended.

Archaeology Section: maintains advice and recommendations made at the time of the previous planning application.

Environmental Health Section: seeks conditions to regulate drainage arrangements and private water supply; and seeks an informative to advise with respect to the operation of a solid fuel burner. No contaminated land comments.

Ecology Section: seeks prior to determination, a report of a survey for bats by a suitably qualified person, along with a Construction Method Statement incorporating measures to protect the internationally designated freshwater environment (specifically with respect to the proposed discharge of foul water in the Rule Water, which is within the River Tweed, Special Area for Conservation. A breeding bird survey should in the event of approval, be required by planning condition.

The Community Council has been consulted but has not responded to the public consultation.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND POLICIES:

Local Development Plan 2016

PMD2: Quality Standards

HD2: Housing in the Countryside

HD3: Protection of Residential Amenity

EP3: Local Biodiversity

EP5: Special Landscape Areas

EP8: Archaeology

IS7: Parking Provisions and Standards

IS9: Waste Water Treatment Standards and Sustainable Urban Drainage

IS13: Contaminated Land

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Placemaking and Design January 2010

Guidance on Householder Development July 2006

New Housing in the Borders Countryside December 2008

Recommendation by - Stuart Herkes (Planning Officer) on 6th August 2018

BACKGROUND

This report should be read in conjunction with the Report of Handling which informed the approval of Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL. The latter permits a change of use of a steading building at Billerwell Farm, to form a single dwellinghouse, with related alterations and extension required to achieve that accommodation. It was issued on 27 February this year, subject to sixteen planning conditions, to informatives and to a legal agreement to secure the requisite development contributions. The current application proposes a successor scheme for the conversion of the same building, including new design details and features, which are not approved under the consented scheme.

The design and layout of the development that is permitted and regulated under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL, is a significant material consideration within the assessment of the current planning application, since the consented scheme could be readily progressed within the next two-and-half years. To this end, the key concerns within the assessment of the current proposal are whether or not any and all proposed new design details are, singularly and collectively, acceptable in the context of the conversion of a farm building; and whether or not they are equivalent in their impacts to those of the scheme approved under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL.

COMPARISON OF PROPOSED AND APPROVED SCHEMES

Certain features of the scheme approved under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL are notable: firstly, the approved scheme already includes some domesticating features: specifically two cat slide dormers; a bay window; and a porch with a pitched roof; none of which reflect the existing character of the building, or might otherwise have occurred, and been compatible with, a typical traditional farm steading building in the local area. Secondly, and notwithstanding these additions, the approved scheme does not propose any increase in the height of the existing building, whose original massing (roof-to-wall ratio) would be retained. Thirdly,

and excepting timber infills in some locations, the walls would be predominantly retained as the original stone. In summary, notwithstanding some additions that would 'domesticate' its character, the approved scheme is nonetheless faithful to the existing structure, and would reasonably allow it to be readily 'read' as a converted traditional farm building.

By contrast, the current proposal would see a significant lift in the height of the wallhead and with it, the roof (and overall) height of the building, such that the existing building would be notably heightened; changing its existing massing to something that would be notably higher than the existing farm buildings, and more domestic than agrarian in its scale and design.

Beyond this, it is proposed that the aforementioned bay feature consented under the Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL should be heightened to include a first floor area in place of one of the cat slide dormers. Rather than a cat slide, it is elsewhere proposed that the second dormer should now be revised to have an altogether more traditional pitched roof, albeit with a hip to the front. Rather than stone - or because of the need to conceal the proposed lift in the building's height above the existing wallhead height - it is now proposed that the walls should be finished in a smooth synthetic render.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DESIGN

