

Committee: **Regulatory
Planning Committee**

Date: **10 December 2008**

Report by: **Head of Planning**

Proposal: **Works associated with the construction of the proposed Bexhill to Hastings Link Road, including the demolition of outbuildings and effect upon the south west corner of the garden, part of the Quarry Garden and surrounding area.**

Site Address: **Adams Farmhouse, Sandrock Hill, Crowhurst, Nr Battle.**

Applicant: **Assistant Director- Delivery, Transport & Environment Department**

Application No. **RR/2612/CCLB**

Key Issues: **I. Effect on the setting of the Listed Building**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To resolve to recommend the Secretary of State to grant Listed Building Consent subject to the conditions set out in the recommendation in paragraph 8.1 of the report

CONSIDERATION BY HEAD OF PLANNING

1. The Site and Surroundings

1.1 The application site occupies about 3.4 hectares of land which forms the grounds and fields to Adams Farmhouse, Sandrock Hill, Crowhurst. It is located on a west-facing slope within the Lower Powdermill Valley, about 1 kilometre south of the village of Crowhurst. The area is characterised by agricultural fields interspersed with areas of woodland, and scattered dwellings and other farm buildings. The site boundaries are defined by mature trees, and a public footpath forming part of the 1066 Country Walk abuts the grounds to the west. The Combe Haven Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies about 50 metres south of the site, and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies about 480 metres north of the farmhouse at its closest point.

1.2 The site is accessed via a track from Sandrock Hill to the north. The Farmhouse and associated outbuildings are located in the southern part of the

site, with a garden area and tennis court just to the north and a field used as a pasture beyond. The site includes a former quarry, which has been converted to an informal area of garden, about 100 metres north-east of the farmhouse.

1.3 The Farmhouse itself is a 2 storey, L shaped, Grade II Listed Building dating from the 16th century. It is faced with brown brick at ground floor level and hung with red tiles at first floor level, with a pitched, dark brown tiled roof with two chimneys. It has white framed sash windows and a brick-built front porch. There are a number of outbuildings associated with the Farmhouse including, to the south-east; (1) a large red-brick barn with a pitched, slate roof; (2) a second barn constructed of concrete block under a corrugated asbestos roof and (3) an open sided, 4 bay woodshed constructed in brick and slate in a state of disrepair. The two barns are the subject of a planning consent for conversion to one 3 bedroom dwelling and garage. Other outbuildings, including further brick stores, a stable block and a greenhouse are located to the west and north of the Farmhouse. The listing description for the building does not refer to any outbuildings.

2. The Proposal

2.1 The County Council has made a planning application (reference RR/2474/CC(EIA)) to construct a new highway to act as a Link Road between the towns of Bexhill and Hastings. The construction and operation of the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road (BHLR) would affect the setting of Adam's Farm and would involve the demolition of outbuildings near to the property. Therefore, an Application for Listed Building Consent is required.

2.2 The BHLR as proposed would lie to the south of Adam's Farmhouse. At its closest point the extent of works potentially required for the Road's construction would fall 30 metres from the house. The Farmhouse itself would not be physically affected by the works, although approximately 1.86 hectares of land would be lost from the holding. This would consist of a small part of the garden, part of the former quarry and grazing land to the north. The two barns and woodshed described in paragraph 1.3 above would be demolished, although all other outbuildings would remain. It is anticipated that 30 trees would be lost, mostly at the southern tip of the application site and just outside its boundary.

3. Site History

3.1 There is no County Planning history relating to the site, other than the current planning application for the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road, noted in paragraph 2.1 above.

3.2 Barns (1) and (2) the subject of the current application are covered by a planning consent for conversion to a dwelling and garage. This was issued by Rother District Council in 2004 under planning permission reference RR/2004/779/P, but has not been implemented to date.

4. Consultations and Representations

4.1 Rother District Council - raises no objections subject to the works only taking place if and when planning permission is granted for the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road and to facilitate implementation of the approved scheme, and subject to consideration being given to the re-building of buildings 2 and 3 elsewhere.

