

REPORT TO THE EAST AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	31 March 2011
Application Number	E/10/1652/FUL
Site Address	Buckerfields Nursery, Southend, Ogbourne St George, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 1SG
Proposal	Conversion of storage barn to four units of holiday accommodation including erection of single storey extensions.
Applicant	Sonia Wright Plants
Town/Parish Council	OGBOURNE ST GEORGE
Grid Ref	419960 173858
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Andrew Guest

1. Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application is before the Planning Committee at the request of the local division member, Cllr Mrs Jemima Milton.

2. Purpose of Report

To consider the recommendation that the application be approved subject to conditions.

There is one objection to the application from Ogbourne St George Parish Council.

3. Main Issues

The main issues in this case are:

- The principle of allowing re-use and extension of the building to provide holiday accommodation;
- The compatibility of the proposed use with the principles of sustainability;
- The impact of the proposed use on the countryside and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- The impact on highway safety;
- The impact on residential amenity.

4. Site Description

The application site forms part of Buckerfields Nursery which is an established horticultural nursery. The site supports a number of buildings used in connection with the nursery business. These include single storey sheds and growing tunnels, and the two storey 'barn' the subject of this planning application. The buildings are grouped more or less centrally on the site. The open parts of the site to the front and rear of the buildings are used for growing and/or displaying plants; there is a large car park also at the front of the site with established access from the public highway.

In policy terms the site lies within open countryside approximately 0.5km from the centre of Ogbourne St George. The site and all surroundings are also within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5. Planning History

K/041507 – The creation of a new access, the erection of storage sheds and a greenhouse, creation of ancillary office space within existing farm building, erection of two polytunnels and two shade tunnels – approved 13/07/01.

[The two storey barn the subject of the current planning application existed at the time of the above planning permission as an open-sided, portal-framed agricultural storage building, albeit disused. The

planning permission allowed the infilling of its open sides, and its re-use as a “potting shed & despatch area” (ground floor) and “office”, “canteen meeting room”, “drying room” and “toilet” (first floor)].

6. The Proposal

To convert and extend the barn to provide four flexible holiday units. The extensions would comprise two storey wings at either end containing bathrooms and drying rooms at ground floor level and covered landings and staircases above (providing access to the first floor accommodation); and single storey conservatories at the front. The accommodation is flexible as it can either provide 4 x 1 bedroom holiday units (for couples) or 2 x 2 bedroom holiday units (for families). Some additional windows would be inserted.

Parking would be provided in the existing large car park at the front of the site.

In support the applicant’s agent states the following:

“The proposal to which this application relates is for the conversion of the existing storage barn on site into tourist accommodation. Although the nursery business is a successful one, as with many agricultural enterprises it would benefit from an extra income stream from a diversification within the site. The applicant has identified a demand for a small scale flexible tourist accommodation, and considers that this would work well within their existing building. The site is within the beautiful surroundings of the AONB, close to the Ridgeway path, as well as being within easy reach of attractions such as Marlborough and Avebury. The idea is that the accommodation can be booked as one or two bedroom holiday flats, so that they can be used by couples or families, or groups of friends.”

In addition the applicants themselves state the following:

