

Planning Development Management Committee

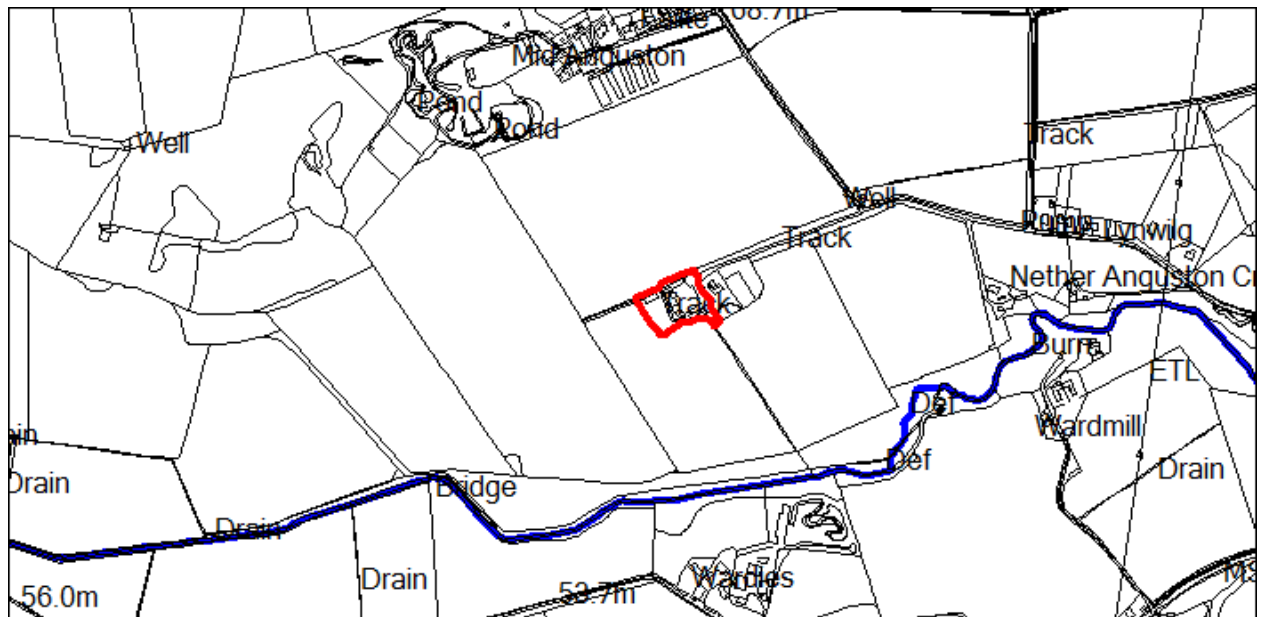
NETHER ANGUSTON, ABERDEEN

PART CONVERSION AND PART EXTENSION
OF FARM STEADING TO FORM RESIDENTIAL
DWELLING HOUSES.

For: Mrs G Gordon

Application Type : Detailed Planning Permission
Application Ref. : P150329
Application Date: 05/03/2015
Officer: Tommy Hart
Ward : Lower Deeside (M Boulton/A Malone/M
Maik)

Advert : Dev. Plan Departure
Advertised on: 01/04/2015
Committee Date: 18/05/2015
Community Council : Comments



RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

DESCRIPTION

The application property is a redundant farm steading at Nether Anguston which is within a site of around 6750sqm, some 2.2km to the west of Peterculter. The previous use of the building was for keeping cattle. The building has been substantially altered over the years in respect to walls having been removed and a cattle court installed to cover the inner yard area. By virtue of the alterations to the building, all that remains of the original buildings are the barn in the north west corner, the bothy in the north east corner the large garage building along the southern boundary, 2no timber garages and the 'L-shape' east and south wings of the original steading.

