

2.4 REFERENCE NO - 15/505666/FULL		
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Demolition of existing outbuilding. Proposed change of use of existing outbuildings to form two holiday lets with additional onsite parking provision, as amended by drawing 14/2520/2B received 7 th September 2015		
ADDRESS Bourne Place Stockers Hill Rodmersham Kent ME9 0PJ		
RECOMMENDATION: GRANT subject to conditions		
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Contrary Representations from Parish Council and local objections		
WARD West Downs	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL Rodmersham	APPLICANT Mr And Mrs Tim Bishop AGENT Nigel Sands And Associates
DECISION DUE DATE 09/09/15	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 26/08/15	
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites): None of relevance to the present application		

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The property is situated just outside the built up area boundary at Rodmersham, although the host property is just within the boundary. It forms part of a steeply sloping field, with a level ‘shelf’ towards the top where the buildings the subject of this application are situated. The topography of the land then continues steeply upwards to the rear gardens of the residential properties situated within Stockers Brow to the east. The view to the west is across the Highsted Valley, commanding panoramic views.
- 1.02 The majority of the field has an established use for the keeping of horses, and indeed is used as such now. At the top part of the field is a private road way running north/south; adjacent to these are three existing buildings. The first is an old Nissen hut type structure, which is to be demolished. The second and third buildings are stable/outbuildings of indeterminate age. Whilst structurally sound, both would require major refurbishment and are not visually pleasing in their present state.
- 1.03 Bourne Place is situated on the outside of a sharp bend in the road known as Stockers Hill, near to the brow of the hill. Stockers Hill is the principal road between Highsted Valley and the village of Rodmersham.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The proposal is for the complete renovation and refurbishment of the two stables/outbuildings, and changing their use to holiday lets.

- 2.02 To enable the conversion, the proposal is to re-clad the exterior of the buildings with weatherboarding, and to add doors and fenestration to create two relatively small, two-bedroomed holiday lets.
- 2.03 The drawings show each building with large glazed sliding doors to the western elevation, facing the aforementioned views across the valley. To the rear, the windows shown would serve bathrooms, and as such would be obscure glazed, although the entrance door to buildings would also be situated on this elevation, together with a high level window to one kitchen.
- 2.04 The site already boasts parking for two cars where the present Nissen hut now stands; this would be increased to six spaces.
- 2.05 The overall outer dimensions of both buildings would be unchanged by this proposal, if approved.
- 2.06 The original submitted drawings showed high level windows to both of the buildings; this was an error. The high level window on building B has been omitted, due to concerns over potential overlooking, and amended drawings have been received showing this.
- 2.07 A comprehensive Planning Statement has been submitted with the application, outlining the benefits that the two units will bring, not only to the applicant but more importantly to the benefit of the rural economy, particularly local shops, pubs, etc. It notes the support for rural tourism within paragraph 28 of the NPPF and states that the proposal is fully compliant with same. It also notes that a cleaner would be employed to service the units.

3.0 SUMMARY INFORMATION

	Existing	Proposed	Change (+/-)
Approximate Ridge Height (m)	4.5m	4.5m	None
Approximate Eaves Height (m)	2.8m	2.8m	None
No. of Storeys	1	1	
Net Floor Area	58.5 square metres (each unit)	58.5 square metres (each unit)	None
Parking Spaces	2	6	+ 4

4.0 PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

- 4.01 None

5.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.01 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Paragraph 28 states that Local Authorities should support *'the provision and expansion of tourist and*

visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres'

5.02 Swale Borough Local Plan 2008: Policies E1, E6, E19, B5 and RC1 (development criteria; protecting the countryside; design criteria; new tourist facilities and rural economy).

5.03 Policy B5 states that;

"Policy B5

Existing and New Tourist Attraction and Facilities

The Borough Council will seek to retain existing tourist attractions and facilities, including tourist accommodation. Proposals to change the use of such facilities will be considered in accordance with Policy B1, Policy RC2, and Policy C1 as appropriate. The Borough Council will permit improvements to existing tourist facilities and the development of new tourist attractions and facilities, including serviced and self-catering accommodation in accordance with the Local Plan."

