Report to Planning Committee
Date 12 February 2015
By Director of Planning
Local Authority Chichester District Council
Application Number SDNP/14/02978/FUL
Applicant Mr W and F Cantello and Fergusson
Application Conversion of redundant 4no silos to a single dwelling and removal of concrete frame barn.
Address Silos At Patching Farm, The Street, Patching, Worthing, BN13 3XF

Recommendation: That planning permission be refused for the reasons set out in paragraph 10.1 of this report

Executive Summary
The site is comprised of four redundant grain silos, linked with a low level “engine shed”. There is an area of hard standing and also the framework of a former barn. The application is for the conversion of the silos into a three-bed dwelling and the removal of a concrete frame barn.

The site is located in the open countryside outside of any settlement boundary and in an unsustainable location for new build residential development. The proposal would require substantial alterations to the structure and additional development in order to make the structure habitable. Given the scale of the works, the proposals are considered to be tantamount to the construction of a new dwelling, not the conversion of an existing building, and as such contrary to national and local planning policy. The scheme would present a degree of landscape harm, harm to the setting of the adjacent listed building and would not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. The proposal would also introduce additional light pollution to a rural area.

The application is reported to committee as the recommendation differs from that of Patching Parish Council.

1. Site Description

1.1 Patching is approximately 1.5km north east of Angmering and 0.5km west of Clapham. It is within the Angmering and Clapham Wood Downland character area and the landscape around the village is characterised by areas of woodland interspersed with arable fields of varying sizes. The application site is towards the northern boundary of the Patching conservation area, which covers the majority of the village.

1.2 The existing silos the subject of this application are located towards the northern extent of the village of Patching, which does not have a defined settlement boundary. The application site is therefore classified as being within the countryside. The application site consists of 4 redundant grain silos surrounded on their north-western side by a curved “engine shed”. To the east of the silos is an area of concrete hard-standing to the east of which is a dilapidated barn structure consisting of a framework with no roof. The silos are of two types with diameters of 5.5m and 4.5m measuring approximately 5.2m high. They are constructed of a single layer of galvanised corrugated steel on a concrete slab. The “engine shed” is approximately 1.3m high constructed of concrete blocks. The barn measures approximately...
13.8m x 9.2m, 5.3m to the ridge and 3.8m to the eaves. The silos and barn are remnants of the former agricultural use of the site. It is understood that the adjacent fields to the west are farmed by a neighbouring farmer.

1.3 Directly south of the application site is a pair of single storey properties used as holiday lets. South-east of the site is a single storey residential property. Further to the south is another residential property. These properties were constructed following a grant of permission in 2008 under reference PA/7/08/.

1.4 North-east of the site is St John Church, a Grade I listed building. On the approach to the village, particularly from the south, the church spire is visible from some distance. The silos are also visible and relatively prominent.

1.5 There are a number of public footpaths which pass through the settlement of Patching and a public footpath which runs along the access road passing the south of the site. The path splits and carries on to the west towards Patching Copse and skirts around the western boundary of the site before heading north across the agricultural fields and eventually meets the Monarch’s Way.

2. Relevant Planning History

2.1 SDNP/13/02903/FUL - Conversion of redundant 4no silos and concrete frame barn to a single dwelling – Application withdrawn

2.2 The adjacent farm has a long planning history which has resulted in the redevelopment of the site including:

2.3 PA/7/08/ Conversion to two residential units plus two self-contained holiday lets and conversion of barn to replacement stables.

3. Proposal

3.1 The application seeks planning permission for the conversion and redevelopment of the silos to create a 3-bed dwelling. The existing concrete frame barn structure would be demolished. The four silos would be “re-used” whilst the “engine shed” would be largely replaced with a 3m high curved structure. The external materials of the silos would comprise the existing corrugated steel with panels replaced like for like where they are damaged. The zinc roof would be retained with a glazed roof cap. The existing metal entrances on the south and south-east side the silos would be replaced with metal framed windows extending to the floor. A secondary vertical steel structure would be provided internally in the walls to provide insulation and support curved plasterboard. The roof would also be insulated. The existing ground floor concrete slab would be removed and replaced with insulated slab. The four silos would be utilised as a master bedroom, two further bedrooms, a sitting room and a dining room. Access to the property would be to the north of the structure via the extended “engine shed”.

3.2 The “engine shed” would be largely replaced, doubled in height, extended and would be clad with polished concrete with a meadow grass roof with sun pipes. The shed would be extended towards to east to link the silos with glazing. The extended “engine shed” would provide circulation space and a kitchen. A corner window would be created in the south-west corner with four windows provided on the north and north-east elevation.

