

Full Planning Application
at
1 Boll O Bere Farm
Midlothian
Balerno
EH14 7JG

Development Quality Sub-Committee
of the Planning Committee

Proposal: Conversion of farm steading to 5 houses
Applicant: Hollick Homes Ltd.
Reference No: 03/04325/FUL

1 Purpose of report

To recommend that the application be **REFUSED** for the following reasons;

Reasons

1. The proposed development would prove contrary to policy 2.2 of the Currie Balerno Local Plan, policy E5 (d) of the Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan and ENV 16 of the Lothian Structure Plan by virtue of the fact that the building is no longer substantially intact and would require a significant level of rebuild.
2. The proposed development would prove contrary to policy E6 of the Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan in that it would result in the introduction of a basement level, additional dormer windows and new openings which do not retain the architectural integrity of the existing buildings and would be inappropriate in the rural setting.
3. The proposal would result in the loss of a building which is of historic significance.

2 Main report

Site description

The application site is situated on the northern side of the A70 road, west of Balerno. The site measures 68metres in width and averages 60 metres in depth. The original stone buildings form a u-shaped layout open to the road at the southern side of the site. Additional buildings which had been added to the west and north of the original steading and within the original courtyard have been removed. The roofs of the original buildings have also been removed. A detached house with front garden lies on the eastern part of the site.

Most of the original building is intact to eaves level. It measures 35 metres in length by 7.5 metres in width. The two outshoots measuring 14 metres in length by 6 metres in width lie to the south of the building.

There is an existing access track to the west of the site which provides access to the rear of the buildings. An area of common ground with some small trees approximately 40 metres in depth lies to the rear of the building.

The buildings originally used for agricultural purposes are now redundant due to changing agricultural practices.

Site history

Planning permission was granted on 12 June 2002 for the conversion of the steading to 5 dwellings (ref: 01/02228/FUL).

The approved proposal involved the removal of the modern steel framed sheds and the renovation and conversion of the steading to accommodate 5 residential dwellings. The existing access road would remain in situ retaining the right of way to the north. The proposal included 10 car-parking spaces to the rear of the property with common garden grounds proposed beyond. The existing house on the west part of the site would remain unaltered.

The approved restoration of the building would utilise all the existing window and door openings of the building with the introduction of velux windows on all elevations and three dormers in the central section of the roof. It proposed slate and pantile roof materials and timber sash and case windows. Existing boundary treatments will be retained.

The original proposal included the existing openings in the eastern elevation.

A supporting letter was provided with the original application which stated that potential alternative uses have been examined for the building and all other Lothian authorities have been consulted, as there are a greater number of steadings in East, Mid and West Lothian areas. The advice has been that there has been only one instance within each Authority where a steading has been converted to a use other than residential, the conclusion having been reached that there was little demand for commercial usage. The applicant concluded that the most appropriate use should be residential.

Planning permission was granted on the grounds that the buildings were of good architectural merit and appeared substantially intact.

Development

The proposal is for a substantial re-build of the external walls of the original, historic building and to change the internal layout, approved under the previous scheme 01/02228/FUL. The rebuild would involve the increase in the height of the roof from the original eaves height of 6.4metres to 7.2 metres. The wings of the building around the courtyard would increase in width from 6.35metres to 7.7metres. It is proposed to use traditional methods for the external skin with an internal timber frame to meet energy conservation requirements on a new foundation as agreed with Building Control.

The proposal involves the insertion of velux windows in the roof facing into the courtyard (south elevation) and a change in window detailing. The proposal includes basement accommodation and to achieve this the central courtyard will be dug out with ground levels dropped down by 1.6 metres. The doors to the properties and basement level windows are proposed at this new ground floor level. To the rear, north facing, three dormers are proposed in the roof plane and alterations to those windows indicated on the original scheme are proposed.

Supporting Statement

The applicant has submitted a Site Structural Survey and a Supporting Statement. The applicant's discussions with Building Control have advised that it would be more appropriate to demolish the structure and rebuild in the same style and character on a new foundation with damp course and an internal timber frame. The applicant advises that this would enhance:

- the quality of the build producing a more even mixture of masonry and reducing the look of a building which has been patched together many times
- the energy conservation characteristics
- the structural integrity

The applicant has advised that using traditional techniques and maintaining the footprint of the building would ensure the unique character of the Steadings was to be retained yet internally affording the new houses the benefit of modern construction to deliver a quality development on this brownfield site.

