

Written Submission 20/00737/COMIND from Applicant

The Shalford Farm development is a key part of securing Wasing Estate's future. It will support the organic farming through providing an outlet for locals to buy fresh organic produce grown on their doorstep with zero food miles and to supply the restaurant delivering fresh organic meals for locals to enjoy with family. The accommodation and restaurant also support the main wedding and events venue, which is facing increased competition and needs to continue as one of the leading venues in the country, something to be proud of.

Following the previous rejection, we have listened to you, we have worked with the local Parish Council, whom are now in support and we have critically reviewed the project. As such, the revised proposal before you, achieves the following:

1. Complete removal of the Wedding Retail and Showcase element, dramatically reducing the retail floor space by 73%.
2. Reduces the overall scale of the Dutch barn and reduces its height by 1.5m to only 8m.
3. Completely removes a whole building (the narrow barn) from the development.
4. Reduces the overall floor area by almost 20% to just 1,337sqm
The reduction from the previous application can be seen clearly in the blue outline on the elevations.

The PO is recommending refusal for the same two reasons:

1. Unsustainable location
2. No Sequential Test

The Case Officer has confirmed that he would support a scheme of less than 1000sqm. The PO's reliance on 1000sqm as the threshold of acceptability is based on the notion that this represents the applicable definition of what is "major development" and that major development is unacceptable in this location and would require a SeqT. To adopt this black and white approach is wrong. By doing so one would ignore:

1. The clear advice of the NPPF which says "*the use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations*"
2. the synergies with the Estate (the scheme could not be relocated to a main town centre)
3. the operation of an innovative Travel Plan (which includes an electric shuttle bus)
4. the Applicants willingness to accept a condition tying the site to the rest of the Estate

You will fully appreciate that accommodation provision has to be supplied at the location it is serving, in this case the wedding venue. An Estate Farm shop and restaurant utilising fresh organic produce direct from the estate fields whilst supporting an existing hospitality venue must also be located on the estate.

When this Committee considered the previous proposal there was unanimous support for the principle of redeveloping this site, yet there was a feeling that it was just a bit too big. We have listened to you and you will see the new scheme has been very significantly reduced in scale and the intensity of the uses. The Highways Officer is content that the local road network can accommodate the amount of traffic that would be generated.

An appeal has been lodged against the refusal of the original scheme – that appeal would be withdrawn if planning permission is granted for the revised and reduced scheme this evening.

Andrew Perkins
Chief Executive - Wasing Estate