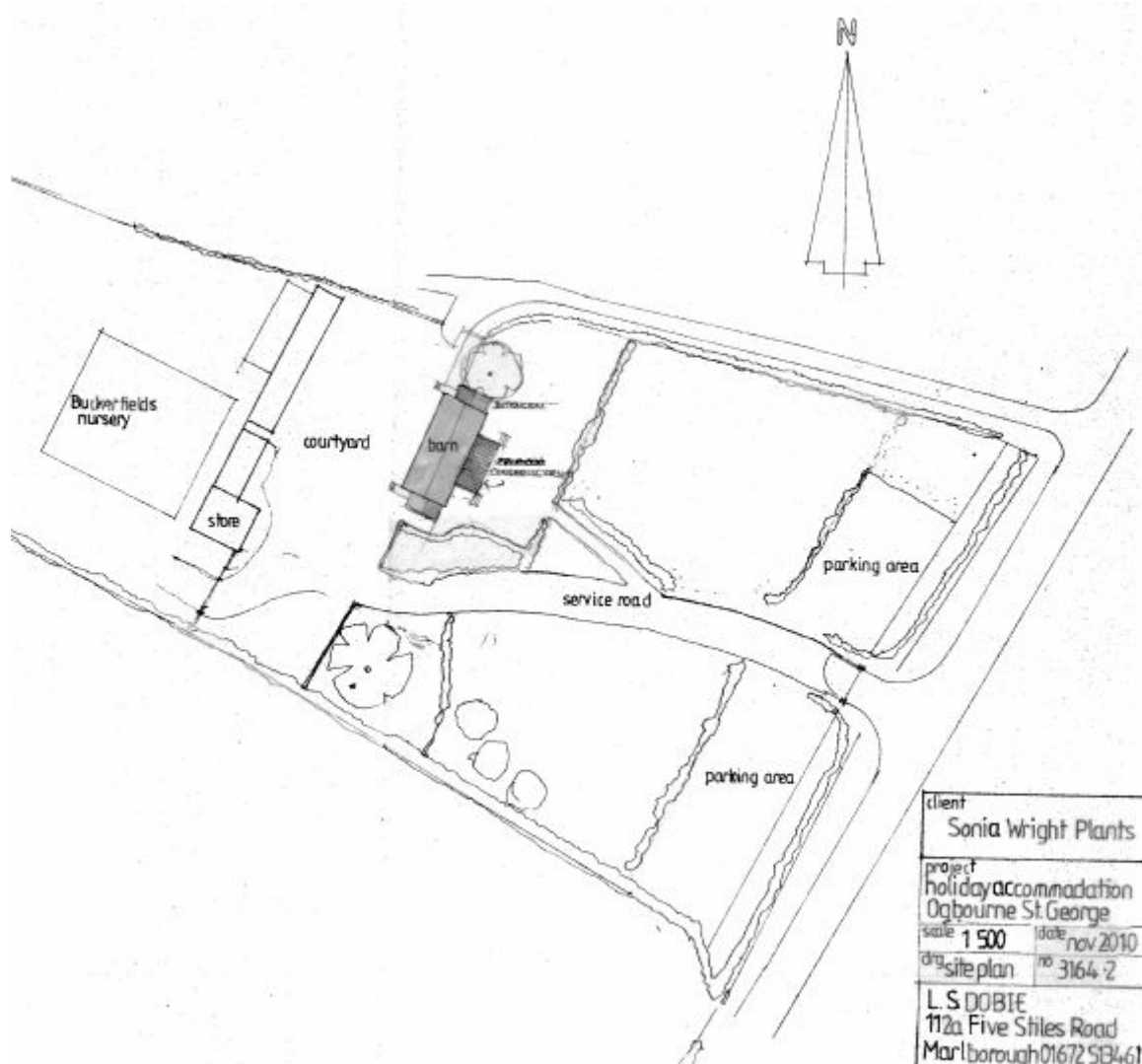
“The business was relocated to the site some ten years ago and like many small businesses it has been affected by the financial climate of the last few years. The creation of the holiday lets is an attempt to make fuller use of the nursery facilities whilst assisting in sustaining the business.

It is hoped that the provision of such self-catering accommodation would not only attract visitors to use local facilities, and enjoy the local amenities, but it would also boost the plant trade on the nursery.

Encouragement has come from bodies whose object is to assist the development of rural business and environment, and also from those concerned by the lack of such accommodation in the area.

The Parish Council state that there is ‘probably’ sufficient accommodation available locally, but it is a known fact, confirmed by the local Tourist Office, that the area has a shortage of such tourist accommodation, which will be further exacerbated by the forthcoming closure of the Ivy House Hotel in nearby Marlborough”.

The full statements are available to view on the working file and via Planning Explorer.



