

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING APPLICATION.

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| 1.0 | REFERENCE | APA/03/0145 |
| 1.1 | Proposed Development | Proposed detached house, with integral garage, and vehicular access from road, with parking and turning area on site (amended plans) |
| 1.2 | Planning Authority | Wiltshire Council Development Management Central |
| 1.3 | Planning Application No. | 18/05384/FUL |
| 1.4 | Applicant | Mr Ronald E.Nevill, Manor Farm, Upton Folly, Upton Lovell |
| 1.5 | Site Address | Auckland Farm, Chitterne Road, Codford |

2.0 DESCRIPTION

2.1 Location

The application site forms part of Auckland Farm. Auckland Farm lies on the eastern side of Chitterne Road approximately three quarters of a mile north of Codford and one and a half miles south of Chitterne. The farm is in open countryside at the edge of Salisbury Plain.

2.2 Land

2.2.1 Area and tenure

The farm is owned freehold by a farming partnership, of which the applicant is a partner. The freehold at Auckland Farm extends to 66 ha (162 acres) in a ring fence. The partnership also owns Manor Farm and land at Knook which means the total ownership and farmed area extends to 476 ha (1,176 acres) across the three blocks.

2.2. Soil Type and Characteristics

The soil at the application site is classified in the Upton 1 association, which is described as shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk, with deeper fine silty soils in valleys and coombes.

3.0 FARMING PRACTICE

Existing

- 3.1 The combined business is run as a dairy and livestock unit. The dairy herd is based at Manor Farm. The dairy unit is substantial with up to 400 cows in the dairy herd with between 280 and 320 in milk at any time. The herd maintains a level production of milk throughout the year which means that calving takes place evenly across the year.
- 3.2 The dairy cows are calved at Manor Farm but calf rearing and the herd youngstock are based at Auckland Farm. All female calves are retained; male calves are not retained. The retained calves are transferred to Auckland Farm at approximately eight weeks old. The calves are then reared through at Auckland. The highest quality heifers are moved back to Manor Farm at 15 – 16 months old; they are the run with the bull and admitted to the dairy herd. The second quality heifers are retained at Auckland Farm where they are run with an Angus bull and then moved back to Manor Farm prior to calving.
- 3.3 I understand the typical stocking level at Auckland Farm is between 240 to 260 head of cattle, ranging from eight week old calves through to in-calf heifers at up to 22 months. The younger animals are kept in the

buildings, some of the older stock are put to grass in the summer months but the farming practice is to keep the majority of the stock in the buildings.

Proposed

3.4 There is no proposal to significantly alter the farming practice at either Auckland Farm or the wider business.

Comments

3.5 The unit is a well established and substantial dairy business.

Buildings

3.6 The buildings at Auckland Farm are modern and reflect its former use as a freestanding dairy unit. The buildings include:

1. The recently constructed five bay covered yard to the south of the main complex. The building has a steel portal frame, spaced timber boarding to the upper elevations and concrete panels to the lower elevations. At the time of inspection the building was used to accommodate calves.
2. A five bay covered yard with steel portal frame, spaced timber boarding to the upper elevations and concrete panels to the lower elevations. At the time of inspection the building was in use to accommodate older heifers.
3. A three bay fodder shed
4. Two small covered silage clamps
5. The former milking parlour and dairy with circular collecting yard.
6. A three bay "Atcost" type shed with concrete portal frame.
7. A seven bay "Atcost" type covered yard and lean-to, used to accommodate cattle.

4.0 EXISTING ACCOMMODATION

Dwellings owned by applicant

4.1 The applicant does not own a dwelling at Auckland Farm. I understand the sole dwelling associated with Auckland Farm and owned by the farming partnership is Auckland Farm House. Auckland Farm House is occupied by Peter Crossman, who is a Partner in the farming business.

5.0 LABOUR REQUIREMENTS

Existing

5.1 Based on standard labour data and allowing for the interaction between Manor Farm and Auckland Farm it is my view that there is a requirement of between half and three quarters of a standard labour unit to manage the livestock at Auckland Farm. If Auckland Farm were run as a separate unit the labour requirement would be higher as the 160 acres of land would need to be run too.

