

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>14 February 2011</b>
By	<b>Head of Planning</b>
Local Authority	<b>East Hampshire District Council</b>
Application Number	<b>27154/007</b>
Application	<b>Barn A – Conversion of oak framed barn for change of use to educational use and ancillary recreational space to proposed holiday cottage (Barn F) following demolition of lean to and shed Barn B – To be used as service area (to Barn A) Barn C – Conversion to dwelling Barn D – To be re roofed Barn F – Conversion from redundant stables to holiday home Barn H – To be demolished Dwelling J – New detached dwelling following demolition of modern barn</b>
Address	<b>Riplington Farm, West Meon Road, East Meon, Petersfield GU32 1HU</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>This report relates to a proposal to convert a barn to educational use, along with the provision of holiday lets and the construction of two new dwellings. The purpose of this report is to gain members' agreement to comments to be submitted to East Hampshire District Council on the application.</b>

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**Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to submit the following comments to East Hampshire District Council:**

- **The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) welcomes the proposed retention and restoration of the Grade II listed threshing barn. However, the SDNPA would wish to seek confirmation that any enabling development is the minimum necessary to make the proposal economically viable and that the proposed educational/tourist use of the barn has a viable business case.**
  - **The SDNPA would also wish to see confirmation that the proposed smaller dwelling ("Barn C") can be considered to be a conversion, that the location of the new access drive is to meet the Highway safety requirements of the proposed use (rather than the more intensive use previously proposed) and that the bat assessment submitted is considered to be up-to-date.**
  - **Subject to the above considerations, the SDNPA raises no objection, providing consideration is given to the following conditions:**
    - **that high quality materials are used;**
    - **that the holiday lets are made subject to an occupancy condition;**
    - **that the new planting proposed is carried out using a mix of appropriate native species of a local provenance;**
    - **that any mitigation for bats (both during the works and in the form of suitable accommodation afterwards) as required by the District Council's ecological advisors is provided.**
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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Riplington Farm is on the north side of West Meon Road, roughly mid-way between the villages of East and West Meon. The Farm House (which is listed) is surrounded by a number of outbuildings, all of which, except the garage, were formerly in agricultural use. These comprise:
- Three stable blocks, totalling 267 sqm.
  - A granary, of 37.5 sqm
  - Two open sided barns, totalling 254 sqm
  - A 1950's garage building of 77 sqm
  - A modern steel framed barn of 439 sqm
  - A former threshing barn of 300 sqm
- 1.2 The threshing barn is a Grade II listed building and was the subject of a number of applications in 2008 and 2009 for conversion to a wedding/conference venue, along with the demolition of some modern buildings, the conversion of some other buildings, and the creation of a new car park in land to the west. The listed buildings applications for the conversion works were allowed, but the full applications were refused or withdrawn. An appeal against the application that was refused in February 2010 – the reasons being (i) the scale and location of the car park (which was considered harmful to the site's landscape setting); and (ii) the night time noise which would have had a detrimental impact on a nearby dwelling.

## **2. The Proposals**

- 2.1 The proposal is to repair the existing listed threshing barn and to restore the original thatched roof (currently a corrugated metal roof is in place). A mezzanine floor would be introduced within one side of the barn, under which would be located toilets and stores. Except for this mezzanine element, the barn would remain open and undivided. The main entrance doors on each side would be replaced and a glazed screen set behind each doorway. An attached outbuilding would be converted to a kitchen and a lean-to structure would be demolished. The barn would be used for education and tourism uses (non residential institutions – D1). In addition it would be made available as ancillary recreation space to users of holiday accommodation proposed elsewhere on the site.
- 2.2 The large modern steel frame barn would be removed. A walled garden formerly existed on this site in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and this walled garden would be recreated by a 2m high brick and flint wall. Within the walled garden would be a new dwelling that is designed to have a "distinct agricultural flavour". The upper storey would be clad in timber weatherboarding and would have a handmade clay tile roof.
- 2.3 A small partly open-sided barn on the western side of the site would be converted to provide a second dwelling. This is a relatively modern building – part blockwork in a steel frame, with a corrugated asbestos roof. The replacement roof would be a timber truss structure clad in slate (although the Planning statement refers to tiles).
- 2.4 On the far eastern boundary of the site, adjacent to a lane leading up onto Old Down, is a former stable block and farm office. It is proposed that this building would be converted to provide holiday accommodation. The existing corrugated metal roof would be replaced with thatch and existing openings would be reused.
- 2.5 At the western end of the site a new access would be created for the use of the two new dwellings. This would be further west than the existing access to the farm yard, which would be blocked up and planted with a native species mix. The new driveway would also be lined with indigenous planting.
- 2.6 A post-submission amendment includes the removal of overhead lines within the site.