There is an existing free-standing natural stone and timber garage beyond the south wing which is single-storey in height and measures around 25.5m in length and 4.5m in width, with a small off-shoot of around 4m x 3m. That building measures around 3.5m to the ridge and 2-2.5m to eaves. Adjacent to that building is a single timber garage. A natural stone bothy lies in the north east corner of the site.

Very little land is available to the north, south and east of the building within the application site due to the location of the building in comparison to the site boundary. To the west there is a fairly substantial area of agricultural scrubland of around 2500sqm. There is a slight slope from north to south throughout the application site with the land to the immediate west of the buildings lying at a higher level than the rest of the site which historically allowed access to the hayloft within the southern leg of the building. Outwith the application site to the north, west, south and south east, the land is in agricultural use.

To the immediate east of the application site lies Nether Anguston farmhouse, a 2-storey B-Listed building flanked on all sides by mature trees.

The site is accessed via a narrow minor road which meanders from south east to northwest past the application site and eventually joins the B9119 at Garlogie. North Deeside Road lies around 900m to the south east of the site.

RELEVANT HISTORY

Planning ref P141451 for conversion of existing steading to residential and the erection of a new domestic dwelling was withdrawn before the application was presented to the Planning Committee with a recommendation of refusal.

PROPOSAL

Detailed planning permission is sought for the creation of four residential dwellings. The application is broadly in two parts; 1. Conversion of the east and south wings to provide 2no dwellings, and, 2. New-build extension of the barn and south wing to provide 2no dwellings. Conversion of the bothy to garaging is

also proposed. In addition, it is proposed to construct three new garages (2no being free-standing and one being attached to the east wing).

New-build and conversions

By virtue of the proposals, Units Two and Three are considered to be steading conversions whilst Units One and Four are considered new build houses in the Green Belt.

Unit One

This unit comprises the conversion of the existing barn and substantially extending it to form a 4-bed 2-storey (in part) dwelling. The barn would comprise the master bedroom and would have 4no conservation style rooflights inserted into the slate roof. Part of the south wall of the barn would be re-built. No other alterations are proposed to the original barn. The remainder of the proposed dwelling, which would be new-build extension, would be of a similar form of the previous steading building with new walls proposed to the west gable, north and south elevations. Two existing openings, on the north and east elevation, are proposed to remain. Along the north elevation, the new wall would include 7no 'suburban-designed' casement windows and a set of bi-fold doors, as well as 4no conservation style rooflights within the new slated roof. Along the south elevation there are 6no conservation style rooflights proposed within the new slated roof, 5no windows and one door opening proposed within the new-build wall. The small gable-end which is adjacent to Unit Two would be built up in natural stone. The new extension would be some 8m wide x 38m long. To reiterate, apart from the conversion of the barn, this unit is essentially a new build house in the Green Belt.

Unit Two

The east wing would be converted into a 2-storey dwelling with four bedrooms. There are a number of high level windows (9no) which be utilised and slapped down to form windows and doors suitable for modern day living. Two existing doors would be half in-filled to form windows and there would be one new opening proposed within the courtyard area. Eleven conservation style rooflights are proposed. Part of the proposal for this unit is to construct a double garage, finished in vertical cedar linings to external walls and slate to the roof, which would be attached to the building on the eastern elevation.

Unit Three

This unit is contained within the majority of the southern wing of the existing steading building and conversion is proposed to form a 2-storey 4-bedroom dwelling. In terms of openings, the following are proposed; 10no conservation style rooflights and a glazed link above the existing centrally located ground floor opening; 3no new openings; 2no existing door openings in-filled for form windows; 1no opening filled in; 9no high level and 4no ground floor level openings retained; 1no window opening enlarged to form larger bi-fold door opening. In addition, the existing eastern gable opening is proposed to be filled in with natural stone. Lastly, an extension is proposed on the southern side of that

part of the steading which is in two parts. An 11m wide x 6m deep glazed link with shallow pitch zinc roofing panel covered roof would adjoin the steading and attached to that would be a rectangular shaped single-storey building around 6m x 20m in size which that replace the existing building at the southern end of the site. That building would sit in a similar position to the existing garage building but be would be smaller in footprint. It would be finished with vertical cedar cladding and a smooth render to the external walls (colour to be confirmed), would have a monopitch roof finished in zinc roofing panels and would benefit from large glazed openings on the south, east and west elevations. In the north east corner of the application site, adjacent to the bothy, a new double garage is proposed which would have a slate finish to the roof and timber linings to the external walls.