7. Planning Policy

Kennet Local Plan 2011: Policies PD1 & NR7.
PPS4 & PPS7

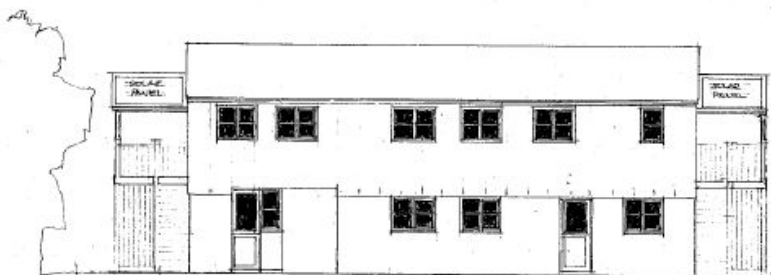
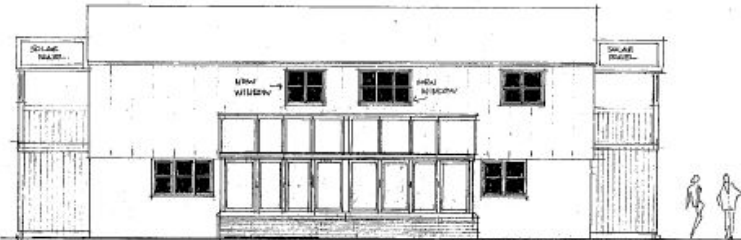
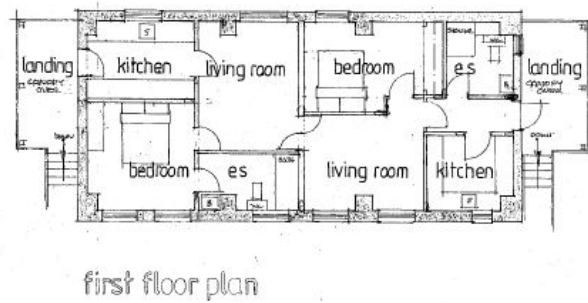
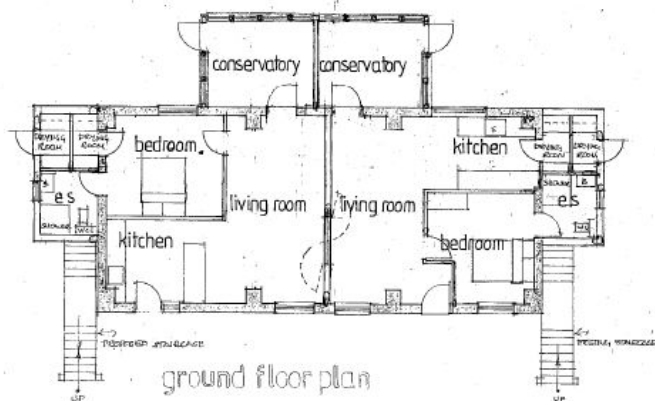
8. Consultations

Ogbourne St George PC: Objection. The PC objects to this application as it takes away from the business of a nursery a significant part that was only constructed less than 10 years ago. This change of use of a barn would move business away from its original purpose. To transfer from a horticultural usage to a tourist use so soon appears to be somewhat disingenuous. The site is outside the village envelope and it is considered that approval of this application could be a first step towards residential development. It is considered that there is probably sufficient local accommodation already. The application states that the business is successful so the barn as such is essential to the business. If it is altered as proposed it will not be available in future as the business develops and then there will be a further application for a new barn.

Wiltshire Council Highways: Parking in existing car park is too remote. One parking space for each unit should be achieved close to the building.

Wilts Fire & Rescue: recommend informatives.

North Wessex Downs AONB: The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan recognises within its Tourism and Leisure chapters that there is insufficient tourist accommodation within our protected landscape. It is also acknowledged that the potential performance of the AONB as a short break destination has considerable potential to be approved. No objection subject to conditions controlling future occupancy for tourism use only.



9. Publicity

The application was publicised by way of site notice and personal letter to adjoining neighbour.

10. Planning Considerations

The main issues in this case are, firstly, the principle of the proposal, and then (assuming the principle is established) the impact of the specific scheme on sustainability, the character and appearance of the countryside and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, highway safety, and residential amenity.

Principle

The application site lies in open countryside and not within the limits of development of any town or village. According to Policy EC7 of PPS4, local planning authorities should support sustainable rural tourism developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, rather than harm, the character of the countryside, its towns, villages, buildings and other features. The PPS further states that local planning authorities should support the provision of visitor facilities in appropriate locations; wherever possible locate visitor facilities in existing or replacement buildings (and, wherever possible, in, or close to, service centres and villages); and recognise that in areas such as AONB's there will be scope for tourist development subject to appropriate control over the number, form and location to ensure the particular qualities or features that justified the designation are conserved.