## **3. Assessment**

- 3.1 The proposal site is located within the South Downs National Park. National Parks have two statutory purposes which must be taken into account when considering planning proposals that could have an impact upon the National Park:

1. *'To conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage'.*
2. *'To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of these special qualities.'*

If there is a conflict between these two policies, then the first must take precedence. National Park Authorities also have a duty in pursuing those purposes:

*'To seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Park'.*

- 3.2 The proposal also involves the conversion of a listed building to help to ensure that it remains in a viable economic use. In terms of the physical works to the listed building, these appear very sympathetic. These are also the subject of a separate listed buildings application, and it should be noted that previously listed building consent has been granted for similar works to this building. The proposed education and tourism use is anticipated to generate around 10-15 attendees at a time, which would be of a smaller scale than the previously proposed conference/wedding venue use. This has the additional benefit that the car parking requirement is also much less (a new car park to the west was the main reason that the appeal was dismissed last year).
- 3.3 The proposed dwellings would not normally be acceptable in policy terms as they are located in a rural area away from a settlement, but are being sought as enabling development to ensure a future for the listed barn. It has to some extent been established through the planning history of the site that a viable long term use for the barn would require some form of cross-subsidy (this might not be the case if the barn were converted to a dwelling, but this would be likely to be detrimental to the character and fabric of the barn). However, English Heritage are clear in their guidance on enabling development that any such development must be the minimum necessary to make the proposal viable (and that local planning authorities should use external consultants if there is not the full range of expertise available in-house). In this particular case two new dwellings (plus some tourist accommodation) are being provided and the need for this extent of development needs to be justified. Confidential financial details have been provided to the District Council and are currently being assessed. In addition, an assessment of the proposed use of the barn will need to be assessed for viability, to ensure that the use proposed is a realistic long-term use. Again, this is being assessed by the District Council.
- 3.4 The large new dwelling to the south of the Threshing Barn would be of an unusual style, taking cues from traditional agricultural barns and with an archway feature based on an oversized mounting block. The timber cladding to the upper floor, combined with a low eaves gives the impression of the building having a high waistline. However, as long as high quality materials are used (particularly handmade clay tiles), the proposals could be considered acceptable for this site (although only as enabling development).
- 3.5 The 'conversion' of the partly open-sided barn to a dwelling would effectively result in a new structure, although it would be of a similar scale and footprint to the existing building. It should therefore be viewed as a new dwelling in the countryside, rather than a conversion. This may be less of an issue if the financial case for two new dwellings is accepted by the District Council (as discussed above).
- 3.6 The proposed conversion of the former stable building on the eastern side of the site to holiday accommodation is sympathetic, would result in an enhancement (through the replacement of the iron roof with thatch), and would provide tourist accommodation of an appropriate scale for the site and wider area. The use of this building would need to be conditioned to ensure that it does not become used for private domestic use.
- 3.7 Most of the buildings have not been in agricultural use for a long time – the only exception being the large modern barn which had occasionally been used by a local farmer for storage purposes. The possible loss of this agricultural storage has been raised as a concern previously but was given little weight in the appeal.

3.8 The creation of a new access drive to the new dwellings is a pity as it extends well beyond the original farmyard area. However, it has been placed in this location at the request of the County Highway consultants due for the need for safe visibility splays.

3.9 Bats are present within some of the buildings. The District Council will seek appropriate advice regarding bat issues, although the current assessment does appear out of date (January 2009). Replacement provision is proposed in the form of bat boxes, plus the use of handmade roof tiles on the larger of the new dwellings will provide new crevice space.

#### **4. Conclusion**

4.1 The retention and restoration of the Grade II listed threshing barn is to be welcomed. However, it is essential to ensure that any enabling development is the minimum necessary to make the proposal economically viable. It would therefore be appropriate to seek confirmation from the District Council that the proposed enabling development is the minimum necessary to ensure the restoration of the barn and that the proposed use of the barn has a viable business case. The holiday let use would need to be subject to a condition ensuring it is not used for private residential purposes.

4.2 The proposed use of the Threshing Barn appears lower intensity than the previously proposed wedding/conference use, and it does not include a car park, which was a strong point of concern with previous proposals. The conversion works to this barn and the proposed holiday lets appear sympathetic.

4.3 The design of the large new dwelling could be considered acceptable, subject to the use of high quality materials. Confirmation will be needed that the smaller dwelling can be considered to be a conversion.

4.4 The new access drive extending to the west of the original farmyard site is of concern but the proposed native planting would provide appropriate mitigation, providing the visibility splays are to meet the current access requirements (rather than being the splays required for the previous, more intensive, use).

4.5 The need for an up-to-date bat assessment and appropriate mitigation will need to be confirmed by the District Council's ecological consultees.

#### **5. Resources**

5.1 There are potential implications for staff resources should the application go to appeal.

#### **6. Risk management**

6.1 The risks of costs being awarded against the National Park Authority at appeal are low, providing the National Park Authority does not act unreasonably. The recommendation that is presented the Committee is considered by your officers to be reasonable.

#### **7. Human Rights, Equalities, Health and Safety**

7.1 As the National Park Authority is not the determining authority there are no implications for the Authority arising out of the application.

#### **8. External Consultees**

8.1 None

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Appendices	Location Map
SDNPA Consultees	Senior Solicitor.