3.3 To the east of the silos the hardstanding would be removed to create a grassed garden and parking for two cars area surfaced with hoggin/gravel. Vehicular access would be from the south of the parking area. Scrub would be removed to the west of the “engine shed” to create a grassed area.

3.4 A residential curtilage for the new dwelling has been indicated as well as additional landscaping and boundary treatment which would consist of the management of the existing hedging to the north, new native hedging to the west, new ornamental hedging to the south and east, tree planting, and a timber post and rail fence.
4. **Consultations**

4.1 **Patching Parish Council**: Support subject to conditions.

- The quality of build should be appropriate to the development’s location immediately adjacent to the Grade 1 Listed Parish Church.
- Replace the hedge proposed along the south side of the curtilage with a flint and brick wall.
- Landscaping conditions should include the retention of hedges
- The whole development site, including the field at the north of the site and outlined in blue on the proposal, should be kept as a single entity
- Light pollution caused by the development should be minimised.
- The type of heating system and fuel storage needs to be considered,
- No area of the development site should be elevated above its present level.
- The proposed car parking would be very visible on the approach to the Church and should be screened

4.3 **SDNPA Historic Buildings Officer**: Objection

- Silos detract from Conservation Area. Removal of silos would enhance the Conservation Area.
- Insertion of a house would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area
- Poor design
- Silos are not buildings and are not suitable for conversion
- Would require significant alteration and new building
- Not sympathetic to the setting

4.4 **SDNPA Design Officer**: Objection

- Buildings of historic or architectural value are sometimes considered acceptable for residential conversion if this is the only viable use that ensures their retention. The four silos and barn have no historic or architectural value so their retention is not a priority.
- The idea that agricultural buildings of whatever quality may be considered appropriate for residential conversion is clearly wrong and unsustainable.
- The proposed building forms have no relationship to any characteristic house types within the South Downs National Park.

4.5 **HCC Landscape Officer**: Objection

- The development as submitted would detract from the primary purpose of the national park designation namely the conserve and enhance the natural beauty wildlife and cultural heritage purpose for reasons given above.
- The visual impact is underplayed. Mitigation measures require more detail.

4.6 **English Heritage** – No objection

4.7 **HCC Archaeology** – No objection

5. **Representations**

5.1 1 third party representation has been received supporting the proposal on the following grounds:

- Visual improvement
- Protection/preserving of farm buildings

5.2 2 third party representations have been received objecting to the proposal, raising the following issues:
Outside settlement boundary
Silos are not buildings
New development rather than conversion
Negative impact on adjacent listed building, Conservation Area and National Park
Traffic
Would set a precedent for the conversion of other non-building structures

6. Planning Policy Context

6.1 Applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The adopted development plan in this area is the saved policies of the Arun District Local Plan (2003).

National Park Purposes

6.2 The two statutory purposes of the SDNP designation are:
- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas;
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their areas.

6.3 If there is a conflict between these two purposes, conservation takes precedence. There is also a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

National Planning Policy Framework and Circular 2010

6.4 Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was issued and came into effect on 27 March 2012. The Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection and the NPPF states at paragraph 115 that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the national parks and that the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations and should also be given great weight in National Parks. Paragraph 55 outlines that new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoid unless there are special circumstances. Paragraphs 126-137 relate to heritage assets. Paragraph 125 relates to light pollution.

6.5 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 refers to the general duty as respects listed buildings and Conservation Areas. Section 66 of the Act sets the general duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 72 requires that “special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of that area”.

6.6 The development plan policies listed below have been assessed for their compliance with the NPPF and are considered to be complaint with the NPPF.

6.7 The South Downs Partnership Management Plan (SDPMP) was adopted on 3 December 2013. It sets out a Vision and long term Outcomes for the National Park, as well as 5 year Policies and a continually updated Delivery Framework. The SDPMP is a material consideration in planning applications and has some weight pending adoption of the SDNP Local Plan. Relevant policies are 1, 3, 9, 28, 37, 38, 39 and 50.

6.8 Policy 1 seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the landscape and its setting, in ways that allow it to continue to evolve and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change and other pressures. Policy 3 seeks to protect and enhance tranquility and dark night skies. Policies 9 and 10 relate to the historic environment. Policy 28 seeks to improve rights of way. Policies 37, 38 and 39 seeks to encourage cycling, reduce car travel and manage vehicle parking. Policy 50 relates to housing.
7. **Planning Policy**

7.1 The following saved policies of the Arun District Local Plan (2003):

- GEN3 Protection Of The Countryside
- GEN5 Provision of New Residential Development
- GEN7 The Form Of New Development
- GEN12 Parking in new development
- GEN20 Provision of Public Open Space within New Development
- GEN29 Nature conservation across the district
- GEN33 Light Pollution
- AREA 2 Conservation Areas
- DEV2 Conversion of Rural Buildings for Residential Uses

7.2 Patching Conservation Area SPG 2000 – which provides a description of the character and appearance of the conservation area and especially notes the 13th Century St Johns Church and its spire as key features as well as the rural character of the village.

