

## REPORT FOR EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

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| <b>Date of Meeting</b>     | 8 <sup>th</sup> September 2022   |
| <b>Application Number</b>  | PL/2022/04255  |
| <b>Site Address</b>        | O and S Self Storage Units, Lockeridge, SN8 4ER  |
| <b>Proposal</b>            | Demolition of existing open-sided, steel-framed storage barn ( 54 sqm.) and the Installation of 10 x Storage containers ( 144 sqm) |
| <b>Applicant</b>           | Oram   |
| <b>Town/Parish Council</b> | WEST OVERTON   |
| <b>Electoral Division</b>  | Cllr Jane Davies   |
| <b>Grid Ref</b>            | 413653 168003  |
| <b>Type of application</b> | Full Planning  |
| <b>Case Officer</b>        | Jonathan James   |

### Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called-in by Cllr Jane Davies if the application is to be recommended for approval, to discuss the potential impacts of the scheme resulting from the scale of development, the visual impact on the surrounding area, the design of the scheme and the environmental/highway impact.

#### 1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposal against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations, and to consider the recommendation that the application be approved.

#### 2. Report Summary

The proposal is for an extension of the existing B8 storage use taking place at a former agricultural yard, the replacement / removal of an existing 'Dutch' barn, and the provision of an additional 10 containers for self-storage. The concerns raised relating to visual impact and nuisance on the amenity of the area are acknowledged. However, the visual impact is considered to be minor, bearing in mind the existing structures and use on site. Also, issues pertaining to nuisance from trial bikes etc would be covered under separate legislation and enforcement by the appropriate body.

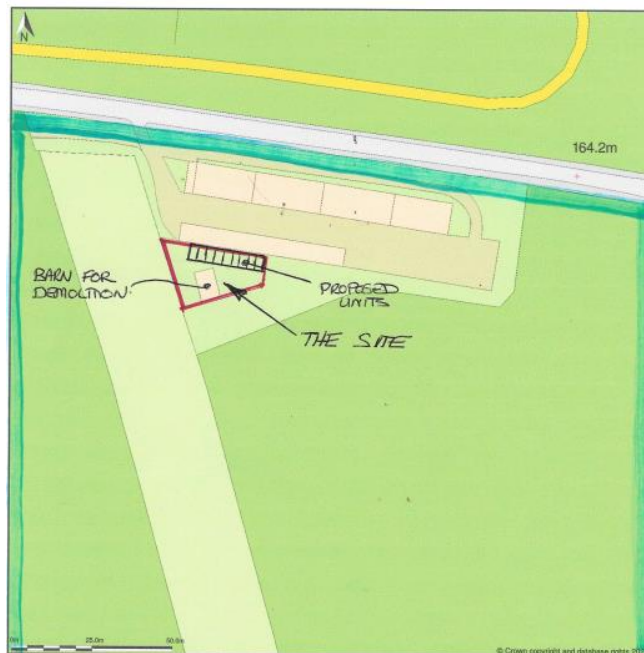
### 3. Site Description

The application concerns a yard previously used for agricultural purposes as part of South Farm. The site is located outside the village of West Overton in a relatively exposed position on raised ground above the Kennet valley within the North Wessex Downs AONB. There is an existing mature tree belt along the western boundary of the site and an existing mature hedgerow with trees forming the northern boundary (ref. 2020/2021 aerial).



*Aerial (2020 / 2021) of the site set within its surroundings*

There is a well-established linear former chicken shed building on the site (ref. site location plan), which has the benefit of planning permission for self-storage use as referenced below. Adjoining steel storage containers also benefit from planning permission.



*Site location plan*

Access into the site exists at present off the adjoining highway at the north-west corner of the site.

The site location plan shows the proposed units and associated access area in relation to the existing units / structures on site. It should be noted that the proposed units would be set at the same level as the existing containers.

