READING AGRICULTURAL CONSULTANTS
Gate House
Beechwood Court
Long Toll
Woodcote
Reading RG8 0RR
Tel: 01491 684 233
rac@reading-ag.com
www.reading-ag.com

Your Ref: DC/25/0375
Our Ref: 10704-kt

10 April 2025

For the attention of Kate Turner
Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 2GB

Dear Ms Turner,

Site: **Woodhouse Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, Woodmancote, West Sussex, BN5 9BA.**
Application: **DC/25/0375**
Proposal: **Erection of an agricultural storage barn**

Thank you for your instruction dated 20 March 2025 requesting Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) comments on the above planning application.

In preparing this response I have had regard to:

- the application form and associated plans; and
- a Planning, Design and Statement (PDAS) (undated) produced by PROwe Planning Solutions (the applicant's agent).

I have not visited the site or discussed the application with the applicant or the agent.

RAC have previously appraised DC/20/0815 for the erection of a grain storage barn (RAC ref: 8776-gh dated 6 May 2020) which was approved by the Council on 30 June 2020.

Background

1. Woodhouse Farm extends to 202 hectares (500 acres) of which 121 hectares (300 acres) is in combinable crops.

2. The site has the benefit of approvals for the change of use of agricultural buildings to residential dwellings under DC/23/1005 and DC/24/0704.

3. The PDAS details that this proposed barn will provide storage for the agricultural plant and equipment which is currently stored in the buildings which have permission to convert to dwellings.

4. No details of the equipment to be stored have been provided.

5. It is unknown if the grain store (approved under DC/20/0815) has been erected. Google Earth satellite images dated March 2022 do not show any building or groundworks.

Proposal

6. The application proposes the erection of a storage building measuring 12.2m x 24.4m (297.6m^2) with an eaves height of 3.6m and a ridge height of 5.5m.

7. The building will be constructed with green profile metal sheeting walls and roof. It will be clad on all sides and accessed via a sliding door and pedestrian door on the eastern elevation.

8. It is of note that the PDAS details the building will be constructed with profile sheeting above concrete wall panels however, this is not detailed in the application form or shown on the sketch elevations.

9. The sketch plan details that the building will provide for storage of hay, agricultural plant and machinery, tractors, trailers and hay making equipment.

Relevant Planning Policies

10. National planning policy guidance for development in the countryside is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated in December 2024.

11. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the core land-use planning principles that should be adopted and these expressly include:

    - A presumption in favour of sustainable development;
    - Positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
    - Provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses;
    - Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and,
    - Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission.

12. Section 4 requires that decision makers:

    - should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way;

      work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic; social and environmental conditions of the area;
    - seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

13. Section 6 of the NPPF is concerned with ‘Building a strong, competitive economy’ and at paragraph 85 it notes:

"planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt…"

14. At paragraph 88 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy' it notes:

"Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses;…"

15. Policy 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) deals with countryside protection and enhancement and states:

"Outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to its countryside location, and in addition meet one of the following criteria:

1. *support the needs of agriculture or forestry;*
2. *enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;*
3. *provide for quiet informal recreational use; or,*
4. *enable the sustainable development of rural areas.*

In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including:

1. *the development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;*
2. *the pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and*
3. *the landform of the area."*

Appraisal

16. It is advisable to store agricultural machinery under cover to protect it from the elements. It protects machinery from corrosion and in particular damage to any moving parts and therefore minimises maintenance requirements and periods of downtime.

17. It is generally considered within the industry that an additional 25% to 30% of machinery storage space is acceptable to allow for the safe manoeuvring and handling of agricultural machinery within the building.

18. RAC considers that the building has been appropriately designed for safe and secure machinery storage. However, as no details of the equipment, and their sizes, proposed to be stored in the building have been provided it is not possible for RAC to conclude that the building is of an appropriate size.

19. It is accepted that the storage of hay undercover protects the hay bales from the elements and prevents mould growth from wet and damp conditions when stored out in the open. Mouldy hay can be a health risk to both livestock and stockpersons. Dry storage under cover maintains the hays nutrient value.

20. RAC considers that the building as designed with metal sheet cladding on all sides would not provide suitable and adequate ventilation for the storage of hay bales and therefore an alternative design that allows ventilation would be considered more appropriate.

21. The number of hay bales, or quantity of hay to be stored within the building has not been detailed. Therefore, it is not possible for RAC to conclude whether the building will provide an appropriate amount of storage space for the storage of hay bales.

22. RAC accepts that Class Q criteria does not require a building to be redundant and therefore it is expected that the applicant is losing agricultural storage space in the approvals of DC/23/1005 and DC/24/1005 however, it is considered that a replacement building still requires a justification of need in terms of national and local planning policy.

23. The PDAS does not provide details of the storage requirements for the holding and the need for this building and therefore it is not possible to conclude the proposal is compliant with national and local planning policy.

24. In addition, RAC questions why the storage building is proposed to be sited away from the grain storage building (if constructed) which was approved under DC/20/0815.

I trust these comments are helpful in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Olivia Wojniak