Unit Four

Part of the existing south leg of the steading would be utilised for the ground and first floor bedrooms. The existing 'hayloft' entrance at first floor level would be retained and be glazed, as well as the existing openings being retained on the ground floor south side. A total of six conservation style rooflights are proposed. The remainder of the new house would be new-build extension. The main section would be some 7m x 20m in size, constructed of natural stone with slate roof. , An addition to that extension is proposed at the northeast corner, which would measure around 9m x 7m, be single-storey with a flat roof covered in zinc roofing panels, be finished externally with vertical cedar cladding and a smooth render, and have a large glazed panel facing south. Adjacent to the extension would be a double garage finished with slate roof and timber linings to the external walls. To reiterate, apart from the conversion of the small section of existing steading, this unit is essentially a new build house in the Green Belt.

The plans suggest each of the units would be afforded their own private garden space, with units 2 – 4 having south facing gardens and unit 1 having a north facing garden although no specific details have been presented at this time in relation to this.

In addition to the double garages shown with each plot, there are eight car parking spaces proposed within the central courtyard area in close proximity to the entrances of the dwellings.

In terms of drainage from the site, the plans show two stages (silt trap and a v filter trench), and in addition to that part of the runoff water will be infiltrated into the ground. This will connect into an existing watercourse (The Gormack Burn) which is a tributary of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation [SAC]).

Supporting Documents

All drawings and the supporting documents listed below relating to this application can be viewed on the Council's website at

<http://planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?ref=150329>

On accepting the disclaimer, enter the application reference quoted on the first page of this report.

- Building Inspection Report
- Design Statement
- Bat survey

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application has been referred to the Planning Development Management Committee because more than 5 objections have been received. Accordingly, the application falls outwith the scope of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

CONSULTATIONS

Roads Development Management – the amount of car parking spaces proposed is acceptable. The access road is sub-standard leading up to the site and thus requires upgrading. Due to the location, there would be little chance of access via public transport and hence there are concerns. Concerns are also raised in respect to pedestrian/cyclist safety given the nature of the rural roads leading to the site. A revised plan is required to show adequate turning facility for emergency vehicles and cars. There are no details about refuse collection. A Drainage Impact Assessment in line with SUDS principles is required to be submitted.

Environmental Health (Contaminated Land) – no objections to the proposal. Although the service does not believe the potential for risk is sufficient to justify the attachment of conditions, the applicant is advised that should any contamination of the ground be discovered during development the Planning Authority should be notified immediately. The extent and nature of the contamination should be investigated and a suitable scheme for the mitigation of any risks arising from the contamination should be agreed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

Communities, Housing and Infrastructure (Flooding) – there are no concerns regarding the impact of the drainage from the site on the River Dee. The treatment proposed has two stages (silt trap and a very long filter trench), and in addition to that part of the runoff water will be infiltrated into the ground.

Communities, Housing and Infrastructure (Waste Services) – no objections to the proposal. Options have been presented to the developer with regards to waste collection provision but this is a separate process from the planning approval.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) - it is unlikely that the proposal will have a significant effect on any qualifying interests, and an appropriate assessment is therefore not required, provided the SUDS and level of wastewater treatment are adequate to avoid pollution of the adjacent watercourse. Provided the design of the SUDS and wastewater treatment is in accordance with current guidance, we

are content that they will be suitable to avoid pollution - these aspects will be regulated by SEPA.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency - It is noted that the reason for consultation with this application is discharge to a watercourse and SEPA do not comment on this for this scale of development. It is for the Planning Authority to consider this matter and to also advise the applicant that this must be addressed at the regulatory stage, if appropriate.