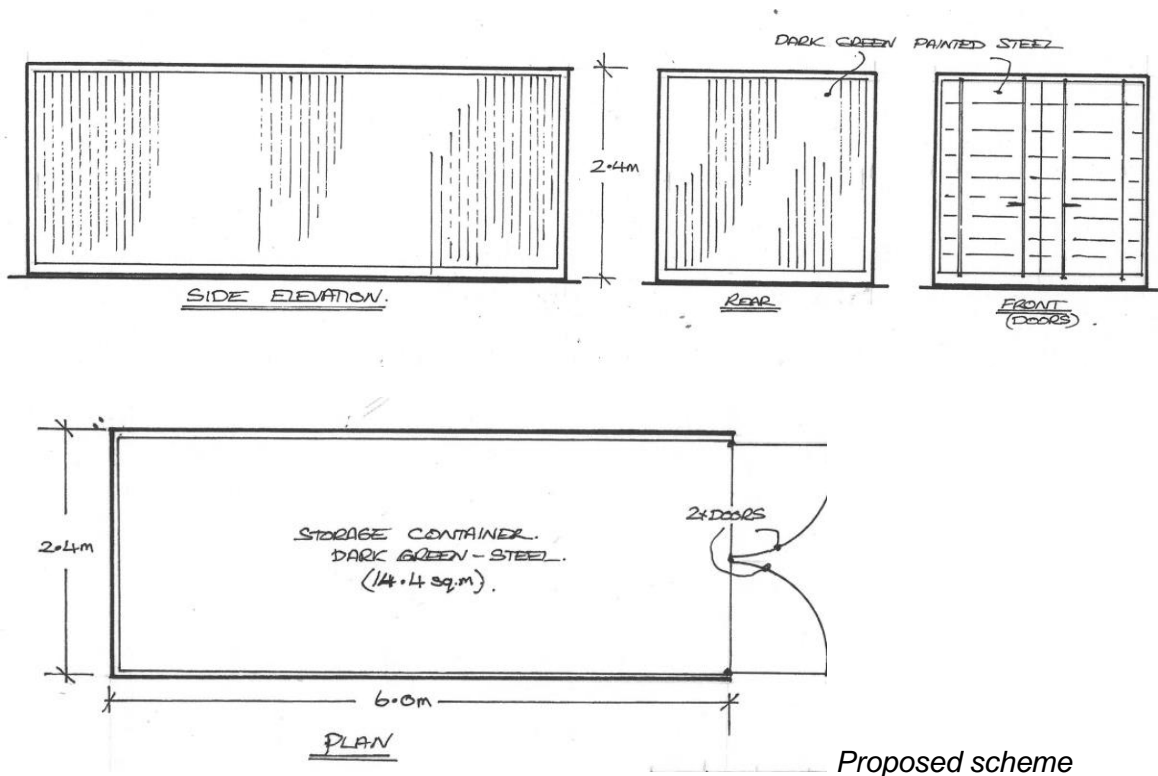
#### 4. Planning History

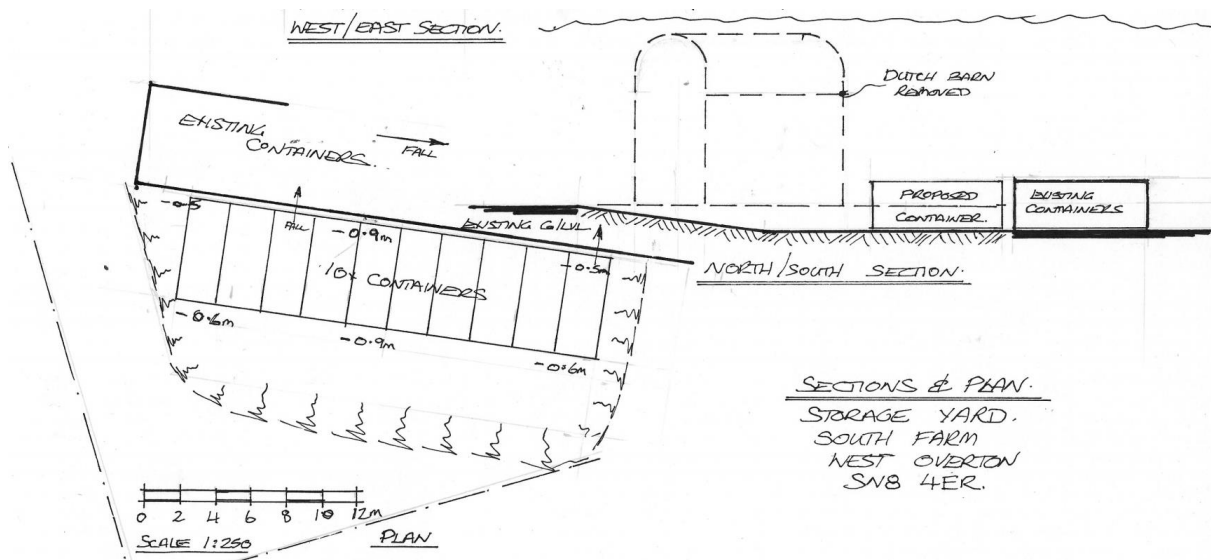
- 20/03917/FUL Conversion of part of former chicken sheds and placement of additional storage containers for B8 'lock-up' -storage purposes.
- 18/01066/PNCOU Prior Notification under Class R - Change of Use of Agricultural Building to B8 Storage Units.
- 19/07772/FUL Retrospective permission for change of use from agricultural to allow for the placement of storage containers for self-storage (resubmission of 19/04352/FUL)