A Structural Survey was produced 7 July 2003, this is available in Group Rooms. The document covers the following;

1. brief
2. background
3. description of the buildings
4. detailed investigation
 - a) north wing
 - b) east Wing
 - c) west wing
5. Technical Discussion
6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The document concludes that the walls of the buildings have settled and continued to move. The walls have no recognisable foundations. The effects of the adverse structural movement are demonstrated in a number of locations by the excessive cracking and dislocation that has taken place. It concludes:

"Repairing and rebuilding on the existing structure will always pose a future risk to the accommodation which will be provided. It will not be possible to meet any building regulations or NHBC requirements without rebuilding the structures with a new foundation. I would therefore recommend that the structure be carefully dismantled as soon as possible and a new foundation installed before being rebuilt".

Consultations

Environmental and Consumer Services

The Department of Environmental and Consumer Services has no objection to the above-proposed development, however, we do have some concerns regarding previous uses of the site and the proximity of the A70. Therefore we recommend that the following conditions are attached to any permission granted.

- All windows with a view of the A70 will be fitted with acoustic double glazing to ensure the internal noise environment is commensurate with a Noise Exposure Category A site.
- Prior to the commencement of construction works on site:
 - 1) a) A site survey (including intrusive investigation where necessary) must be carried out to establish to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning, either that the level of risk posed to human health and the wider environment by contaminants in, on or under the land is acceptable, or that remedial and/or protective measures could be

undertaken to bring the risks to an acceptable level in relation to the development: and

b) Where necessary, a detailed schedule of any remedial and/or protective measures, including their programming, must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Planning.

2) Any required remedial and/or protective measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved schedule and documentary evidence to certify those works shall be provided to the satisfaction of the Head of Planning.

Transport

No objection to the application subject to the following being applied:

All accesses must be open for use by the public in terms of the statutory definition of "road" and require to be the subject of applications for road construction consent.

It is noted that the application is for house type amendments with no change to the road layout.

An RCC will be required for this development the current road layout will not meet RCC standards.

Planning application 01/02228/FUL which was approved on 26 February 2002 despite Transportation's request for continuation. The proposed road will require a RCC and the present design falls short of standards. The report makes no reference in the conditions of Transportation request.

Education

No objection

BAA

No objection

Culture and Leisure - Archaeology

In summary an archaeological evaluation and limited programme of historic building has been already carried out by CFA Archaeology at the site, between February and May 2002, in response to a condition attached to application 01/02228/FUL. The results show that the earliest element is a one-and-a-half storey long house forming the north range of the steading dating to the mid-18th century. This building dates to around a century later than the earliest historic (1682) reference to the steading, though some elements of this building may relate to this earlier structure. Both the east and west ranges were added later around the late 18th/early 19th centuries.

Accordingly this application should be considered under the following planning policies, issued by the Secretary of State for Scotland; National Planning Policy Guidance 18: Planning and the Historic environment (NPPG 18), 1999, National Planning Policy Guidance 5: Planning and Archaeology (NPPG 5) and the accompanying Planning Advice Note 42 (PAN 42), 1994. The aim should be to preserve archaeological remains in situ as a first option, but alternatively where this is not possible, archaeological excavation or an appropriate level of recording may be an acceptable alternative.

This proposed scheme will see the replacement of the current single/ one-and-a-half story steading with a 2-3 story complex of new houses on the same footprint as before.

Firstly, the scale of this new steading is in my opinion out of keeping with both its historic landscape setting and historic character, trebling in effect the original design. Further in order to build this new steading, in particular the basement levels, the developer will require to demolish the existing steading, reusing the salvaged stone to recreate the look of the former steading. As such this will lead to the loss of historic significance attached to the steading, with any rebuilt sections being in effect modern reproductions. It is the whole-scale nature of the proposed demolition required by this particular application that I find unacceptable. It is this two factors that make this application stand out from the original agreed scheme which was in effect a conversion of the existing buildings.

In summary the longevity of use of over 300 years makes Boll of Bere steading a rare survival within the Lothian's and certainly in my opinion of Regional significance. Indeed steadings of similar date have been accorded national significance; for example the nearby remains of Bavelaw Steading are a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Accordingly based on the above comments it is my recommendation that this planning application should be refused.

In addition, in recognising that it is inevitable that that any future redevelopment of the site will necessitate the demolition of certain sections of the steading, any future planning applications seeking to redevelop the steading must seek to preserve and incorporate as much of the original fabric as possible. Furthermore any rebuilding of the steading must also respect the scale, setting and character of this historic farmstead.