Community Council – concerns have been raised which can be summarised as; 1. The access road between the site and North Deeside Road is not up to the required standards; 2. The increase in traffic for this development when added to that of the riding school application (150110) would be considerable; 3. Concerns over the surface water drainage into the Gormack Burn which is part of the River Dee Special Area of Conservation catchment.

REPRESENTATIONS

Seven letters of objection have been received. The objections raised relate to the following matters –

- Too much timber is proposed which is inappropriate for a building of this type;
- Concerns regarding the access road and the increase in traffic which the development will bring.

In addition nine letters of support have also been received which are appended to the end of the report. It is worth noting that the majority of the letters of support come from people living outwith the locality of the application site, including Cults, Milltimber, Elrick and within Aberdeen City: Great Western Road, Devanha Gardens South, North Deeside Road and Springfield Road.

PLANNING POLICY

Scottish Planning Policy

The purpose of green belt designation in the development plan is to:

- Direct planned growth to the most appropriate locations and support regeneration;
- Protect and enhance the character, landscape setting and identity of settlements; and
- Protect and give access to open space.

Aberdeen Local Development Plan

Policy D1: Architecture and Placemaking

To ensure high standards of design, new development must be designed with due consideration for its context and make a positive contribution to its setting.

Policy NE2: Green Belt

No development will be permitted in the green belt for purposes other than those essential for agriculture, woodland and forestry, recreational uses compatible with an agricultural or natural setting, mineral extraction or restoration or landscape renewal.

Buildings in the Green Belt which have a historic or architectural interest or traditional character that contributes to the landscape setting of the city will be permitted to undergo a change of use to private residential use or to a use which makes a worthwhile contribution to the amenity of the Green Belt, providing it has been demonstrated that the building is no longer suitable for the purpose for which it was originally designed.

Proposals for extensions of existing buildings as part of a conversion or rehabilitation scheme will be permitted in the Green Belt provided; a) the original building remains visually dominant, b) the design of the extension is sympathetic to the original building in terms of massing, detailing and materials; and, c) the siting of the extension relates well to the setting of the original building.

Supplementary Guidance

The Council's supplementary guidance (SG) *The Conversion of Steadings and Other Non-residential Vernacular Buildings in the Countryside* is a relevant material consideration.

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

The following policies substantively reiterate policies in the adopted local development plan as summarised below;

- Policy D1 – Quality Placemaking by Design
- Policy NE2 – Green Belt

EVALUATION

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the development plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Principle development

Whilst SPP seeks to ensure that within Green Belts development protects and enhances the character and landscape setting of town and cities, it doesn't provide sufficient detail in order to determine a planning application. Aberdeen Local Development Plan Policy NE2 (Green Belt) sets out the Council's position relative to development within the Green Belt, which is consistent with and

supports the principles and objectives expressed in SPP. Similarly, that Policy and the SG on 'steading conversions' provides clarity in that the principle of converting and extending traditional buildings to residential use is acceptable so long as certain criteria are met, which will be discussed in more detail below. The SG outlines basic principles that ensure the sensitive conservation and creative conversion of redundant vernacular agricultural buildings to other uses. Importantly, it is the conversion of largely intact and structurally sound traditional buildings, which are of historic or architectural interest, that is permitted by Policy NE2, not the substantial re-building or extension of such buildings.

Conversion

A structural survey submitted with the application confirms that the existing steading, namely the east and south wings, are suitable for conversion. Likewise, the existing barn in the northwest corner of the cattle court and the bothy are also suitable for conversion and so in that respect only there is no conflict with the SG.