4.2 Crowhurst Parish Council – raises objections on the following grounds: The Environmental Statement states that the contractor is obliged to make a Statement before any work is undertaken and that as part of the Construction Statement a helpline will be set up; English Heritage must be informed of the application and their opinions sought; a number of mature trees on site would need to be removed if the application is approved; a previous application to turn these buildings into dwellings had been refused by Rother District Council; the property is being ruined to provide for a Link Road for which planning permission has not yet been granted. The Parish Council also advises that consideration should be given to the buildings being dismantled and repositioned elsewhere on site.

4.3 English Heritage - has confirmed it does not wish to offer any comments, and recommends that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of the Council's specialist conservation advice.

4.4 Public Representations – One letter has been received, raising objection to the application on the following grounds: The application should not be determined before the application for the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road is determined. The Link Road would have a serious adverse impact on the Combe Haven Valley and ecology, and equal attention must be paid to its impact on the heritage of the village of Crowhurst. Planning Committee Members lack detailed and independent knowledge on the heritage of the Link Road corridor. Adam's Farmhouse is one of the oldest farmhouses in the village and of great historical importance; the planning application fails to convey this. The proximity of the Link Road to Adam's Farm would make it inhabitable as a home, meaning the building would fall into disrepair and be lost. In his provisional approval of the Link Road Scheme, the Secretary of State directed that the environmental impacts should be minimised; the impact of the Link Road upon Adams Farm has not been mitigated; the mitigation merely protects the view of the house but fails to protect the integrity of the house itself.

5. The Development Plan policies of relevance to this decision are:

5.1 East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011: Policies S1 (b, m) (Sustainable Development), EN1 (Environment).

5.2 Rother District Local Plan 2006: Policy GD1 (8) (Listed Buildings).

6. Considerations

Effect on the setting of the Listed Building

6.1 Policy S1 (m) of the Structure Plan seeks to ensure that listed buildings and their settings are protected and enhanced. Policy GD1 (8) of the Rother District Local Plan seeks to ensure that development does not prejudice the character, appearance or setting of Listed Buildings.

6.2 While there will be no physical impact on Adam's Farmhouse, the construction of the BHLR in such close proximity to it and within its curtilage would impact on its setting. This aspect has been separately considered in relation to the consideration of the planning application for the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road.

6.3 The three buildings to be demolished are not referred to in the listing description. Building (1), the red brick barn, has the greatest architectural value of the three, although it appears a more recent addition and does not date back to the construction of the farmhouse. The barn has alternate course of headers and stretches bricks with a lime mortar all of which appears to be in reasonable structural condition including offset vent holes formed within the double bricked wall. It is apparent that the roof has been reconstructed with a slate roof laid over felt and new timbers with more modern concrete ridge tiles. The number of original timbers is limited to the posts by the doorway and some roof brackets. The barn has been altered with a more modern infill within the western doorway comprising horizontal timber lap boarding and a modern framed window with plastic infilled windows. The changes have reduced the buildings character and its immediate architectural value. The barn is separated from the farmhouse with intervening vegetation and not within the immediate surrounds of the farmhouse.

6.4 The loss of the barn will not prejudice or detract from the setting to the listed building and on this basis, together with the physical changes that have been undertaken its demolition is considered acceptable. However, because it does process some architectural value its demolition should only take place if the Link Road application is approved and implemented.

6.5 Whilst not material to the merits of this application it is noted that under the planning application for the Link Road it is proposed to rebuild the barn in acknowledgement of its local importance as a bat roost (see Agenda Item 5a).