Representations

The application was advertised on 2 January 2004. Three late letters of support have been received.

Policy

The proposal is subject to the countryside policies of the Currie Balerno Local Plan and the Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan. The

Historic Scotland document " Rural Buildings of the Lothians, Conversion Guide for Practitioners" is of relevance.

Relevant Policies:

Policy 2.2 states that no development in the countryside will be permitted for purposes other than agriculture, outdoor recreation or other purposes appropriate to a rural area.

Policy 2.3 states that high quality agricultural land will protected from development, with development which is justified in terms of Countryside police being restricted to land of lesser quality and to locations where there will be no adverse impact on rural amenity.

Policy E5 restricts development in Green Belt and Countryside policy areas to protect their landscape qualities, rural character and amenity.

Policy E6 states that where acceptable in principle, development proposals in the Green Belt or Countryside must meet high standards of design and landscaping and meet criteria to safeguard local amenity.

Policy E27 encourages and supports measures for the protection and enhancement of the recreational potential of the River Almond, Water of Leith and their tributaries, including the completion of continuous walkway/cycle routes along their banks, where appropriate, the protection of their exceptional landscape qualities and rural character, the improvement of degraded sites adjacent to the River Almond between the airport and Newbridge, and the sensitive management of their banks and defined valleys to consolidate and enhance their value as wildlife corridors.

Policy E31 outlines the Council's intention to enter into management agreements with landowners of important archaeological sites.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

DETERMINING ISSUES

The determining issues are:

- Do the proposals comply with the development plan?
- If the proposals do comply with the development plan, are there are any compelling reasons for not approving them?
- If the proposals do not comply with the development plan, are there any compelling reasons for approving them?

ASSESSMENT

To address the determining issues, the Committee needs to consider:

- a) whether the proposed use is acceptable in this location;
- b) whether the design is satisfactory given the setting of the site;
- c) whether the proposals are detrimental to residential amenity or road safety.

a) Planning permission was granted on 12 June 2002 (ref 01/02228/FUL) for the restoration of the farmhouse and conversion of the steading. This was considered acceptable in policy terms on the basis that the buildings were of architectural merit and capable of conversion and restoration without substantial rebuilding.

In justification of that proposal the applicant submitted a supporting statement outlining that the building was no longer required for agricultural purposes. It was considered that the buildings were substantially intact and, whilst not statutorily listed, are architecturally important and worthy of retention. On the basis of the information submitted the proposal was considered appropriate to the rural character of the area compliant with policy E5 and E6 of the Finalised Rural West Local Plan.

Whilst some repairs and restoring of the building is acceptable, the new build basement element altering the structural form of the buildings and altering the courtyard does not comply with policy E5 (d) of the Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan which only allows for the conversion of buildings in the countryside where they are substantially intact and would require no significant demolition. The proposal is therefore contrary to the development plan in respect of countryside policy. This includes policy 2.2 in the Currie Balerno Local Plan 1983 and ENV 16 in the Lothian Structure Plan 1994. Both policies presume against new development in the Countryside.

b) The proposed development is substantially different from both the original building and the approved scheme. Whilst this is for a change of use, there is a significant change to the building proposed including the level of new build element, the addition of a basement and increase in height and width of parts of the building. In this regard the changes being made would significantly alter the character of the building contrary to policy E6 of the Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan.

The development proposes an increased number of window openings with additional dormer windows and velux rooflights proposed which substantially alter the rural nature of the group of buildings. In addition the lowering of the ground floor level and introduction of basement accommodation with new windows and the lowering of the main doors is considered unacceptable in design terms in this rural location and results in a group of buildings of suburban appearance. On the east elevation the loss of the original openings to larger windows is unacceptable as these are strong traditional features of the steading.

It is considered that the extent of the alterations proposed would not retain the integrity of the historic building and would not follow the guidelines set out in the Historic Scotland document " Rural Buildings of the Lothians, Conversion Guide for Practitioners".

c) The proposed development is isolated with the exception of the neighbouring bungalow. The proposal would not affect the residential amenity of the neighbouring property. Environmental and Consumer Services have recommended that to protect the amenity of the residents of the proposed dwellings that the proposed windows facing the A70 should be fitted with acoustic double-glazing.

The proposal would not affect highway safety. However, Transport have advised that the road layout will need to meet Road Construction Consent Standards.

It is recommended that the Committee refuses this application for the reasons stated.