5.2 The labour requirement is met by Peter Crossman and I understand that in practice Peter Crossman splits his time between Auckland Farm and Manor Farm.

Anticipated if proposals undertaken

5.2 No significant changes are proposed so the labour assessment is unlikely to alter significantly.

6.0 NPPF – ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT

6.1 The planning application for the dwelling is associated with the existing calf and youngstock rearing activity at Auckland Farm. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in 2012. The NPPF

replaces all previous Planning Policy Statements (PPS). In the context of the application for the proposed dwelling, paragraph 55 of the NPPF states:

“Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside”

- 6.2 Under the NPPF it is therefore relevant to consider the requirements of the current enterprise at Auckland Farm and whether those requirements present an essential need for a worker to live at or near the enterprise.
- 6.3 The enterprise at Auckland Farm involves the close care of a significant quantity of young cattle ranging from animals just transferred in at approximately eight weeks old, through to in-calf heifers over 20 months old. In my view the quantity and type of stock presents a range of needs. The range extends from stressed smaller animals, dependent still on milk replacer, through weaning and into pregnancy. The stock are housed which means there is capacity for animals to become stuck, injured, bloated or infected.
- 6.4 In my view the quantity of housed stock, together with the capacity for incident to occur means that in this particular set of circumstances there is an essential need for a presence at the unit at most times. Clearly that essential need is currently met through the accommodation available at Auckland Farm House. The availability of Auckland Farm House is explored further, below.

7.0 BUSINESS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There is no express reference in the NPPF to an assessment of either an existing or proposed business which will operate in association with the proposed rural dwelling. It is my opinion that such an assessment is critical to forming an opinion on the continuation of the “essential need”. In this case the essential need described and recognised above will only continue through the operation of the business. If the business does not operate on a profitable and viable basis then it will fail and the authority would be left with a dwelling but no “essential need” for its presence.
- 7.2 The applicant has previously submitted summary profit and loss accounts for the last six trading periods. The accounts indicate the business has a significant turnover (in excess of £1m) and that the business is profitable. In my view the level of profit is sufficient to show viability. I have not seen the capital accounts and thus cannot comment on the overall gearing or net worth of the business but the applicant confirms business borrowings are low.

8.0 GENERAL COMMENTS

- 8.1 This report follows the submission of revised floorplans for the dwelling proposed in application 18/05384/FUL. The application was registered on 6th June. The original plans accompanying the application showed a dwelling with a Gross Internal Area (GIA) of approximately 200m². I concluded that the dwelling proposed was excessively large for the essential need recognised at the holding.
- 8.2 The revised drawings show a two storey dwelling with four bedrooms, two bathrooms (one en suite) and an integrated garage. The revised Design and Access Statement indicates the dwelling (excluding the integrated garage) has a floor area of 169m². The floorplans include a ground floor utility area of 13m² GIA.
- 8.3 In my view the ground floor utility area is a requisite for livestock farming, as an area in which to remove dirty clothes and to wash. It is therefore reasonable to discount a reasonable utility area from the total floor area. If the utility area is discounted then the GIA of the rest of the dwelling is 156m², which is not, in my view, *excessively* large for the identified essential need.
- 8.4 It is still noted that the dwelling currently proposed is significantly different to that which was identified as needed to meet the essential need for the outline application (18/03181). The applicant’s agricultural adviser, KCC stated at paragraph 3.1 of their “Essential Needs Appraisal”:

“it is proposed to erect a farm dwelling, suitable for a stockman probably a three bedroom bungalow, adjacent to the first calf shed at Auckland Farm.”

8.5 It is thus clear from the KCC report that the dwelling would likely be a three bedroom bungalow, not the four bedroom, two storey dwelling currently proposed.

9.0 CONCLUSION AND OPINION

It follows from the above that the proposed dwelling is not excessively large in relation to the identified essential need at Auckland Farm.

I trust the above provides you with the information required. If you require any further information, or clarification on the any aspect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact the writer.

A.M Coke BSc (Hons) MRICS

Note: *This Report has been prepared on information provided by the Applicant and or the Applicant's Agent.*

APA/03/0145/AMC

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