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Your Ref: DC/24/0095
Our Ref: 10367-hc

15 April 2024

For the attention of Halima Chowdhury
Horsham District Council
Parkside
Chart Way
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Dear Ms Chowdhury,

Site: **Oaklands House, Cowfold Road, West Grinstead, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 8LZ.**
Application: **DC/24/0095**
Proposal: **Erection of a part agriculture / part multi-purpose storage barn.**

Thank you for your instruction dated 27 March 2024 requesting Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) comments on the above planning application.

In preparing this desktop response I have had regard to:

- the application form and associated plans;
- a Planning Design and Access Statement (undated).

I have not visited the site in the preparation of this report or discussed this application with the agent or applicant. I did however make a site visit on 11 January 2018 on the instructions of the Council in the refused application DC/17/2815 *'Erection of a steel framed general purpose agricultural building'.*

In that appraisal for DC/17/2815 (RAC Ref:7932-nm1) RAC concluded the following:

> "*Mrs Bruce stated that the proposed new barn will be used to store the machinery that is currently stored within the building permitted in 2010. I was informed that this is to keep the residential and agricultural activities separate, ensuring their gardeners do not have to come into the residential area of the holding. The applicants do not employ agricultural contractor services.*
>
> *Mrs Bruce also informed me that no hay cuts are taken from the land, and that the owner of the sheep brings any hay on to site. At the time of the site visit I did not view any hay bales stored at Oaklands House.*

The Officer's Report for DC/10/0445 stated that the building measuring 9m x 7m (63m^2) was used to store a quad bike, small tractor, trailer, some bales of hay and sundry tools and equipment. At the time there were approximately 24 sheep grazing the land.

No details of additional machinery required by the holding above and above those detailed in the 2010 application have been provided. In addition, no justification for an increase agricultural storage by 369m2 has been given when the number of sheep grazing has reduced, and the overall agricultural activities do not appear to have changed.

As such, the size of the proposed building cannot be in terms of a demonstrated need. Therefore, it is not reasonably required as supporting the needs of agriculture on the holding in terms of national and local planning policy".

Background

1. The PDAS details that the land holding extends to 20 acres of agricultural land around the residential dwelling. RAC would note from the 2017 application it details that Oaklands House extends to 7.7 hectares (18.9 acres) and comprises 4.7 hectares (11.6 acres) of pasture, with the remaining 3.0 hectares being within the residential curtilage. It is not detailed in the application that the applicant has purchased any further land since the previous application and the location plan submitted does not show the full extent of ownership.

2. At the time of my visit in 2018 there were approximately 20 sheep belonging to a local farmer grazing the paddock west of the access track. It is unknown how many sheep graze the land, if any, at the time of this 2024 application. The 2024 PDAS notes that the applicant intends to graze his own sheep but the timeframe for this is not provided in the document. There is no indication that the land is registered as an agricultural holding – County Parish Holding Number (CPH).

3. Permission was granted in 2010 for the retention of a steel frame barn to store tractor, trailer and other agricultural equipment (DC/10/0445). The Council's Agricultural Adviser (Richard Wood) concluded that *"Whilst the holding is not being used for commercial agricultural purposes there are 7.5 hectares of pasture, hedges and boundaries to maintain which require machinery and equipment to undertake this type of work. I am of the opinion that the building does provide the required storage facility for such machinery and is reasonably necessary for the maintenance of the land and property. I would not wish to raise an objection to the retention of this building."*

4. The Decision Notice included a condition that *"the buildings hereby permitted shall be used for agricultural purposes only, as defined in Section 336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990."*

5. The current use of this building is unknown.

6. A Prior Approval application was objected to in August 2017 (DC/17/1725) for the erection of a 24m x 18m agricultural barn which would be used for the storage of machinery. The Decision Notice states that *"the Local Planning Authority are not satisfied from the information provided that the land is used for the purposes of an agricultural trade or business, and the building is reasonable necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the unit. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not meet the requirements to be permitted development as set out in Class A, Part 6*, *Schedule 2 of Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2015."*

7. The 2024 PDAS details that 432m^2 of the proposed building will provide agricultural storage for a tractor, hay trailer, topper and large hedge trimmer along with other farming equipment, hay and sheep feed. The remaining 216m^2 will provide storage for personal/ancillary

residential equipment and vehicles such as a large motor home, sea going RIB and two covered trailers.

Proposal

8. The application proposes the erection of an agricultural/residential storage building with a floor area measuring 648m^2. The agricultural storage area will be four open fronted bays on the northern elevation and the residential storage will be enclose with roller shutter door access on the eastern elevation and secured by 1m high concrete block walls and vertical boarding above.

9. The PDAS notes that the building will be set into the ground but the plans do not provide any details of floor levels.

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 2023.

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. Paragraph 38 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 81 it notes:

    "Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support econmic growth and productivity.. …"

14. At paragraph 84 '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 10 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) (adopted November 2015) deals with Rural Economic Development and states:

"Sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the district will be encouraged in order to generate local employment opportunities and economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities.

In the countryside, development which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity will be supported in principle. Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and must:

1. *contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the district or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside; and either*
    a. *be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or, in the case of an established rural industrial estate, within the existing boundaries of the estate; or*
    b. *result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside particularly if there are exceptional cases where new or replacement buildings are involved. New buildings or development in the rural area will be acceptable provided that it supports sustainable economic growth towards balance living and working communities and criteria (a) has been considered first.*
2. *demonstrate that car parking requirements can be accommodated satisfactorily within the immediate surrounds of the buildings, or an alternative, logical solution is proposed.*

    Proposals for the conversion of rural buildings to business and commercial uses will be considered favourably over residential in the first instance."

16. Policy 26 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

17. The PDAS provides minimal justification for 432m^2 of agricultural storage within the proposed building and no confirmation of how many sheep the applicants intend to graze on the land.

18. The building permitted under DC/10/0445 provides 63m^2 of agricultural storage and is conditioned to use for agricultural purposes only. At the time, this was considered appropriate for 7.5 hectares and 24 sheep owned by a local farmer.

19. The agricultural activities on the site do not appear to have changed since the 2017 application and my site visit (January 2018) and as such, the size of the proposed building cannot be in

terms of demonstrating an agricultural need. Therefore, it is not reasonably required as supporting the needs of agriculture on the holding in terms of national and local planning policy.

20. Policy 26 does not allow for development for personal vehicle storage and therefore it is considered the 216m^2 allocated for this use is not justified in terms of national and local planning policy.

I trust these comments are helpful in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Olivia Wojniak