#### 5. The Proposal

The application is for the provision of an additional ten B8 storage units associated with the existing storage use on site. There is an existing 'Dutch' barn that would be removed.

Each unit would measure 6.0m long by 2.4m wide and 2.4m high; they would be finished in a 'dark green' painted steel.





*Proposed section / levels*

The cross-section above shows that the proposed units would be set down so that they are level with the existing units.



*Image 1*

Image 1 taken from the access point of the site shows the existing storage containers and former agricultural shed as well as the existing redundant 'Dutch' barn. The proposed storage containers would be set down in level behind the existing storage units in front of the 'Dutch' barn.

## **6. Local Planning Policy**

### Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 (WCS):

- Core Policy 1 – Settlement Strategy
- Core Policy 2 – Delivery Strategy
- Core Policy 14 – Spatial Strategy: Marlborough Community Area
- Core Policy 34 - Additional employment land
- Core Policy 35 – Existing employment land
- Core Policy 48 – Supporting Rural Life
- Core Policy 51 – Landscape
- Core Policy 57 – Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
- Core Policy 58 – Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment.
- Core Policy 60 – Sustainable transport
- Core Policy 61 – Transport and new development

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021)

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026: Car Parking Strategy (2015)

Management Plan 2019 – 2024 NWD AONB

## **7. Summary of consultation responses**

Fyfield and West Overton Parish Council – Object: the site is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Since permission was granted for the commercial use of the premises there have been recurring acts of common law nuisance and breaches of planning control, to which the Planning Authority's response has been characteristically supine. Traffic associated with the site has proved to be excessive. If the current application is approved the potential for these disadvantages can only increase. This will impair the function of the AONB. Church Hill in West Overton and the traffic conditions there can only become a source of greater concern.

WC Highways – Comments: the applicant is clear that the proposed storage units are for just storage. I note that other representations suggest that some of the units have been used for other types of business use. The previous approval has been granted from a highway perspective based on the B8 use.

I am minded that another 10 units for B8/storage is unlikely to lead to a significant number of additional movements and does not warrant a highway objection. However, one would need to ensure that this is the only use granted and adhered to.

## **8. Publicity**

The application has been advertised by letter to local residents and by site notice. Third party representations have been received and are summarised as follows:

### Third party comments:

- Increase in traffic
- Problems with motor bikes, dirt bikes and quad bikes
- Noise issues
- No regulation on opening / closing times
- Safety issues, conflict between traffic using this site and walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- Use of the site as for purposes other than B8 storage (eg garage)
- Adding extra containers will exacerbate the problems
- Visual impact within AONB
- Impact on AONB
- In breach of planning consent already granted
- Lack of consultation

## **9. Planning Considerations**

### 9.1 Principle of Development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the development plan comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) (2015).

The site lies between the nearest villages of West Overton and Lockeridge, both described as small villages within the WCS (2015), and are located within the Marlborough Community Area. The site lies in countryside beyond the limits of development as defined within the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) (2015) and therefore in planning policy terms lies within countryside where policy seeks to restrict new development to that which is permitted by an exceptions policy.



*Image 2 – Location of site in relation to surrounding villages*

The applicant argues that there is a greater demand locally for these units and on the basis of 'Image 2' above, it is apparent that there are a number of small villages (Kennett, West Overton, Lockeridge and Fyfield) within a mile of the site.