Alterations associated with conversion

In converting traditional steading and buildings for residential use, the temptation often arises to incorporate standardised domestic features, which result in very modest vernacular buildings becoming suburban in appearance. In doing so, their original character and setting can be compromised. The best conversions reinforce the original architectural qualities of a building. The SG states "*original characteristics of a steading that is to be converted for residential or other use, should be retained, and consideration given to the reinstatement of significant or attractive features that have previously been removed. Alterations should be the minimum necessary to allow the building to function adequately in its new use, and should not disguise its original purpose.*" Importantly, a founding principle in adapting buildings of historic character is that, within practical limits, the user should adapt the use of the building to suit its form, rather than adapt the building to suit the use, which can lead to major and harmful transformation.

In terms of window and door openings, the SG seeks to limit any new openings and make the most of existing openings. It also states that the accumulation of domestic scale windows should be avoided in order to ensure they do not detrimentally affect the appearance and character of the steading. The proposed rooflights, whilst conservation style, are laid in a regular pattern which goes against the principles of the SG. Further, although the new windows are finished in timber, these take the form of domestic style casement windows and in that respect are incompatible with the traditional form of the steading and thus do not conform to the SG. Lastly, the proposed alterations to the existing openings go against the spirit of the SG and thus there is conflict.

New build extensions

Accommodation should largely be created within the existing envelope of the building. Alterations to the external envelope should be kept to a minimum. Any non-original infilled courtyards or steel-framed or concrete block-work structures

cannot be retained as part of any newly created dwelling. The SG states only *“modest extensions will be permitted to allow small steadings to satisfy present day expectations of standards of accommodation.”* Large extensions will not be permitted.

The garage extension to Unit Two is modest in scale and is finished externally in materials which complement the existing steading building and the location within the Green Belt. The original building would remain dominant and the dimensions are comparable to the existing building so in that respect there is no conflict with the SG or Policy NE2.

As for the large extension to the south of Unit Three, there is a clear conflict with the SG and Policy NE2. The footprint of that extension is around 180sqm which is approximately 6sqm more than the footprint of the part of the steading to which it would be attached, thus doubling the size of the building. Further, the width of the T-shaped extension totals 12m, whereas the gable width of the existing building is only 6m. Lastly, because of the location and size of the extension, the southern leg of the steading would no longer remain visually dominant and the siting of the extension does not relate well to the setting of the original building. That being the case, the extension to Unit Three does not comply with Policy NE2 or the SG.

The plans show the remainder of the south wing of the steading, which has a footprint of around 78sqm, being extended to the north by around 200sqm meaning that new house would be around three times the size of the original structure. Similarly, there is a proposal to convert the existing barn and extend it by some 270sqm to realise a total footprint of around 350sqm to create a new north wing. By virtue of the extensions, the original barn and steading would not remain visually dominant and the footprint of these extensions are far in excess of the original buildings. Indeed, the original retained structures would be overwhelmed by the very large and dominant extensions. Further, the dimensions of the proposed extensions are such that they would be wider than the barn and steading. In that respect, the extensions conflict with Policy NE2 and the SG.

It is clear that the rationale behind extending the barn and steading (Units One and Four) is to provide two new dwellinghouses in the Green Belt. Policy NE2 does not allow for new housing in the Green Belt unless it meets the essential criteria. No agricultural justification has been provided for what are essentially new-build houses and thus there is no reason for departing from the Development Plan and in that case there is clear conflict with Policy NE2 in respect to the new housing in the Green Belt.

Design, massing and visual impact of development

In terms of design, it is considered that the extensions which form part of the application have not been designed with due consideration for their context. Although aesthetically the new steading wings may provide a nod to what previously existed on site, this cannot be separated from the scale and massing

of the proposed extensions which are clearly not acceptable in this situation. The new double garages are considered to be acceptable in terms of visual aesthetic and material finish.

