

Design and Access Statement
& Statement in Support

of an application for an;

Amendment to the siting of the farmhouse as
Approved under Planning Application ref: 13/00331/FULD
On 25th April 2013

At

Bushnells Green Farm
Chapel Row
Reading
Berkshire
RG7 6DW

WEST BERKSHIRE
COUNCIL
- 2 DEC 2013
PLANNING AND
COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE



On Behalf of Mr & Mrs J Plank

Prepared By

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Heritage South West Ltd

20th November 2013

Introduction.

This Planning Application seeks only to amend the proposed siting of the farmhouse to a location some 50m east from the position as approved under Planning consent ref 13/00331/FULD on 13th April this year.

All other matters such as the need for the dwelling, its size, design, elevational treatment, construction specification and materials of the proposed farmhouse remain as previously approved. Only the siting of the house and it's immediate residential curtilage and access thereto are now proposed to be altered.

As this amendment requires construction of the house outside of the approved application site 'red-line' (although still within the 'blue land' under the control and ownership of the applicants) then a full fresh planning application is required. For completeness therefore, a copy of the agricultural case that supported the previous approval is also resubmitted here (attached as Appendix 1).

The applicants also accept that such an amendment will need to be subject to the same or similar conditions and section 106 legal agreement requirements as previously set by the consented scheme earlier this year.

The application is prompted by the very real need to ensure that the new permanent farmhouse is most appropriately sited in relation to the successful running of the farm as a whole, both now and on into the future. This has required full, proper and thorough consideration being given to related health and safety, operational, environmental health and living condition issues and requirements that will affect not just the current family farming this land but others that will continue here in years to come.

In formulating the current proposal due regard has also been paid to the resultant landscape impact of such a move upon the AONB designation which covers this area and to the historical precedent of built form in this vicinity.

To assist with these considerations the help and support has been sought and given from the National Farmers Union (NFU) and from landscape consultants Floyd Matcham. Their respective reports and comments are attached as Appendices 2 and 3 of this report.

The Proposal

The current application seeks to locate the approved farmhouse which is of traditional design and materials some 50m further east into the site, away from the lane and the site entrance and busiest yards 1 and 2, and onto the more level ground directly opposite the 'third yard' within the farm located between the second and third barns. There is no proposed movement of the house south or north with this proposal.

This allows, (as did the 13/00331 approval), the continued occupation of the temporary timber chalet during the construction of the permanent dwelling and its removal upon first occupation of the new house. The area presently occupied by the temporary chalet will then be restored to its former agricultural use and landscaped accordingly. The original profile of this field will be restored and all existing trees in this vicinity will be protected and preserved.

The new dwelling will be accessed by an extension of the current drive to the chalet, alongside the existing ditch thus separating as far as possible residential traffic and access (whether by car or on foot) from operational farming vehicular movements.

Residential parking bays are again provided within the new residential curtilage, itself defined by post and rail fencing with stock proof wire mesh (as previously approved) and new hedge and tree planting. The overall size of the residential curtilage has been slightly reduced from that approved and more considered landscape proposals are now shown, including some field tree planting proposed within the 'blue land'. For more details of this see Floyd Matcham's Landscape Assessment and Report attached as appendix 3.

A securable pedestrian only gate and footpath link is provided from the farmhouse giving direct access to the 'third yard' within the farm which is the least busy – especially in relation to the scale and nature of daily agricultural operations and vehicle movements here.

Looking toward third yard and bard 3



Reasoning behind the current proposal

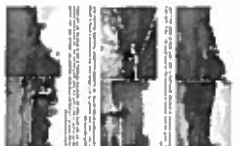
The Governments Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have an ongoing and very active campaign to continuously improve safety on farms with special attention being paid to trying to reduce the incidences of accidents involving children.

A copy of the very recent HSE publication of June 2013 in this regard entitled 'Preventing accidents to Children on Farms' is attached in full as Appendix 4 to this report. This document confirms that; *"Agriculture has one of the highest fatal injury rates of any industry in Great Britain, but is the only high-risk industry that has to deal with the constant presence of children"*. Page 3 of the document under the heading of "Manage the Risks" confirms that children should be *"kept away from farming activities and work traffic wherever possible"*.

A further leaflet publicising these risk issues and produced by the HSE and NFU in conjunction with many other partners entitled "Farms are not playgrounds" is attached as Appendix 5 to this report. Of the 'Top Ten' dangers on farms listed, Bushnells Green Farm currently has all but no.3 (a slurry lagoon).