6.6 Building (2) has little architectural value and is constructed of modern materials with a concrete frame and concrete block infill walls beneath a corrugated sheeted roof. The building is generally unsympathetic to the site, although it is in reasonably sound structural condition with evidence of some current agricultural use. The building is further divorced from the surrounds of the listed building than barn (1). I do not consider the loss of building (2) is unacceptable, indeed its removal has the potential to enhance the site and wider setting of Adam's Farmhouse albeit that the context would alter with the construction of the Link Road. Building (3), the open sided timber woodshed,

is a low building in very poor structural condition. While its slate roof and general design is sympathetic to the rural area, its partial collapse is indicative of dilapidated state of repair. Whilst it is closer to the house than the other buildings it is not generally visible beyond the site and makes little positive contribution to the character of the listed building and its removal is therefore considered acceptable.

7. Conclusion and reasons for approval

7.1 In accordance with Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the decision on this application should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 The proposals involve the demolition of three farm buildings necessary to provide for the construction of the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road. All the buildings are detached to different degrees from the immediate setting of the listed building. Building (2) has little architectural value and is constructed of modern materials unsympathetic to the site. Building (3), the timber woodshed, is a small building in very poor structural condition. Building (1), the red brick barn, has the greatest architectural merit but has been the subject of more modern additions and has the benefit of an extant permission for its conversion and alteration.

7.3 Having regard to these factors it is not considered that the demolition of these buildings will affect the character or setting of the listed building and their removal is therefore considered acceptable. The proposal is in compliance with Policy S1 of the Structure Plan and Policy GD1 (8) of the Rother District Local Plan.

7.4 There are no other material considerations and the decision should be taken in accordance with the development plan. The County Council does not have the power to determine listed building applications and the proposal needs to be referred to the Secretary of State for decision. It is recommended that the County Council should advise the Secretary of State that the application should be approved subject to conditions including that demolition should only take place if permission is granted for the Link Road and it is implemented.

8. Recommendation

8.1 To recommend that the Planning Committee resolves to recommend the Secretary of State to grant Listed Building Consent for application RR/2612/CCLB subject to the following conditions:

1. The works hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with section 18 (1) (b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and to relate to the timescale allowed for the implementation of the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road.

2. The two barns and woodshed shall only be demolished if planning permission for the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road is granted and implemented.

Reason: To ensure that the outbuildings are only demolished if the reason requiring their loss has the benefit of planning permission and its implementation is pursued.

INFORMATIVE

1. The applicant is requested to consider rebuilding Barn 1 (the red brick barn with a slate roof) in another location at Adams Farm in view of its importance as a bat roost.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Transport & Environment
2 December 2008

Contact Officer: Peter Earl Tel. No. 01273 482650
Local Member: Councillor Kathryn Field

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

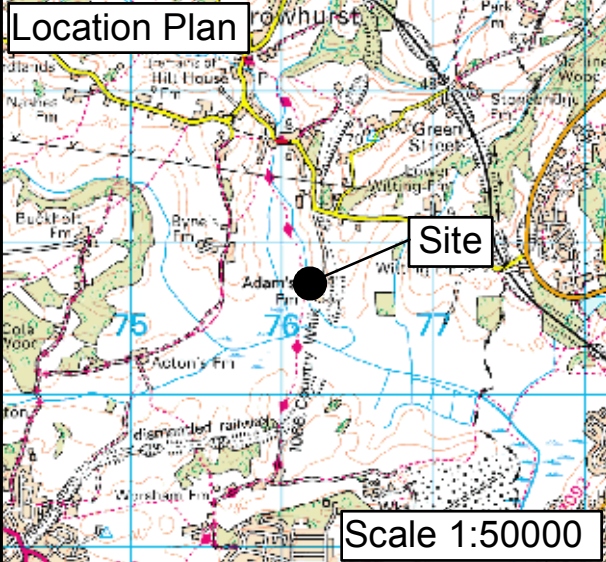
East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011
Rother District Local Plan 2006
Planning application file.

RR/2612/CCLB



Application site boundary

Access



Adam's Farmhouse
Buildings to be demolished

Route of proposed link road

Scale 1:2500

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Director, Transport and Environment
East Sussex County Council

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