As outlined above, it is considered that the scale and massing of the proposed extensions are such that they cannot be considered to be subservient to the original steading and would lead to confusion as to which parts of the building are original and which are more recent. The aggregate footprint of the extensions are substantially more than the original building footprint and the width of some of the extensions are greater than the existing steading. By original footprint this is taken to be the part of the steading which is capable of being converted and not any historic leg of the steading which is no longer in existence.

In relation to visual impact, it is considered that given the location of the property, the topography and existing buildings/landscaping, the visual impact of the new extensions and new build garages would not have any significant detrimental impact on the wider Green Belt. However, in terms of localised impact, it is clear that there would be a significant detrimental impact.

Setting, Boundary Enclosures and Extend of Curtilage

The SG states that *“the space around the outside of buildings can make a major contribution towards the setting and character of most agricultural buildings... [and] ... careful consideration should be given to arrange spaces to give the building a setting appropriate to its rural setting.”* The plans suggest a general arrangement of gardens which is suburban in nature although their size would be considered commensurate with the respective dwelling. That said there are no specific details on boundary enclosures which gives rise to concern that the whole application site, which includes an area of 2500sqm to the west of the steading would be included in the curtilage of Unit Four and thus be unusually large in the context of its setting. Further, approval of the application for residential purposes would mean this vacant land would become residential in nature and thus there would need to be restrictions in place via condition, relative to use and boundary enclosures, should permission be granted to ensure that land remains in agricultural use. However, the lack of information relative to this reason is sufficient to be potentially contrary to the SG and therefore form part of the recommendation of refusal.

Access/parking

The plans submitted show an appropriate level of car parking provision for the development and is therefore acceptable. In terms of access, the Roads engineer had indicated that the un-adopted access track is sub-standard and thus requires upgrading. Due to the site location, access via public transport would be difficult and thus not in line with the Council's aspirations on 'green travel'. Concerns were also raised regarding pedestrian/cyclist safety given the nature of the rural roads leading to the site. A revised plan was requested to show adequate turning facility for emergency vehicles and cars but no plan was submitted. There are no details about refuse collection although this could be dealt with via planning

condition should the application be approved. It is understood that discussions are taking place with Roads officers to deal with their comments but no amendments have been submitted to date.

Drainage/Flooding/Water pollution

Plans and calculations were submitted in support of the application that show the surface water drainage connecting into the Gormack Burn via two levels of treatment as well as infiltration of some of the run-off water into the ground. Comments received from SNH, and the Council's Flooding, Roads and Environmental Policy teams indicate that there are no issues in relation to the drainage of the site towards, or indeed pollution of, the Gormack Burn. There is no need to undertake an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive.

Relevant matters raised by community council

1. This point has been dealt with in the access/parking section above;
2. The roads engineer did not raise any concerns with regard to the increase in traffic given that this application is for four houses and is unrelated to the application for the riding school;
3. This point has been dealt with in the drainage/flooding/water pollution section above.

Relevant matters raised in letters of objection

In respect to the use of timber on the development, this material is considered to complement the natural stone of the steading building and in that respect the principle of using timber is acceptable.

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan

The Proposed ALDP was approved at the meeting of the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee of 28 October 2014. It constitutes the Council's settled view as to what should be the content of the final adopted ALDP and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, along with the adopted ALDP. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the Proposed ALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on whether:

- these matters have been subject to public consultation through the Main Issues Report; and
- the level of objection raised in relation these matters as part of the Main Issues Report; and
- the relevance of these matters to the application under consideration

The foregoing can only be assessed on a case by case basis. In relation to this particular application, the policies listed below are of relevance;

- Policy D1 – Quality Placemaking by Design
- Policy NE2 – Green Belt

These policies substantively reiterate policies in the adopted local plan. For the same reasons that there is no conflict with the current local plan Policy D1, there is no conflict with Policy D1 of the proposed Plan. Likewise, for the same reason the application conflicts with Policy NE2 of the adopted local plan, there is conflict with Policy NE2 of the proposed Plan.