The site has the benefit of previous consents (see site history above – 18/01066/PNCOU, 19/07772/FUL and 20/03917/FUL) for the change of use to B8 storage and is therefore now an established B8 commercial storage site. The proposal is to extend the existing use / number of units onto an area of land to the rear of the site, which is described as 'farmyard' within the submission and which contains an existing dilapidated 'Dutch' barn (ref. Google map extract below and site visit photo of site below).



*Extract from Google maps (© Google)*



*View of site from highway*

Core policy 34 (Additional employment land) supports proposals for employment development [B1 (now class E), B2 and B8], generally within the Principal Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres. However, the policy does also support such development outside the Principal Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres, developments where they meet certain criteria.

Core Policy 34, criteria (iii) supports development for new or existing rural based businesses within or adjacent to large and small villages. It is considered that the site does lie within a reasonable distance of the villages of West Overton and Lockeridge so can be considered to comply with the first part of this policy.

The extension of the existing business through the addition of ten units on an area that is contained by the 'Dutch' barn would support the viability of the business, provide further storage where there is an apparent demand and remove a dilapidated structure. The proposed units will be set behind the existing ones, are consistent in scale with their situation and do not adversely affect or detract from the character of the surrounding area or adversely affect residential amenity. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) clarifies that these units will be supporting local residents with additional storage beyond the constrictions of smaller dwellings that new housing offers, and that the proposal enhances the existing viability of the site. The scheme, being an extension of an existing B8 storage unit, would not undermine the delivery of strategic employment allocation and the site is supported by adequate infrastructure. On balance, the scheme is considered to meet the requirements of Core Policy 34.

An underpinning theme of the NPPF is the need to build strong and prosperous economies. Chapter 6 encourages economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.



Taking into consideration all of the material issues in reaching a decision, it is considered that in this instance the fact that there is an existing B8 storage use at this site plays a significant role in supporting this application. The surrounding arguments that add substance to the crux of the case is that of the history of the site. It is therefore considered, on balance, that the principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable in this location in this instance.

## 9.2 Visual Impact

Core Policy 57 of the WCS (2015) refers specifically to development responding positively to the existing landscape features in terms of built form, scale, design and materials to effectively integrate development into its setting. Core Policy 51 seeks to protect the character of Wiltshire's landscape.

Concerns have been raised about the proposed scheme and the potential for harmful visual impact on the surrounding area. The site lies in countryside within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The AONB team have been consulted on the proposed scheme however, no comments had been submitted by them at the time of drafting this report. As described above, the site is well screened within the area by existing trees along the western boundary and also by an existing hedgerow and trees along the northern boundary.

Of relevance is the site planning history that has supported the change from agriculture to B8 storage. Application 20/03917/FUL for the conversion of remainder of building to self-storage units and use of land for stationing 13 steel containers for self-storage concluded that although the site itself is in a relatively exposed location within the landscape, the containers themselves would be largely screened by the building, the external appearance of which, facing the street, would remain unchanged. Rising ground levels, a retaining wall to the rear and a tree belt to the west provide additional screening along with roadside vegetation. It was thus concluded that the development does not materially impact on the rural character or landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

The scheme under this application proposes new containers behind the existing containers and the removal of the existing 'Dutch' barn. The proposed containers would be well screened by the existing structures and trees and hedgerow within this area and the removal of the 'Dutch' barn would be a visual enhancement. As such, it is considered that the development would not materially impact on the rural character or landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

## 9.3 Highway Safety Impact / Parking

Core Policy 61 - Transport and New Development - seeks to ensure that new development is capable of being served by safe access to the highway network. Core Policy 64 seeks to ensure that parking standards are met as set out in the Council's adopted standards. The NPPF (2021) states that an application should only be refused on highway grounds if *"there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe"*.

Concerns have been raised by local residents and the parish council about the impact of traffic increases and the nuisance from motorbikes / trial bikes within the area. The units are for storage purposes only and therefore will only generate a limited level of traffic

movements - a view reflected by the highway officer. Issues pertaining to antisocial behaviour by persons using these units for purposes beyond the planning scope would need to be dealt with by the appropriate enforcing body.

