
Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	1st December 2010
Report By:	Head of Regeneration and Planning	Report No:	10/0237/IC Plan12/10 Local Application Development
Contact Officer:	Guy Phillips	Contact No:	01475 712422
Subject:	Change of Use from offices (Class 4) to dwellings (Class 9). Conversion and extension of former ARP Station to form 6 No. dwellings at Former ARP Station, 84 Lochwinnoch Road, Kilmacolm		

SITE DESCRIPTION

The approximately 0.3ha site lies within the Green Belt, south of Kilmacolm on the Lochwinnoch Road. It contains a former world war two ARP station comprising two flat roofed, single storey buildings of utilitarian design. Each building is painted white and has a prominent square water tower. The two buildings extend to approximately 84 square metres and 370 square metres. Partial screening of the site is provided by mature hedging along the road frontage. There are no properties adjoining the site and it is bound on all sides by countryside. The site is enclosed by beech hedging.

The buildings on the site were last in use as a contractor's office but have been disused for some time.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed to convert the smaller building into a 4 bedroomed house and the larger into a terrace of 5 x 3 bedroomed houses. It is proposed to extend the buildings at the rear by approximately 55 and 216 square metres respectively with a second storey added. Proposed roofs are a mixture of flat and monopitch types with the overall height similar to that of the existing water towers. The second storey on the larger of the two buildings would be set back approximately 6m from the building frontage.

Submitted with the planning application are a structural report, an average vehicle speed survey and a detailed landscaping proposal.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy DS8 - Green Belt

There is a presumption against development in the designated Green Belt, as identified on the Proposals Map. Proposals will only be considered favourably in exceptional or mitigating circumstances and where the criteria for development in Policy DS10 for the 'Countryside' can be satisfied.

Local Plan Policy DS10 - Countryside

Development within the countryside (including the Green Belt) will be permitted only where it can be supported with reference to the following criteria:

- (a) it is required for the purposes of agriculture and forestry;
- (b) it is a recreation, leisure or tourism proposal which is appropriate for the countryside and contributes to the social and economic development of the area;
- (c) there is a specific locational requirement for the use and it cannot be accommodated on an alternative site;
- (d) it entails appropriate re-use of vacant buildings which it would be desirable to retain for their historic or architectural character; or
- (e) it forms part of an establishment or institution standing in extensive grounds; and
- (f) it does not adversely impact on the landscape character;
- (g) it does not adversely impact on the natural heritage resource;
- (h) it does not adversely affect the visual amenity of the area and is capable of satisfactory mitigation;
- (i) there is a need for additional land for development purposes, provided it takes account of the requirements of the Structure Plan; and
- (j) it complies with other relevant Local Plan policies.

Local Plan Policy H18 - Reuse of Buildings in the Green Belt and Countryside

Proposals for the conversion, re-use or rehabilitation of buildings in the Green Belt and Countryside will be supported provided that:

- (a) such buildings are structurally sound, largely intact and capable of conversion without recourse to substantial demolition and rebuild (the Council will require a structural suitability report to accompany planning applications);
- (b) the proposed development respects the existing character of such buildings in terms of scale, form, proportions and architectural congruity and creates a cohesive and satisfactory group of new houses;
- (c) proposed finishing materials and design details are compatible with the character of the existing structure;
- (d) such buildings no longer meet their original purpose (the Council will require clarification of a building's redundancy);
- (e) such a development can be sympathetically integrated into its setting (details of site surfaces, planting and boundary treatments will be required); and
- (f) infrastructural requirements, particularly roads and drainage matters can be satisfactorily addressed.

Local Plan Policy DC1 - Development Control Advice

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will support applications for planning, listed building and advertisement consent, where applicable, which accord with the principles established in the Council's Planning Practice Advice Notes.

CONSULTATIONS

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services – A footway should be constructed to the village boundary and lit. The visibility splay that can be achieved is adequate for the speed of vehicles demonstrated by the survey.

Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities - Bin positions are unacceptable.

Scottish Natural Heritage - In order to avoid any offence being committed under the habitats regulations 1994, detail a condition that if works are to be undertaken during

spring/summer/autumn (March to October inclusive) that the roofing felt be removed by hand prior to renovation/demolition. If bats are found to be present then SNH should be contacted in the first instance from which we will advise on necessary licensing requirements etc.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 13th August 2010 as there are no premises on neighbouring land.

SITE NOTICES

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Four objections have been received.

The objectors are concerned that:-

1. There are few sites in Kilmacolm which can support business use and the site should be retained for local economic activity.
2. The design is of an urban form, out of keeping with the isolated rural location in the green belt, giving rise to the potential for ribbon development, thus eroding the integrity of the green belt.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in the determination of this planning application are the Local Plan, the Council's PPAN 5 "Design & Siting Of Houses In The Countryside", the structural report, the average traffic speed report, the consultation responses and the written representations.