Summary

The principle of adapting a steading for residential use is supported by Local Policy and Guidance subject to certain criteria being met as providing a useful and diverse addition to the City's housing stock. The restoration of a traditional steading that is currently unused would undoubtedly improve the overall amenity of this part of the Green Belt. It is clear that the building which is present differs from the original steading building. Notwithstanding, the application for conversion and new build extension must be evaluated on the current situation.

Alterations to steading buildings should be the minimum necessary to allow the building to function adequately, not the minimum required by the applicant for personal need. In this instance, as a consequential result of the significant floor-space proposed; substantial extensions and alterations are proposed, adapting the building to suit the use rather than adapting the use of the building to suit its form. The proposed extensions and alterations would not be considered visually subordinate to; nor would they retain the identity and character of the building that currently exists. The result would be a steading largely dominated by the new extensions, disguising its original use and character, with confusion as to what was original and what is new

The proposal represents a departure from the Development Plan, in that there has been no justification provided which would allow deviation from Green Belt Policy for the new-build extensions which are, in reality, two new build houses in the Green Belt. Likewise, the proposed new build extensions are of a scale that they dominate the existing steading building and, in part, have not been designed to match the dimensions of the existing steading. Further, with respect to the conversion aspect, the amount of openings and design of windows and doors are not considered to be consistent with the aspirations of the SG and in that respect there is conflict.

Conclusion

The submitted plans show a proposal to convert two wings of the existing dwelling into residential use. The plans for Unit Two, subject to some minor alterations relative to openings, would be considered to accord with the SG and Policy NE2. The conversion of Unit Three is not considered acceptable on the basis of the proposed openings and also the substantial extension which would dwarf the original building. In respect to Units One and Four, given the lack of

original structure in place, these 'extensions' are effectively new build houses in the Green Belt and as such cannot be supported.

Should Members be minded to approve the application, it is recommended that any such approval includes planning conditions relative to; cycle parking, removal of permitted development rights; clarification of external finishing materials and samples; further detailed plans showing location of all rainwater pipes and any flues; detailed site and plot boundary plans specifically to ensure the land to the west is retained as agricultural plan showing turning area for refuse/emergency vehicles; colours of windows/doors; a plan showing upgrades to the access track in line with Roads officer comments.

An informative may also be necessary in respect to construction hours and contaminated land.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

1) Policy NE2 (Green Belt) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP) states that new development in the Green Belt must meet the specific criteria set out in the policy, being that there is a presumption against most kinds of development with only limited exceptions. No information has been provided to justify the inclusion of two new build houses in the Green Belt. The proposal therefore does not comply with Policy NE2 (Green Belt) of the ALDP. If permitted, this application would create a precedent for more, similar developments to the further detriment of the objectives of the Green Belt Policy and the character and amenity of the Green Belt, when sufficient land has been identified for housing through the development plan.

2) That although the principle of converting and extending a steading to provide residential accommodation is supported, in this particular instance the proposed development would be contrary to Policy NE2 (Green Belt) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan and the Council's Supplementary Guidance *The Conversion of Steadings and other Non-residential Vernacular Buildings in the Countryside*, in that it would result in inappropriate extensions and alterations that would, by way of scale and form, individually and collectively dominate and disguise the original steading and its character, to the detriment of the visual amenity and character of the green belt and landscape setting of the City.

3) That the garden spaces around the buildings proposed within the application site are such that they have not been carefully considered to respect their rural setting. The curtilage that is suggested in the plans would not be appropriate for the type and scale of buildings, specifically Unit Four as it would be unusually large. Therefore the plans do not comply with Policy NE2 (Green Belt) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan and the Council's Supplementary Guidance

The Conversion of Steadings and other Non-residential Vernacular Buildings in the Countryside.

Dr Margaret Bochel

Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.