5.04 Policy RC1 states;

"Policy RC1

Helping to Revitalise the Rural Economy

Proposals that would help to diversify the rural economy, provide new rural jobs and services or provide environmentally positive countryside management, will be permitted provided that:

- 1 the proposal is appropriate in scale with its locality and the site retains its rural character;*
- 2 there is a positive impact upon, or no detriment to, landscape character, biodiversity or countryside conservation;*
- 3 the use would not result in a significant increase in traffic to the detriment of the character, quiet enjoyment or safety of the lanes to and from the site, or be of a scale as to create unsustainable travel patterns;*
- 4 maximum use is firstly made of existing buildings, or, if not suitable, their modest redevelopment, followed by use of other previously developed land, in preference to development on greenfield land, except where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion; and*
- 5 the reuse of such buildings, or their extension, do not detract from their historical, architectural or landscape interest, character, or appearance."*

6.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

6.01 Three letters and emails of objection have been received from local residents. Their contents may be summarised as follows:

- Noise and light pollution
- Concern that the buildings may become separate dwellings, rather than just holiday lets
- Stockers Hill is a steep hill; the entrance to the site is just thirty feet below the brow
- There is no pavement above the entrance
- View from the entrance is generally obscured by several parked cars
- Although Building B is situated below my property on a slope, views from the rear windows will look directly into my windows
- Disruption during construction
- Smells from barbecues and bin stores
- Noise and lighting disruption from people staying in the holiday lets
- Emergency vehicles will find access to the site difficult
- Will damage the value of my property
- Additional traffic from holiday makers
- Lack of clarity over where property owners will park their own cars
- There are better areas of the site on which to build two new holiday lets

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.01 Rodmersham Parish Council objects to the proposal, for the following reasons:

“Concerns have been expressed to the PC ref this application. Firstly the increased traffic is causing some concern. The only entrance/exit already serves two properties and this will increase to four properties and probably be 8 cars or more. This exit is on a bend, where already parked cars are causing problems to cars coming down the hill - this problem has been reported to the police on numerous occasions. It is also the exact place the pavement ends making it even more dangerous for pedestrians - having to deal with the parked cars, traffic on the hill and now excess traffic entering the properties. The proposed building also will be overlooking the immediate neighbours with the inclusion of windows on that side but also it will be overlooking some of the properties in Highsted Valley - this build will be looking down on to them.”

- 7.02 Kent Highway Services raises no objection: *‘I refer to the above planning application and having considered the development proposals and the effect on the highway network, raise no objection on behalf of the local highway authority. I note that the parking spaces nearest the proposed holiday lets and the available turning areas are quite constrained, and this may result in difficulties manoeuvring a vehicle within the site. I do not consider that this has an effect on the highway, but may cause difficulties within the site.’*

- 7.03 The Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board raises no objection.

7.04 Southern Water raises no objection, but requests that an informative be added advising the applicant of the correct procedure for connecting the units to water services.

7.05 The Council's Tourism Officer supports the proposal, noting that:

“The size and scale of the tourism development is in keeping with the location and landscape and I am pleased to support the application. There is a limited stock of quality self catering accommodation in Swale and this will support a growing requirement for more flexible guest accommodation in an area where the product base has widespread and growing appeal not just in the traditional visitor season but throughout the year. With growing visitor interest in the 'great outdoors' and for short breaks in the UK, this accommodation will appeal to those seeking year-round leisure breaks - walking, cycling, photography and birdwatching as well as those seeking more traditional pursuits such as visiting family and friends or visiting the 'Garden of England'. The location is well placed to take advantage of honeypot destinations in Kent and near Europe. Tourism is no longer confined to summer holidays only and accommodation of this calibre is key to supporting a growing demand throughout the four seasons.”

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PLANS

8.01 Application papers and correspondence relating to planning reference 15/505666.

9.0 APPRAISAL

9.01 The main issues of concern appear to centre around highways issues; privacy and overlooking; and the potential future use of the holiday lets (if approved). For the sake of regularity, I will deal with each of these issues in turn.

9.02 With regard to highways issues, I acknowledge that the entrance to the site is on a sharp bend on a steep hill, but visibility is still good in both directions. I have no doubt that parking may indeed occur on this corner, but the lack of any parking restrictions would suggest that neither the police nor Kent Highway Services consider the matter one for particular concern. I also note that Kent Highway Services raises no objections of grounds of highway safety, but have mentioned that the parking proposal seem a little constrained. I have therefore thought it prudent to include Condition 4 below, requesting a full parking area drawing.