It is evident from this policy that there is a general presumption in favour of tourist development subject to certain controls. In this case the controls are satisfied in that the proposed visitor accommodation would be contained largely within an existing building (which itself lies within a yard of buildings), would be relatively close to the village of Ogbourne St George, and would not harm the qualities of the AONB. As a matter of principle the proposal is, therefore, considered to be acceptable under Policy

EC7.

Although some extensions are proposed to the existing building to enable the conversion, these extensions are modest in size and have little impact outside of the site. They do not, therefore, cause the proposal to fail this 'test' of Policy EC7.

Impact on sustainability

As set out above, Policy EC7 is supportive of sustainable rural tourism. In this case the proposal is considered to be sustainable, firstly, in view of its proximity to Ogbourne St. George (which has a public house/restaurant); and secondly, because the proposal would assist in sustaining an existing rural enterprise. Separately, PPS4 advises that local planning authorities should support diversification for business purposes that are consistent in their scale and environmental impact with their rural location. This proposal is a classic example of diversification where the proposed tourist accommodation would help to ensure the future viability of the nursery business without harming the wider environment.

The Parish Council's concerns that this proposal would remove an existing barn which is essential to the business and lead to a requirement for a further barn is not supported. The need or otherwise for the existing barn in connection with the business is a decision for the applicant to make, and any future requirement for an additional barn would be subject to another planning application at which time it would be considered on its own merits in any event.

Regarding the amount of local visitor accommodation, PPS4 encourages local planning authorities to support facilities where identified needs are not met. There is disagreement between the applicant and Parish Council as to the local need. However, as there is no discouragement of over-provision in the PPS, this is not considered to be a sustainable reason to raise objection. Supply and demand in this case is a matter for the market to determine.

Impact on the countryside/AONB

The barn to be converted is situated in an existing yard of sheltered buildings. It is set well-back from the highway and largely screened in distant views. The proposed alterations and modest extensions to the barn would not significantly change its appearance or impact on the countryside. In view of these circumstances no adverse harm would be caused to the visual amenities of the countryside, and the character and appearance of the AONB would be safeguarded. This is in accordance with PPS4, PPS7 and Policies PD1 and NR7 of the local plan.

Impact on highway safety

Car parking for the proposed visitor accommodation would be provided in the existing large car park serving the nursery, and access would be via the existing driveway. No harm would be caused to highway safety from these.

The WC Highways Officers requests that the parking is provided closer to the barn. However, as it is a relatively short walk between the car park and the barn this is considered unnecessary.

Impact on residential amenity

The site is sufficiently distanced from neighbouring properties to ensure no adverse impact on residential amenity.

Conclusion

This application presents a proposal for sustainable tourism accommodation at an established rural business which is in accordance with government guidance and the policies of the development plan relating to development in the countryside and diversification. The proposal would cause no harm to visual amenity, highway safety, nor residential amenity, and consequently is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve, for the following reasons and subject to the conditions set out below:

The decision to grant planning permission has been taken on the grounds that the proposed development would not cause any significant harm to interests of acknowledged importance, including the character and appearance of the landscape of this part of the area of outstanding natural beauty, and having regard to the following policies and proposals in the Kennet Local Plan 2011 namely: policies PD1 & NR7; and Central Government planning policy set out in PPS4 & PPS7.

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match in material, colour and texture those used in the existing building.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

- 3 Notwithstanding Class C3 of the Schedule of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) the accommodation hereby permitted shall be used to provide holiday accommodation only, which shall not be occupied as permanent, unrestricted accommodation or as primary place of residence. An up-to-date register of names and main home address of all occupiers shall be maintained by the owner and shall be made available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to ensure that the accommodation is not occupied on a long-term basis because the site is in an area where the Local Planning Authority would not normally permit new dwellings.

- 4 This decision relates to documents/plans submitted with the application, listed below. No variation from the approved documents should be made without the prior approval of this Council. Amendments may require the submission of a further application. Failure to comply with this advice may lead to enforcement action which may require alterations and/or demolition of any unauthorised buildings or structures and may also lead to prosecution.

Drawing nos. 3163.1 & 3164.2 dated Nov 2010 (and received by the lpa 09/12/2010) and red-edged site plan.

Appendices:

None

Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:

Application file and history file.