

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT DRAFT

to be read in conjunction with drawings submitted for:
The Grain Barn, Woodhouse Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, Woodmancote BN5 9BA

Preamble:

This is a Full Planning application for the proposed rebuilding of an agricultural building to become four dwellings, providing accommodation over two floors, as an alternative to permissions previously granted as 'prior approval for change of use from agricultural building to dwellings' as detailed below.

This planning application is identical to that approved under DC/18/2165 with the sole exception that the group of four attached dwellings is divided into two pairs of attached dwellings. A separation of three metres is proposed between the two pairs; in all other respects the application is the same as that previously approved.

Site Assessment:

Woodhouse Farm is a substantial agricultural holding to the south of Wheatsheaf Road. The site is located within countryside but has no other statutory designations. The site is within a rural area characterised by farms, small commercial buildings and individual dwellings.

The existing barn was used as a grain store and agricultural machine store, but is now redundant for these purposes. It is described as the 'Grain Store' to differentiate the building from the 'Cow Shed' to the south, which has also been approved for conversion to residential use.

The existing building measures about 36.8m x 12.2m and is 6.5m high at the ridge.

The barn is well screened by mature boundary trees and hedging along the wider field boundaries to north and south and has a two metre high brick wall to the west that screens it to a certain extent from Woodhouse Farm and dwelling also recently converted from agricultural buildings. The old cow shed further screens the existing building from dwellings to the south, and it is only from open countryside to the east that a distant view is available of the building.

Access is available from an existing track to the north that is within the applicant's control.

The proposed plot area is 1595m² and the existing building footprint area is 450m²

Planning history:

DC/18/2165: Prior Approval of proposed Change of Use from agricultural to four dwellings (C3 Use Class) Grain Store Woodhouse Farm Wheatsheaf Road PERMITTED

DC/18/1004: Prior Approval of proposed Change of Use from agricultural to three dwellings (C3 Use Class) Grain Store Woodhouse Farm Wheatsheaf Road PERMITTED

DC/18/1001: Prior Approval of proposed Change of Use from agricultural to five dwellings (C3 Use Class) Grain Store Woodhouse Farm Wheatsheaf Road PERMITTED

WK/17/02 - Conversion of agricultural buildings to 2 residential units Woodhouse Farm Wheatsheaf Road Woodmancote Henfield West Sussex PERMITTED

DC/19/2128 – Prior Approval of proposed Change of Use from agricultural to three dwellings (C3 Use Class) Cow Shed Woodhouse Farm Wheatsheaf Road PERMITTED

Planning considerations:

The building to be reconfigured is not Listed nor within a Conservation Area. The principle of redevelopment of this building is accepted; only the alteration from a single very large building to a pair that is juxtaposed is in question. If the proposed re-design can show a material

improvement on the previous arrangement, then the new application should, we suggest, be treated favourably.

Built footprint together with bulk is considered to be the main test with respect to acceptable design in rural locations. These should be the same or very similar to the existing building to be replaced in order to be deemed acceptable.

The proposed conversion has been already accepted as a natural evolution in the context of the site; the barn is well screened by the mature boundary trees and hedging along the wider field boundaries.

Planning precedent:

The essential precedent for this application resides with planning permission DC/18/2165, which was itself a variation of two previous permissions for the same building. In addition, farm buildings to the south and west have been approved for conversion to residential use (one now implemented) and there is no question that the principle is acceptable.

The planning report submitted by P Rowe for application DC/18/2165 made reference to appeal decisions that upheld the view that once a planning permission was granted for a site of this nature, it became 'previously developed land' and as such, alterations and changes in the alternative should be viewed positively. In addition, the construction of the approved proposals would prevent implementation of any other planning permissions, thereby adequately controlling development.

That report stated: *'The proposal raises exactly the same issues and as such compares very favourably against three recent appeal decisions together with the recent Court of Appeal decision Mansell v Tonbridge and Malling BC [2017] EWCA Civ. The proposed development in comparison to the fallback permissions scores more favourably against both criterion. The proposal represents a sympathetic alternative development of four build houses in a situation, by remaining within the confines of the existing developed yard, where it would not intrude into areas where there is currently any greater undeveloped feel to the context'.*

Design and Development Objectives:

As expressed in the previous planning statement, 'good quality design principles (require that) the layout, scale, form and appearance will absorb the development into the landscape and honour the character and vernacular of the existing building and the other buildings in the vicinity'.

