

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL
RBC Planning@rugby.gov.uk

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

Conversion of barns to 5 residential dwellings including the demolition of existing barn to be replaced with new garage block

ADDRESS OF DEVELOPMENT:

WOLVEY HOUSE FARM, WOLDS LANE, WOLVEY, LE10 3LL

APPLICATION NUMBER: R10/0383

The application has been reviewed and I enclose Wolvey Parish Council's comments.

Overall Wolvey Parish Council Objects to this application.

The council believes that the application is contrary to Policies GP1, GP3, GP7 E1, E2, E5, E6 and H18 of the Rugby Local Plan and the Wolvey Parish Plan (adopted as an SPD by Rugby Borough Council 2008)

Wolvey Parish Council and Wolvey residents place a high value on the open spaces and the greenbelt around the village. There is a strong desire to retain the rural identity of the village. Evidence for this is contained within the Wolvey Parish Plan (for which we obtained an 85% response) and 95% of respondents wished to preserve the green belt.

In accordance with this, the Parish Council supports and seeks to protect its farming community. Wolvey House Farm is situated very close to the village being only approximately 250 yards from the village centre. It is, therefore, particularly well placed as an integral part of the rural identity of the village. Any change of use from its agricultural heritage would be a significant and damaging change to the character and rural quality of the area (contrary to Policy E5 of the Rugby Local Plan which says development proposals should respect and enhance the quality and character of the area)

Wolds Lane itself has been used for generations as a recreational amenity for a high proportion Wolvey residents. It is well used daily for walking dogs, horse riding, pushing children in pushchairs, children on trikes, bicycles, etc, or just for a pleasant walk in the countryside, and is the access route to a number of well used public footpaths. The lane has no footpaths or streetlighting and is therefore unsuitable for any further increase in traffic volumes. Development at this site would cause a significant increase in traffic volumes and therefore, impact on the amenity value of the lane. This is contrary to policies GP1, GP2 GP7, which seeks to safeguard amenity and public rights of way and again to policy E5.

Whilst residential use would be preferable to commercial use, **there is no valid reason for a change of use for these buildings.**

Until very recently Wolvey House Farm was a successful and productive farm. It had provided employment for members of the same family for more than 30 years and was an important and integral part of the community (evidence for this is enclosed showing Wolvey House Farm's contribution to the Wolvey Summer Festival 2009. The Summer Festival was an important part of the reason that Wolvey won the Community Projects award in the Warwickshire Best Village of the Year competition 2010) The farm has, therefore, a pivotal role in the retention of Wolvey as a sustainable rural community.

The barns are structurally sound and could easily be revived to their original use. Thus, the barns cannot be accurately described as redundant. The only reason the barns are currently empty is because the owners chose to terminate the tenancy agreement (thus the application is contrary to point 3 of Policy H18 of the Rugby Local Plan). The Parish Council is not aware of any attempt to retain or sell the barns as agricultural buildings.

A change of use from its current agricultural status will have a long term impact on the future management of the surrounding land, its ecology and the biodiversity of the area (contrary to Policy E6 of the Rugby Local Plan)

Additional comments:

1. This application is within the green belt. Policy E1 states all forms of development in the countryside will be resisted to preserve its character and protect resources. E2 states that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. This application does not fulfil any of the special circumstances.
2. The site is accessed by a single track rural road which is not suitable for increased traffic.
3. The Parish Council disputes the information included in the Transport Statement with the application:
 - a) The statement seriously under-estimates the number of trips per day from a development with 15 bedrooms. From experience of vehicle use in Wolvey, the council believes it would be at least double the quoted figure.
 - b) The statement dismisses the fact that farm trips of tractors towing machinery and cattle lorries still operate from the land adjacent to these barns, being used by the same farmers who previously operated from the site. Any vehicle movements from residential properties would therefore be in addition to, not instead of, these agricultural vehicle movements.
 - c) It is not acceptable to state that the grass verges form part of the highway. If used regularly in this way it would soon become a mud bath and cause serious ecological damage to the verges. It is also not true that there are "numerous access locations that function as passing places" - between the village boundary and the site entrance there is one.
 - d) The council disputes that existing traffic travels at speeds of 30mph. Many vehicles currently using the road travel at excessive speeds. Recent diversification of farms further down the road has already caused a significant increase in traffic volume.
 - e) Visibility on exiting the site is inadequate. Removal, or drastic pruning of hedgerows to improve visibility is environmentally unacceptable in a green belt location (policy E6)

- f) The parking allocation in the application is inadequate. The Wolvey Parish Plan states that development be designed with maximum provision for parking as Wolvey is a low accessibility area where parking needs are greater than in an urban area. Without greater parking facilities it is likely that overflow parking will take place on the narrow rural lane, causing disruption and danger to other road users & pedestrians.
 - g) The new build garage block is inappropriate development in the green belt and contravenes policy E2 which states there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. A garage block does not fulfil the criteria for special circumstances.
4. The Protected Species survey which took place in July 2010 found no evidence of barn owls. However, regular sightings of barn owls have recently been made by members of the Wolvey Environment Group in the field immediately adjacent to the site. It is not known where these barns owls are living but it seems likely that the barns at Wolvey House Farm might now be in use for this purpose, therefore, the Parish Council request that further surveys be undertaken.

Please let me know of the final outcome of this application.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Cartwright
Parish Clerk
23/12/10