Alan Henderson

Alan Henderson
Head of Planning and Strategy

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Ward affected 01 -Balerno

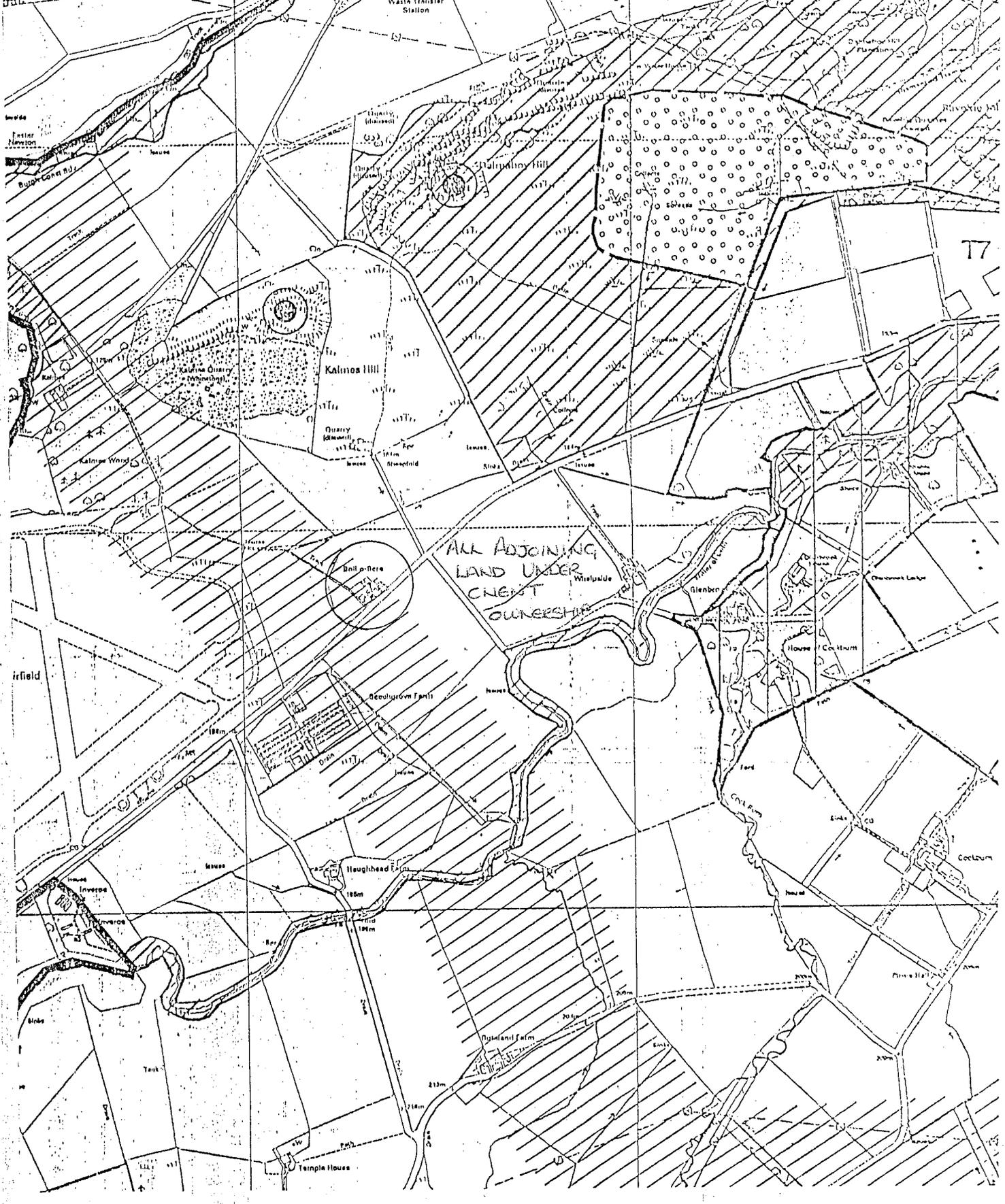
Local Plan Currie Balerno Local Plan
Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan

**Statutory Development
Plan Provision** Countryside

File

Date registered 9 December 2003

**Drawing numbers/
Scheme** 1-22



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PROPOSED CONVERSION OF BOLL O BERE STEADING, BALERNO.
 EDINBURGH. SITE LAYOUT PLAN.

DATE APR 01
 DRAWN A.J.S.
 SCALE 1:10,000
 No.