Policy DS8 of the Local Plan presumes against development in the designated Green Belt. Proposals will only be considered favourably in exceptional or mitigating circumstances and where the criteria for development in Policy DS10 can be satisfied. Policy DS10 advises that development within the countryside will only be permitted where it can be supported with reference to a range of criteria, including (d) appropriate re-use of vacant buildings which it would be desirable to retain for their historic or architectural character. Policy H18 also lists criteria which proposals for the conversion, re-use or rehabilitation of buildings in the Green Belt and Countryside require to satisfy. PPAN5 also offers guidance on design. If the aims of Policy DS10 and the criteria of Policy H18 and PPAN5 can be met, then development may be permitted within the Green Belt. The criteria are as follows:

(a) The existing building must be structurally sound, largely intact and capable of conversion without recourse to substantial demolition and rebuild (the Council will require a structural suitability report to accompany planning applications). A structural survey has been submitted and has been assessed favourably by the Council's Structural Engineer.

(b) The proposed development respects the existing character of such buildings in terms of scale, form, proportions and architectural congruity and creates a cohesive and satisfactory group of new houses. I consider that the proposed alterations to the former ARP station are a significant departure from the original design. However, Policy H18 is written to assist in the assessment of the conversion of traditional buildings in the countryside and the ARP station does not fit within that category and is unique within Inverclyde's countryside. Disused, the functionally designed buildings with their large water towers and reinforced concrete roofs, while partially screened from public view by hedging, provide the first impression on the approach to Kilmacolm from Lochwinnoch. Given the unique circumstances of the two buildings and their lack of visual impact outwith the

immediate site I consider they lend themselves to the architecture of the proposal. I am further satisfied that to grant planning permission in this instance would not set a precedent for substantial alterations to more traditional buildings elsewhere in Inverclyde's countryside. At the August meeting planning permission was granted for the conversion of a post war anti aircraft operations room at the former HMS Dalriada, Inverkip with substantial alterations. The planning policy considerations were similar to those under consideration in this report. I consider that the proposal is to be welcomed, in bringing redundant wartime structures into residential use.

(c) The proposed finishing materials and design details are compatible with the character of the existing structure. This guidance is appropriate for the conversion of traditional buildings. The principal materials proposed are a dark grey roofing membrane and white, through coloured polymer render. I consider these finishes compatible with the existing white paint and roofing felt finishes.

(d) Such buildings no longer meet their original purpose (the Council will require clarification of a building's redundancy). As a wartime building, the building's original use has long past although it has periodically been in other uses, including, most recently, as an office. The premises have, however, been out of use for some time.

(e) Such a development can be sympathetically integrated into its setting (details of site surfaces, planting and boundary treatments will be required). I consider the design has been carefully considered to minimise its visual impact. Extensions to the ground floor are set to the rear and the additional storey on the larger of the two blocks recessed from the front elevation. Overall, I consider the submitted design to be a significant improvement upon the functional wartime architecture and an enhancement of the approach to Kilmacolm from Lochwinnoch. Existing hedging along the site frontage assists in integrating the adapted buildings into their countryside setting and in pre application advice the Council's landscape advisors confirmed their satisfaction with the submitted landscaping scheme.

(f) Infrastructural requirements, particularly roads and drainage matters can be satisfactorily addressed. The Head of Environmental & Commercial Services is satisfied with the proposed means of access and the level of off street parking provision. It is further suggested by the Head of Environmental & Commercial Services that a lit footway be provided between the development and the village boundary. I note, however, that a roadside path already exists alongside the road carriageway, between the site and the village to provide pedestrian passage. Given that the proposal is for the reuse of existing buildings in the countryside, I consider it important that a distinction remains between it and the built up part of Kilmacolm. To provide lighting, would, I consider, result in the development being read as part of the village and raise pressure to develop in the intervening Green Belt land.

Regarding the objectors' concern that the site should be retained for business use, I note that the premises have been disused for some time. Planning policy does not prevent alternative uses being considered, and the principle of development accords with the reuse of disused buildings policy.

While I note that the design alteration to the buildings means that the proposal does not strictly adhere to the requirement of Policy H18(b), I am satisfied that the uniqueness of the original buildings and the visual isolation of the site and the lack of realistic alternatives for the site deem this to be an acceptable departure from policy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted

Conditions

1. No development shall commence until samples of all external materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority: development thereafter shall proceed utilising the approved materials, unless the Planning Authority gives its prior written approval to any alternatives.
2. Notwithstanding the information in the docquetted drawings, no development shall commence until details of bin storage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
3. If works are to be undertaken between March and October inclusive, roofing felt shall be removed by hand prior to renovation/demolition. If bats are subsequently found to be present SNH shall be contacted to advise on necessary licencing requirements.

Reasons

1. To ensure a choice of finishes consistent with the countryside location.
2. In order to provide satisfactory measures for the storage and uplift of waste materials.
3. In order to avoid any offence being committed under the habitats regulations 1994.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form
2. Application plans
3. Inverclyde Local plan
4. Inverclyde Council PPAN5
5. Consultation responses
6. Written representations



Drawing No. 10/0237/IC former ARP Station, 84 Lochwinnoch Road, Kilmacolm

Drawn by: JML

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