8. **Planning Assessment**

8.1 Paragraph 55 of the NPPF advises that Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting. It is considered that the principle of a new dwelling in this location, where the primary movement of occupiers of the property would be via the private car to reach local services and facilities, would represent unsustainable development, would be unacceptable and contrary to both national and local planning policy.

8.2 The application site is located in the countryside outside of any settlement boundary where there is a presumption against new residential dwellings. Planning policies do however allow for the conversion of existing buildings to residential use. The applicant has submitted details showing a long demolished farm house on the site, c1876, this however is historic, the site has long returned to agricultural land and was last used for agricultural purposes as evidenced by the silos. The proposal is for a change of use of the land to residential and the erection of a dwelling through the partial re-use of existing structures on the site. Policy DEV2 of the Arun Local Plan which deals with the conversion of existing buildings to residential use outside the built-up area, requires amongst other things, that the building to be converted is structurally sound, of permanent construction and capable of conversion without rebuilding or significant alteration or extension.

8.3 The planning application is accompanied with a structural report of the silos but makes no reference to the “engine shed” and also makes references to the scheme proposed in a previously withdrawn planning application. The report advises that the metal of the silos has areas of rust staining and corrosion. They show no excessive deformation or structural distress and are judged to be structurally sound. It would appear therefore that the silos may be “structurally sound” however no information on the soundness of the “engine shed” has been provided.

8.4 Policy DEV2 also advises that the buildings should be capable of conversion without rebuilding or significant alteration. In order to convert the structures significant alteration is required through the addition of windows, the linking of the silos through substantial extension and the complete replacement of the “engine shed”. It would appear than none of the engine shed structure is to be retained and it would be completely replaced with a larger footprint and approximately doubled in height. As it stands the “engine shed” could not be converted to living accommodation due to its limited height and width. The silos would also be largely re-clad with substantial internal alterations. As a result of this a large proportion of the proposal is new development rather than the re-use of an existing building. Significant alteration of the silos is required and there would be very little left of the original structures. Therefore in this regard policy DEV2 is not met.
8.5 Saved policies GEN7, AREA2 and national policy in the NPPF, taken together, all require that development should take account of the importance of heritage assets and not cause material harm to them. Policy AREA2 in particular, reflect the general duty, at s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area and as s66(1) of that Act, amongst other matters, to have special regard to the setting of listed buildings. The heritage assets in this instance are the Patching conservation area and the Grade I listed Church to the north-east of the site.

8.6 The site and the silos in its present form present a negative impact on the character or the area, landscape and setting of the adjacent grade I listed church. The structures currently present a negative impact on the Conservation Area. The removal of all the structures on the site would be the best option to enhance the countryside setting, the Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent grade I listed church. It is acknowledged that through this proposal the existing barn and abandoned agricultural equipment on the site would be removed which would enhance the character of the area. However this could take place without the proposed residential development.

8.7 The conversion of the silos to residential would remove their potential for them to be dismantled and the site remaining in agricultural use and reverting back to open countryside and would retain the silos as permanent structures. The “engine shed” would be substantially altered and doubled in height presenting a greater impact on the character of the area however this could be mitigated by appropriate screening. The proposed landscaping would appear to do much to screen the structures from the west however the tops of the silos would remain clearly visible. The proposal would create a residential garden, provide parking and introduce residential uses and paraphernalia to the countryside location which would be visible from the public right of way and wider area. The Landscape Officer, Design Officer and Historic Buildings Officer have all objected to the scheme due to the impact on the character of the area and wider landscape. The silos and the substantial additional development required to convert the structures do not respond to local character and history or reflect the local surroundings or materials. The structures are not visually attractive in the local and wider landscape. The proposed development would result in an intrusive, uncharacteristic and detrimental form of development outside of a settlement boundary which would have a harmful impact upon the setting and significance of the adjacent Grade I listed church and Conservation Area and would harm the landscape character, visual amenity and natural beauty of this part of the South Downs National Park.