The current proposals seek to achieve a residential use by increasing the height of the existing buildings. It is a requirement of the Housing in the Countryside Policy that the Council be satisfied that a building proposed for conversion, should in fact be capable of conversion and be physically suited for residential use. Were any significant increase in height necessary to accommodate a residential use within a building, then it would follow that the building was not in its existing form, suitable for conversion in the first place. Moreover, the subject building in this case, has already been accepted as a suitable subject for conversion under a previous and recent planning consent, and without an increase in its height. As such, the Department has previously and very recently taken the view that the existing building is suitable for residential use without there being any requirement to increase its height. I can find no reason to take any different view within the circumstances of the current proposals that would now justify the proposed increase in height. Further, the additional height proposed would significantly change the massing of the existing buildings, reducing the classical horizontal emphasis of traditional farm steading buildings which would be counteracted by a stronger vertical emphasis more in line with a house or cottage; albeit that the massing that would result would have something of an indeterminate character.

While I would acknowledge that the approved scheme itself already includes some quite domesticating features, it nonetheless would see no fundamental alterations to the basic massing of the existing building. By contrast, what is now proposed under the current application, is highly domesticating in its character and highly unsympathetic to the character of the existing farm steading building. Besides the changes to the building's massing, the proposed Northwest and Northeast Elevations in particular, are extremely domestic in their form and character. The bay-feature, while simpler in its form than the bay of the consented scheme, does not find any logical or natural context relative to a converted farm building. It is a particularly awkward and incongruous detail. The cat slide dormers on the approved scheme, while not normally appropriate in the context of a conversion, at least find some functional justification in that they would facilitate the accommodation of a first floor level within the existing envelope of the building; that is, without the need for the latter to be heightened. Within the current proposal though, not only is the building to be raised notably in its height to accommodate a more generous first floor area; but this in turn, is then also to be augmented by new dormer features as well.

It might be set against this, that - excepting the increase in height and rendering of the walls - most of the most domesticating features of the proposed scheme; principally the Northwest and Northeast Elevations; would occur within a relatively secluded farm courtyard, into which views from the nearby access road are more limited. However, the basic character of the existing farm building; its contribution to the sense of place at Billerwell; and the need under planning policy and guidance to ensure that conversions are sympathetic to the existing building and its environs, are not reasonably set aside against the relative seclusion of these elevations. Policy HD2, Section C, in particular, explicitly requires that the conversion, and any extension or alteration, should be in keeping with the scale and architectural character of the existing building. Policy PMD2, criterion k, requires that development should be compatible with, and respect the character of the surrounding area, neighbouring uses and neighbouring built form. The proposals do not comply with these requirements. It might be added that there is a history of other farm buildings in the surrounding area having been the subject of consents for conversion. Therefore even accounting for the relative seclusion of these

elevations, there would be a concern that an acceptance of such a domestic character would promote proposals for other equally or more domesticating schemes for these other surrounding buildings. The farm steading buildings, including those on the site, should remain to be clearly read as farm buildings, notwithstanding their potential for conversion to residential use.

Overall, the proposed development would be liable to change so fundamentally the basic character and form, including massing, of the existing building, to such an extent that it would no longer be capable of being 'read' as a converted farm building. Taking account of the proposed new massing, and the addition of the bay-feature and pitched roof dormer-feature, it would instead be liable to appear to be a dwellinghouse; and potentially even a new-build, particularly if it were also to be clad in a synthetic render as is proposed. The proposals would counteract - if not in effect, erase - any keen sense of this being a dwellinghouse based on the conversion of a traditional farm building. Rather, it would instead be liable to be 'read' as a cottage; potentially a new-build; incongruously sited within the heart of a traditional steading. It is certainly difficult to escape the sense that the proposals are not in fact purposefully seeking to 'over-write' the original farm building; and indeed, appear intended to ensure that the dwellinghouse should be more readily understood as a cottage rather than as a converted steading; or at least, that it should have something of a dual character between its courtyard elevations and external elevations. Regardless of the intention though, the resulting structure would be too different from the existing building, and would have a confused and confusing character. It would in its setting, have an indeterminate character, and would if anything, be liable to seem very out-of-place, and out-of-keeping with its site and surroundings. This blurring of domestic and agrarian characteristics would in turn, distort the sense of Billerwell as a farmsteading on the opposite side of the road from its farmhouse.