The proposed new dwellings should be generally to the same footprint and of approximately the same volume as the existing agricultural building. The design of the development should be derived from the existing to maintain the agricultural character of the site.

The new buildings should seek to enhance the existing context, enabling further practical residential accommodation that will optimise the efficient use of the land, at the same time as maintaining the openness of the countryside.

Design Proposals:

The alterations to this previously approved residential redevelopment are being suggested in order to make more efficient use of the land, and in particular, will provide enhanced access to private amenity areas. The alterations are also proposed to improve and enhance the character of the area, insofar as the existing building is an extremely large single volume that dominates the overall site. By dividing this building in two, we suggest this will reduce the present visual impact, enhancing the outlook and amenity of adjacent properties, with a better built form that complements and respects the rural site.

These factors are all emphasised in paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework to achieve better quality residential buildings. The development site will be served by the existing access and in all other respects such as; amenity, visual appearance, use of materials, privacy, energy conservation, biodiversity, prevention of flooding, efficient use of land and general usage **the proposals are identical to those already approved.**

Energy Statement:

This is described in a separate document to support HDC validation requirements.

Access and car parking:

Parking provision satisfies the requirements of West Sussex Highways, as does the means of access. Note that access from Wheatsheaf Road is within the applicant's control.

Landscaping:

We recognise that the area of hard standing on the site and appearance of the existing buildings have a neutral to negative effect on the wider character of the area, insofar as they are utilitarian and agricultural. However, much of the site will be returned to soft landscaping with new tree and shrub planting throughout the proposed scheme. Due to the sensitive location of the site it is acknowledged that the finer details of this scheme will be very important and require further discussion. The applicant is happy to work with the Council with regard to imposition of conditions in this regard.

A major advantage to the current proposal would be the breaking up of large expanses of impermeable concrete yard hard-standing to be returned to permeable garden curtilage. The site is flat and the proposed dwellings, within the existing developed yard area and over the existing built footprint (and importantly to the same volume and footprint) is not readily visible from public vantage points being screened by the adjoining mature boundary trees and hedging.

Ecology:

Although this site is located in a rural area, there is no evidence that threatened species are present. A condition requiring examination of this might be considered by the local planning authority.

Site contamination:

The site has served only agricultural purposes and as such this does not indicate that contamination is likely, nevertheless, a condition requiring this to be examined might be considered by the local planning authority.

Community Infrastructure Levy:

An appropriate CIL certificate has been attached separately as part of HDC validation requirements.

Planning Conditions:

Planning permission DC/18/2165 applied eleven conditions to the Notice. These were:

1. Approved plans.
2. Standard expiration.
3. Pre commencement slab level requiring approval of materials.
4. Pre commencement slab level requiring approval of water consumption.
5. Pre occupation requiring details of landscaping.
6. Pre occupation requiring details of car parking provision.
7. Pre occupation requiring details of refuse storage and removal/recycling.
8. Pre occupation requiring details of cycle provision.
9. Pre occupation condition requiring high speed internet provision.
10. Regulatory removing PD rights for ancillary development.

The applicant suggests that all these conditions are applied to the present submission.

Summary:

In form and substance we suggest that this proposal varies little from the approved conversion and rebuilding of the existing barn. The single variation is that the very large volume of the existing building is split in two with a modest three metre space between each part.

From a nearby viewpoint this will help to reduce the large mass of the building, whilst from the distance it will still retain an agricultural appearance. The advantage will be to create dwellings that have enhanced access to rear amenity areas and external walls to bathrooms that would otherwise have been internal spaces.

We would suggest that the intention of planning legislation that encourages conversion of redundant farm buildings is not just to make use of structures that already inhabit the landscape, but to do this in a way that will enhance and improve our housing stock nationally. We believe that this small improvement to the arrangement of these dwellings will be beneficial to future occupiers without threatening the essential characteristics of the countryside.

R MINOST BA(Hons) Dip Arch Dist RIBA

26 September 2021