8.8 Policy DEV2 requires that proposals minimise the amount of land to be used as residential curtilage. The scheme proposes a residential garden between the silos and the parking area and a residential garden further to the east of the parking area and to the west and north of the silos. The built residential floor area of the site would be substantially increased through new development. It is not clear how access to the area west and north of the silos would be achieved or how it will be maintained. The applicant owns land to the north of the application site and the future use of this land is uncertain.

8.9 The development would also be clearly visible and obtrusive from the adjacent public rights of way. The proposal would incorporate glazed roofs, additional windows has the potential for further lighting. The scheme would therefore introduce additional light sources into a rural location contrary to the SDNPA’s dark skies policy and saved policy GEN33 of the Arun Local Plan.

8.10 The scheme would not present any loss of light, privacy or overshadowing to nearby properties. Members of the public utilising the PROW would be able to obtain views into the proposed kitchen area. There would appear to be sufficient distance between this kitchen area and the windows on the northern elevation of the adjacent holiday let.

8.11 The existing silos, “engine shed” and barn structure are unlikely to support bats. The survey of the site identified a range of habitats suitable for other protected species including scrub, unmanaged grassland and debris piles. The applicants have provided an appropriate strategy to avoid any impacts on reptiles or other protected species on the site. The County Ecologist has raised no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions.
The County Highways have not commented on the proposed development. The proposed dwelling would be served by the existing access road. It is not considered that the proposed development, which utilises an existing vehicular access, would result in such a significant increase in vehicular trips to and from the site that would prejudice highway safety.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The proposal is for the removal of an existing barn framework on the site and the substantial alteration of agricultural grain silos in order to convert them into a 3-bedroomed dwelling along with the provision of a residential garden, parking area and landscaping. The proposal would require substantial alterations to the structure and additional development in order to make the structure habitable. The proposal is not in accordance with policy DEV2 in these regards. The removal of the barn framework would lead to some enhancement of the character of the area, the Conservation Area, the setting of the adjacent listed building and wider area however the scheme would retain the existing silos on site and introduce additional built development and residential paraphernalia to this countryside location directly adjacent to and visible from a public right of way. The scheme would therefore present landscape harm, harm to the setting of the adjacent listed building and would not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. The proposal would also introduce additional light pollution to a rural area.

10. Reason for Recommendation

10.1 It is recommended that the application be refused for the following reasons:

1) The proposed development does not constitute the conversion of an existing building. Furthermore given the scale and nature of the works, the structure would not be capable of conversion without significant extension and alterations and would instead result in the construction of a new dwelling. The application site is within the open countryside and special circumstances have not been demonstrated to justify a new dwelling in this unsustainable countryside location. As such, the proposed development is considered contrary to paragraph 55 of the NPPF and saved policies GEN3, GEN7 and DEV2 of the Arun District Local Plan 2003, the purposes of the National Park and the NPPF.

2) The proposed development would result in an intrusive, uncharacteristic and detrimental form of development outside of a settlement boundary which would have a harmful impact upon the setting and significance of the adjacent Grade 1 listed church and Conservation Area and would harm the landscape character, visual amenity and natural beauty of this part of the South Downs National Park. It is therefore contrary to Saved Policies GEN2, GEN3, GEN7, AREA2 and DEV7 of the Arun District Local Plan (2003), Patching Conservation Area SPG 2000, the purposes of the National Park and the NPPF.

3) The proposed development would introduce additional lighting into a secluded rural area and would therefore not accord with the SDNPA dark skies initiative and would be contrary to policy GEN33 of the Arun District Local Plan (2003), policy 3 of the SDNP Partnership Management Plan, the purposes of the National Park and paragraphs 115 and 125 of the NPPF.

11. Crime and Disorder Implications

11.1 It is considered that the proposal does not raise any crime and disorder implications.

12. Human Rights Implications

12.1 This planning application has been considered in light of statute and case law and any interference with an individual’s human rights is considered to be proportionate to the aims sought to be realised.
13 **Equalities Act 2010**

13.1 Due regard, where relevant, has been taken to the South Downs National Park Authority’s equality duty as contained within the Equalities Act 2010.

14 **Proactive Working**

14.1 In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the NPPF. This has included the provision of pre-application advice.

**Tim Slaney**

**Director of Planning**

**South Downs National Park Authority**

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Appendices  
1. Site Location Map  

**SDNPA Consultees**  
Deputy Director of Planning, Monitoring Officer & Legal Services.

**Background Documents**

- Application Documents  
  http://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=N6ZVUPTUH5P00  
- National Planning Policy Framework  
- National Planning Practice Guidance  
  http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/  
- SDNP Partnership Management Plan  
- Arun Local Plan  
  http://www.arunlocalplan.net/
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