9.03 With reference to issues of privacy, overlooking and general residential amenity, I believe that local concerns may have to some extent been influenced by an error shown on the submitted drawings, which originally showed a high level window to the kitchen areas of both structures. This is an error: the agent acknowledges that Building B is not as well screened to the rear as Building A, and has therefore now omitted any windows to the kitchen, relying on the light from the glazed doors to the front. This will leave only the

en-suite bathroom windows (which would be obscure glazed) and the rear window in the door of the rear lobby areas facing the properties above in Stockers Brow. An amended drawing received on 7 September shows this. As such, I recommend the inclusion of Condition 5 below, which will ensure that these windows are obscure glazed, and shall remain so in perpetuity. It should also be noted that the rear windows of Building B and the properties in Stockers Brow are at least 28 metres apart, far in excess of the normal minimum privacy distance of 21m.

- 9.04 I do not share the Parish Council's contention that the buildings would have views over the properties in Highsted Valley. I can confirm that from the site only the roofs of two properties can be seen, and no windows at all. One property on Stockers Hill can be seen from the site, but this is on an oblique angle, and situated 55 metres away.
- 9.05 With regard to the objections raised regarding potential smells from barbecues and bins, and noise from any holiday makers, these are matters of conjecture only; bearing in mind that the applicants live adjacent to these buildings, it is unlikely that such problems would be tolerated.
- 9.06 Concern has been expressed that the buildings might not in future be used as holiday lets and might be used as separate residential dwellings. In view of these concerns, I have thought it prudent to include Condition 6 below, to ensure that the use of the buildings is as holiday lets only.
- 9.07 Given the above discussion I conclude that the general policy in favour of new tourist accommodation in rural buildings is not outweighed by other local factors which give rise to unacceptable consequences. Accordingly, I find that the development accords with local plan policy and is acceptable.

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.01 In view of the above, and as the appearance of the buildings would be vastly improved if the application were to be supported, I recommend that the application be approved, subject to strict conformity with the conditions noted below.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION – GRANT Subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS

- 1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2) No development shall take place until samples of facing materials, including roof slates and featheredged weatherboarding to be used in the development

hereby permitted shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with these approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity to ensure a high standard of materials are used before development is commenced.

- 3) Detailed drawings of all new joinery work and fittings, together with sections through glazing bars, frames and mouldings, at a scale of 1:10, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any development takes place. The development shall then proceed in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity to ensure a high standard of joinery is used before development is commenced.

- 4) Notwithstanding the details submitted, a detailed drawing of the parking/turning area, showing adequate parking and turning space in line with Kent Vehicle Parking Standards ING3, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then proceed in complete accordance with these approved details and the parking area so shown shall be maintained clear of obstruction at all times..

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and amenity and to ensure that adequate parking and turning facilities are provided before development is commenced.

- 5) Notwithstanding the details submitted, the windows serving the en-suite bathrooms and the rear entrance doors shall be obscure glazed, to remain so in perpetuity.

Reason: In the interest of preserving the privacy to neighbouring properties.

- 6) The holiday let accommodation hereby permitted shall be used solely for the purpose of holiday accommodation and shall not be let or occupied by any person or group of persons for more than four weeks in any calendar year.

Reason: In order to prevent the permanent residential use of the buildings and having regard to the rural location of the site.

- 7) Upon completion of the development hereby permitted, no external alterations, whether permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 or not, shall be carried out.

Reason: In the interest of visual and local amenity.

Council's approach to the application

The Council recognises the advice in paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and seeks to work with applicants in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service; and seeking to find solutions to any obstacles to approval of applications having due regard to the responses to consultation, where it can reasonably be expected that amendments to an application will result in an approval without resulting in a significant change to the nature of the application and the application can then be amended and determined in accordance with statutory timescales.

In this case the proposal was submitted to the Council's Planning Committee, and the applicant/agent had the opportunity to address the Committee.

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.

The conditions set out in the report may be subject to such reasonable change as is necessary to ensure accuracy and enforceability.