

**REPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
COMMITTEE**

Report No.

Date of Meeting	26th November 2008
Application Number	08/02293/FUL
Site Address	Winkworth farm, Lea, Malmesbury, SN16 9NH
Proposal	Change of use and extension to barns to a function venue and associated car parking
Applicant	Mr and Mrs A J Newman
Town/Parish Council	Brinkworth
Grid Ref	397461 186751
Type of application	Full application

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application has been submitted to the Committee for decision under the scheme of delegation in force after the 8th April 2002 because Councillors Vines and Crisp have requested that the application be considered by committee to assess local plan policy in terms of sustainability, climate change, environmental impact plus economic development in relation to the need for farm diversification.

Summary of Report

This application proposes the conversion and substantial extension of a range of farm buildings, together with associated car parking, to form a venue for weddings and other functions. The use has been operating for approx. 2 years using a temporary marquee and a converted barn (without the benefit of planning permission). The issues are:

- Local plan policy in relation to barn conversions and rural businesses.
- Impact on highways and sustainability.
- Impact on the countryside and any neighbours.

Officer Recommendation

Planning Permission be REFUSED

Contact Officer	Charmian Burkey	01249 706667	cburkey@northwilts.gov.uk
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Proposal and Site Description

The scheme involves the conversion and extension of 4 buildings on the site. The first, The Long Barn, has already been converted, to a function facility (without the benefit of planning permission) and used in conjunction with a temporary marquee for weddings for the last 2 years. This barn is also to be extended to allow for civil wedding ceremonies.

A larger barn, The Threshing Barn, is to be converted and extended to allow seating for up to 200 guests and to provide kitchen space, by removing the rear wall and replacing it with oak posts and beams to support the existing roof structure. Then a lean-to structure will be built to the west and south sides, doubling the width of the barn.

A pole barn to the north of the long barn is to be replaced with a larger more permanent structure to allow the civil wedding ceremonies to take place. A courtyard would be formed to the west of this building and the north of the extended threshing barn.

The final part of the scheme is the conversion of a detached barn to accommodation to be used in association with weddings.

A number of existing agricultural buildings will be demolished as part of the improvement of the area.

An area for parking up to 80 cars is to be provided in a field immediately to the south of the farm. This will involve some digging in and levelling of the land to screen the parked cars. There is also an area to park and turn up to 2 coaches

Winkworth Farm is a working farm situated approx half a mile off The Street in Lea. It is reached by a long driveway.

Planning History		
Application number	Proposal	Decision
88.01392.F	Conversion an extension of barn to form dwelling	Refused.
01.01186.FUL	Conversion and extension of farm buildings to provide agricultural workers dwelling.	Refused
01.02317.FUL	Extension and conversion of existing farm building to residential use. Garage and store.	Refused.

Consultations

Lea and Cleverton Parish Council support the proposal after discussions with the applicant, provided that it is compliant with policies C4, BD6/7 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011. Concern was expressed about the lack of directional signage. Any signage should be temporary and is association with highways authority.

Wiltshire County Council Highways object on the unsustainable location. They have read the transport statement and comments about coach travel, but comment that this would be impossible to enforce. The development is thus likely to rely heavily on the use of the private car and the parking provision enforces this.

Principal Environmental Health Officer's comments are awaited

The following documents were submitted with the application and are available to read on the file:

- Design and access statement.
- Supporting planning statement.
- Assessment by The Farm Consultancy Group.
- Transport assessment.

Representations

63 letters of support have been received.

2 letters of objection have been received.

Summary of key points raised:

- Increased noise disruption to neighbours and local residents.
- Impact on single track farm access across meadow land which becomes blocked when the motocross events are being run.
- The issues need to be discussed in the wider parishes
- The high noise activities should be controlled.

Planning Considerations

Principle of development

Winkworth Farm has been operating a wedding service using a converted barn (without permission) and a marquee on the site for the last 2 summers. Additionally the applicants also operate activity days for shooting, archery, quad biking, carriage driving and falconry using their permitted development for such activities.

The conversion and rebuilding of the barns is to be assessed against policies BD5 (Rural Business development), BD6 (Re-use of rural buildings) and BD7 (Farm diversification) of NWLP 2011.

BD5 permits proposals for the re-use of suitable buildings for uses falling within B1, B2 and B8 provided that they are suitable for conversion and limited new building within or well related to an existing group of buildings. A wedding function facility is 'sui generis' and does not, therefore, fall within B1, B2, and B8

Policy BD6 allows conversion of buildings without extensive alterations, re-building or extension.

BD7 permits farm diversification where (amongst other things) the proposal does not adversely affect the character of the surrounding environment and amenities of local residents. All 3 policies refer to the proposal not having an adverse impact upon the surrounding road network.

It is considered that the proposal does not accord with either policy BD5 or BD6 because it involves such extensive re-building and extension to the barns and the use for wedding receptions and functions falls outside use classes B1, B2 and B8. The floor area to be covered by the buildings is more than doubled and although other farm buildings are to be demolished, they are of modern design and poor quality. Their loss cannot be seen as a "trade" for such large extensions to more traditional buildings.

Comments about the impact on the highways network are covered below.

Impact on amenity

It is not considered that noise from a wedding venue would be an issue to local residents as the nearest dwelling is 300m away. The comments of Environmental Health are, however, awaited.

However, it is considered that the impact of the buildings and more particularly the car park for 100 cars to the south of the site in an open field, would be detrimental to the overall rural character of the area, because although they will not necessarily be seen from the wider area, they will be seen by many visitors to the site and will add an alien feature to what is open countryside.

Sustainability

The site is remote from public transport being approx 1.2km from the nearest possible bus stop in Lea.

An hourly service runs to Lea from Malmesbury and Swindon Monday-Saturday but only until 18.45 latest. This would not cater for transporting wedding guests to and from the venue and inevitably they would travel by private car.

The application is accompanied by a travel assessment which in itself admits that it is rare for guests to travel to weddings or receptions by means other than a private car. However, Winkworth Farm does encourage travel by coach and minibus and this trend is predicted to grow. The caterers used, all arrive by bus.

The applicants operate an organic farm and are keen to only use locally sourced produce and are encouraging links with other local businesses which may be affiliated with a wedding eg cake maker, hotel accommodation.

However, none of these elements can be controlled through planning conditions and the application, as a wedding or function venue, will encourage travel by private car and is thus unsustainable.

Conclusion

This is a substantial development in an unsustainable countryside location which is not permitted by any policy of the local plan. There are no overriding material considerations sufficient to outweigh these policies.

Recommendation

Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reason:

1. The proposal would involve extensive re-building and extension of buildings for a non B1, B2 or B8 use contrary to policies BD5, BD6 and BD7 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.
2. The proposal, located remote from services and population centres and not well served by public transport, is contrary to the key aims of PPG13, which seeks to reduce growth in length and number of motorised journeys and also to policy C3 of North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011, which seeks to promote sustainable patterns of development that will reduce the overall need to travel.

Appendices:	NONE
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	2.02. 3.03, 4.02. 4.03, 4.07