I have taken account of the character of the scheme approved under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL since this is a significant material consideration in the context of this assessment, but I consider that the current proposals are significantly more intrusive and more domesticating than the approved scheme; and to such an extent that they would have an unacceptably adverse impact upon the existing building, its site and surroundings. If anything, the previous approval was reasonably at the upper limit of what might have been accommodated in the context of a secluded farm courtyard. However, the current proposals appear to take this only as a starting-point to justify an even greater, and more significant, domestication of the existing building. What is ultimately proposed, is neither a subtle nor incremental drift into a more domestic form of development from this starting-point; it is rather a significant 're-write' of the consented scheme, which would have an unacceptably adverse impact upon the character of the original farm building. Specifically, I find that the proposals would not comply with criterion c. of Section C of Policy HD2: Housing in the Countryside, in that these proposals are not in keeping with the scale and architectural character of the existing building.

I also find that the specific proposals would be contrary to Policy PMD2: Quality Standards, in that they are not of a scale, massing or height that is appropriate to the existing building, and would not be compatible with, or respect, the character of the surrounding area or neighbouring built form.

OTHER DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The revised proposals would not have any unacceptable impacts upon the residential amenity of any surrounding dwellings and are largely equivalent in any case to those of the approved scheme; views to the north being interrupted by another steading building.

I have considered the potential for the use of different materials and finishes to mitigate the appearance. While a render-finish for the walls should certainly be avoided, I am content that the revised scheme would not be appropriately mitigated through attention to materials and colours alone.

OTHER CONCERNS

With respect to all other concerns beyond the actual design itself, I am content that these would only appropriately be addressed as they have been under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL, largely because these are the same concerns that were considered at the time of the determination of Planning Application 17/00915/FUL. Where no new or different circumstances apply, these matters are only reasonably assessed as before, and where necessary, made subject to the same planning conditions that were applied to Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL.

I note that Ecology seeks both a bat survey and construction method statement, but it is material that the Applicant could commence the development approved under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL having addressing all the requirements of the suspensively worded conditions, without having to meet these identified 'pre-determination' requirements. As such, it would only be reasonable to allow that any consent issued anterior to the determination of this current planning application, should simply be regulated by the equivalent conditions. For this reason, I have not asked the Applicants to address Ecology's 'pre-determination' requirements.

CONCLUSION

For the above noted reason, I consider that the current planning application should be refused.

REASON FOR DECISION :

The planning application should be refused for the following reasons:

The proposal is contrary to criterion c. of Section C of Adopted Local Development Plan Policy HD2 in that it is not in keeping with the scale and architectural character of the existing building to be converted, even having regard to what has been approved, and can be progressed, under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL.

The proposal is contrary to criteria i. and k. of Adopted Local Development Plan Policy Policy PMD2, in that it is not of a scale, massing or height that is appropriate to the existing building, and would not be compatible with, or respect, the character of the surrounding area or neighbouring built form, even having regard to what has been approved, and can be progressed, under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL.

Recommendation: Refused

- 1 The proposal is contrary to criterion c. of Section C of Adopted Local Development Plan Policy HD2 in that it is not in keeping with the scale and architectural character of the existing building to be converted, even having regard to what has been approved, and can be progressed, under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL.
- 2 The proposal is contrary to criteria i. and k. of Adopted Local Development Plan Policy Policy PMD2, in that it is not of a scale, massing or height that is appropriate to the existing building, and would not be compatible with, or respect, the character of the surrounding area or neighbouring built form, even having regard to what has been approved, and can be progressed, under Planning Consent 17/00915/FUL.

“Photographs taken in connection with the determination of the application and any other associated documentation form part of the Report of Handling”.