Comments received from the Council's Highway Officer acknowledge that the site is just used for storage and the assessment of the scheme is against a B8 storage use. They consider that the proposed additional 10 units would unlikely lead to significant additional traffic movements and that the scheme does not warrant a highway objection. The agent confirms that there is a demand locally for this type of storage. The access is as existing which offers good visibility in both directions and the ability for vehicles to pass each clearly without causing conflict in doing so. There is sufficient parking and turning space within the site to allow vehicles to enter and exit safely in a forward gear.

On balance, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of local and national policies; Core Policies 60 and 61 of the WCS (2015) and the WLTP (2011 – 2026) Car Parking Strategy (2015) and with the relevant sections in the NPPF (2021).

#### 9.4 Other matters

Comments have been received querying the extent of consultation on the application. The application has been consulted on in accordance with the legislation as prescribed in Article 15 of the Development Management Procedure Order (DMPO) (as amended).

### **10. Conclusion (The Planning Balance)**

There are three aspects of sustainable development - an economic, social and environmental role. The NPPF identifies that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is seen as a golden thread running through the decision-making process and that local planning authorities should approve development that accord with the development plan without delay.

It is acknowledged that there is some positive weight to be given to economic benefits through the likely local employment that may be generated by the development proposed, as are there likely to be some social benefits through the provision of additional storage units for use of by local residents in the surrounding villages of the area. There will be the added visual benefit of removal of the existing dilapidated 'Dutch' barn.

The scale of the proposed operations would represent an increase in the area covered by units than that previously approved. However, these units are of a temporary nature and low lying within the site and would be screened by the existing hedgerow and trees to the west and north of the site. Therefore, there would not be a significant visual impact as a result of the proposed development and there would be a beneficial visual impact through the removal of the dilapidated 'Dutch' barn. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the AONB. The proposal would not result in a detrimental impact on any nearby neighbouring properties. Comments pertaining to noise from antisocial behaviour using motorbikes / trial bikes should be enforced under the appropriate body and would be covered under separate legislation.

Whilst there is a valid argument that the site is not in a sustainable location, there are existing commercial activities taking place here now and it is not forecast that there will be a significant increase in traffic movements. Access and parking are considered acceptable, and no objections have been raised by the highways officer. In addition, this application must also be weighed against the economic benefits of providing additional financial security to the existing business.

In this instance it is considered that the benefits outweigh any limited harm that the proposal might have within this area and that the application complies with Core Policies 34, 51, 57, 60 and 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). Consequently, the development is considered acceptable in this instance.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:**

### **Conditions:**

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 development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved details:

- Plans
- Application form
- Design and Access Statement
- Site location Plan
- Existing Block Plan
- Proposed Block Plan
- Proposed Storage Containers – Plan and Elevations
- Sections and Plan

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. No part of the development shall be first brought into use until all the existing 'Dutch' barn has been permanently demolished and all of the demolition materials and debris resulting there from has been removed from the site.

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

4. No external lighting shall be installed on-site until plans showing the type of light appliance, the height and position of fitting, illumination levels and light spillage in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institution of Lighting Professionals in their publication "The Reduction of Obtrusive Light" Guidance Note 01/21 (reference GN01/21), have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting shall be installed and shall be

maintained in accordance with the approved details and no additional external lighting shall be installed.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site.

5. This consent relates to a maximum of 10 storage containers that shall not be placed other than as shown on the approved drawings, and individually these shall measure no more than 2.4m x 2.4m x 6.0m, and shall all be placed at ground level and finished in dark green.

REASON: To ensure an appropriate scale of development and the associated activity and to minimise vehicle movements on the local highway network in the interests of highway safety and the amenities of the area.

6. The external materials and finishes to be used in the conversion of the building as hereby permitted shall not be other than as shown on the approved drawings.

REASON: In the interests of amenity, the agricultural character of the building and the rural character of the site within the AONB.

7. Notwithstanding the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 (or any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification), the development hereby permitted shall be used as a self-storage facility only and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Class B8 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2005, (or in any provisions equivalent to that class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

REASON: The proposed use is acceptable but the local planning authority wish to consider any future proposal for a change of use having regard to the circumstances of the case.