The applicants presently have 2 young children aged 1 and 3 and therefore these health and safety matters (not just for them but for their friends / visitors / associates and indeed for future generations who will be resident here) are clearly a key consideration in determining the most appropriate siting for the new house.

The approved siting (under 13/00331) locates the new permanent farmhouse within just 20m of the principle and busiest 'first yard' which also acts as the main site entrance and turning area, giving access to the first and second barns / yards and the farms silo. It is the first and second barns and yards that accommodate most of the farm's daily activity.





The current proposal seeks permission to locate the new farmhouse some 50m further from the site entrance and main yard albeit still near and well related enough to visually form part of the 'group' of existing farm buildings within the landscape and also to allow an appropriate and acceptable level of control and supervision.

This separation offers genuine advantages in relation to keeping residential occupiers and most notably children secure and well away from the most dangerous areas of daily farming activity, especially those involving the turning, loading and unloading of tractors trailers and other vehicles.

In addition the proposed move also offers considerable and genuine environmental health benefits over the approved siting. The applicants, whilst resident in the existing temporary chalet, have first hand experience of disturbances to their living conditions from noise of vehicles and agricultural machinery operating in yard 1, and from smell and pest ingress from cattle in the yards and from the casualty stock awaiting collection from yard 1. The applicants are not allowed to bury dead stock and they have to await collection for disposal. This can take several days.

The move as proposed offers beneficial separation in this connection.



Landscape Impact

In order to properly assess the environmental and landscape impact of the proposed move the applicants have commissioned 'Floyd Matcham' Landscape Architects to undertake a study and report on the characteristics of the current site and its surroundings and to consider the consequences of the current proposals on matters of recognised / acknowledged importance.

Their report is attached in full as Appendix 3 to this report. It concludes that the current proposal will have no more materially adverse impact upon the landscape character or natural environment of this part of the North Wessex Downs AONB than the approved scheme.

Historical Precedent:

Although of little direct relevance to the subject application it is nonetheless of some interest and worthy of note that there is also historical precedent for a farmhouse to be located further into the site at Bushnells Green Farm.

Up until the 1950's there is evidence that the farm was supported by a farmhouse and related buildings, (of which some evidence can still be found on site) located much further into the site than the current proposal.

Copies of historical maps to substantiate this finding are attached as Appendix 6 to this report.

This evidence confirms that it is not unusual or inappropriate from a historical or landscape character perspective for this part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to accommodate permanent farm buildings (including a farmhouse) further into the site than that adopted by the approved or current proposal. Indeed the former farmhouse here was located considerably further into the site than the current proposal seeks.

It is acknowledged however that any new development here should be well related to existing structures on the farm and that because the approved dwelling is larger than the existing temporary dwelling it replaces, the adopted design needs to continue to ensure that its impact within the rural environment is minimised. Accordingly the approved details such as the size and design of the farmhouse (featuring dormer windows and rooms in the roof which help to reduce the height of the proposed development) are all retained as part of the current proposal and its new siting (being fairly central to the existing group of barns) remains appropriate.

In April this year the Council concluded that whilst it felt that some harm resulted from the proposed built form, it was not on balance harmful enough to warrant refusal on these grounds. It is our contention that the same conclusion can be drawn for the subject proposal.

Other matters

The acceptability of the principle of development was established by the approval earlier this year under ref:13/00331/FULD. This principle was assessed against government guidance set out in the NPPF and relevant development plan policies.

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and in terms of rural workers dwellings para 55 of the NPPF, as referred to in the agricultural assessment, advises that, to promote sustainable development in rural areas housing should be *carefully located*, essential and sustainable.

The proposed move which retains the farmhouse in close proximity to associated built development in the existing farmyard, offers significant health and safety, and environmental health benefits over the approved siting and maintains its landscape impact to an appropriate and acceptable level.

Also it is not an inappropriate siting from a historical or operational point of view and for reasons as given in Floyd Matcham's landscape assessment and report it is clear that the impact on the AONB, or upon on neighbouring amenity, is not considered to be any more materially adverse from that previously accepted by the Council..

Matters in relation to highway safety, sustainable construction, the impact on local infrastructure and services remain as approved and are unaffected by the current proposal. No representation letters were received as part of the approved scheme.

A pre assessment report has been submitted with this application (see copy attached as appendix 7) to demonstrate that the proposed development can achieve Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 in accordance with Policy CS15 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026,

Conclusion

Having taken account of the previous approval and all other relevant policy and other material considerations, it is contended that the development proposed offer significant and important benefits over the previous siting whilst protecting and preserving the overarching character of the immediate and wider environment and as such should be approved for the reasons set out above.



