

REPORT TO THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	13 November 2013
Application Number	13/03635/FUL
Site Address	Dockers Yard Greens Lane Calstone Wiltshire SN11 8QQ
Proposal	Change of Use From Agricultural to Equine & Erection of Stables & Menage
Applicant	Mrs D Sands
Town/Parish Council	CALNE WITHOUT
Grid Ref	402636 169545
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Chris Marsh

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called in by Cllr Hill in order to consider the scale and design of the proposed development, as well as its impact on the AONB and highway network.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions.

2. Report Summary

The main issues in considering the application are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area and AONB
- Impact on the privacy and amenity of existing neighbours
- Impact on highway safety
- Impact on site drainage

The application has attracted a total of 27 public objections, including revised comments in respect of the amended plans. No objection is raised by the Council's Highways Officer, subject to conditions; however an objection has been raised in respect of the current proposal on drainage grounds. No comments have been received from the Parish Council.

3. Site Description

The land known as Dockers Yard comprises around 4ha of agricultural land spanning between the A4 main road East of Calne and Greens Lane, a narrow unclassified road to the South. Greens Lane is used primarily for access to the limited number of properties scattered along its length, which terminates in a dead end to the southeast of the site. The land slopes gently down toward its southeast corner, adjoining an area that has previously been converted to equestrian/horse grazing use to the immediate East. At present, there is no made up vehicular access to the land, which currently forms part of the wider holding with the land to the West, and the land is enclosed by a mature hedge boundary to the North and East, with a post-and-wire fence at its southern edge. The site is located in the open countryside and within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4. Planning History

There is no planning history relevant to the site.

5. The Proposal

It is proposed to change the use of the land to equestrian, creating a new secure access onto Greens Lane and erecting a new stables and ménage. Following negotiation, the scheme has been amended in several significant respects, including the siting of the building and ménage, design of the stables and amount of hard standing surrounding them. The site is to be accessed from Greens Lane via a new splayed entrance leading to a pair of five-bar gates recessed from the highway by some 5m. The splay widens from 4.5m at the gates to 13m at the highway edge and is to be surfaced in a suitably consolidated material, yet to be agreed. But for a 5m-deep apron to the front of the stables, however, the residual area traversing the land West of the stables up to the ménage to the North is to be surfaced in Grasscrete. This plastic grid system, inlaid into the existing turf, will provide a total area of 160m², sufficient for the manoeuvring of vehicles/ horseboxes as necessary.

The stables are to be arranged so as to back onto the eastern site boundary, comprising a series of 3no. 3.6 x 3.6m loose boxes flanked by a modest tack room and larger feed and bedding store. The block is to be arranged over an L-plan; with separate manure storage enclosure situated a short distance from the northwest corner of the building. The stable block is to measure 18.6m in length and 7.4m at its widest, with the majority section being dictated by the 3.6m depth of the boxes. Horizontal timber boarding is to be used to clad the external walls of the building, with a 15° pitched roof over to be surfaced in black Onduline corrugated sheeting incorporating three separate translucent panels to afford additional natural light to the boxes. The doors are to be of traditional vertical timber construction, with an open front to the hay store wing. Overall, the building will adopt a scale of 2.1m to eaves level and 3.1m to its ridge.

Adjacent to the northern end of the stables, it is proposed to create a ménage, to be laid out similarly alongside the East site boundary, 20m wide and extending 40m northwards, toward the A4. The area is to be enclosed by a 1.2m timber post-and-rail fence, incorporating dual gates at its southern end, and surfaced in a top layer of various silica sands, fibres and rubber over a permeable membrane, with foundation of crushed limestone below. Integral drainage is to be

provided as a series of parallel 100mm-diameter perforated pipes, into which surface water is to drain through the upper levels and over an impermeable membrane. These pipes are then to converge and discharge into a soakaway at the southeast corner of the site. The remainder of the land – approximately 88% of the total – is to be left as general grazing land in association with the proposed equestrian use.

6. Planning Policy

The following planning policies are relevant to the application:

Policy C3 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 (Development Control Core Policy)
Policy NE4 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
Policy NE15 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 (The Landscape Character of the Countryside)
Paragraphs 103, 109 and 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework

7. Consultations

Calne Without Parish Council – no comments
Highways – no objection, subject to conditions
Drainage – objections, however noted mitigation may be possible

The Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre has noted the multitude of badger records within c.60-500m of the site between 1966 and 2003.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice, press advert and neighbour consultation.

17 letters of objection received, including representations on behalf of the AONB and the North Wiltshire & Swindon CPRE.

Following the receipt of amended plans, the consultation period was subsequently extended and 10 further comments were received.

Summary of key relevant points raised:

- Visual impact on the open countryside
- Impact on the character of the wider AONB
- Inappropriate use of land in an AONB
- Impact on highways
- Effect on residential amenity
- Drainage and flood risk

Concerns have been raised in respect of the impact of the development on private views and, consequently, the value of property. As neither is a material planning consideration, it is necessary to detach these issues from legitimate considerations such as the impact on the landscape and wider AONB.

9. Planning Considerations

Principle of development

In principle, private equestrian uses are considered acceptable in this type of location, as exemplified by the proliferation of similar schemes in the wider vicinity of the site. Such proposals are particularly prevalent amongst areas of land, like this, that have relatively little agricultural merit due variously to their size, access, relief and drainage. For this reason, the relatively minimal loss of agricultural land for the purposes of equestrian use, most of which is to comprise grazing land largely consistent with agricultural practice, is considered justified in this instance.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area and AONB

Following negotiation, the scheme has been amended in several significant respects, including the siting of the building and ménage, design of the stables and amount of hard standing surrounding them. The entire arrangement has been brought closer to the southeast corner of the site, conserving to a greater extent the open aspect that characterises the land and reducing the amount of hard standing required. The introduction of Grasscrete to the majority of the turning space will mean that this is barely apparent in visual terms, whilst providing a fully permeable surface to both support vehicles and protect the ground from damage.

In terms of design and materials, the stable building proposed is typical of a small-scale private facility and certainly will appear less imposing than the American-style barn originally shown. The scale has been reduced to an absolute minimum and the use of a traditional natural timber finish will enable the building to weather to a regressive colour. Likewise, the ménage is enclosed by a traditional post-and-rail fence and, whilst easily distinguished by the onlooker from the immediate surroundings, will not appear unduly prominent or out of place in this setting, nor will it significantly affect the wider landscape.

The scheme should be taken in context with the proliferation of dwellings further southeast along Greens Lane, in which context the building will be seen when viewed from the A4 to the North. Although certainly apparent from a number of viewpoints in the immediate vicinity of the site, the scheme will not appear as unduly prominent in the wider landscape, including that of the AONB, by reason of its modest scale and type of use. The risk of 'clutter' (e.g. vehicles, lights, jumps, etc) undermining this simple appearance is a relevant consideration, however, and to this end suitable conditions are recommended.

Impact on the privacy and amenity of existing neighbours

It is not considered that the level of activity associated with a private facility of this type and scale should pose any significant threat to the residential amenity of neighbouring properties in respect of noise disturbance, etc. The area is, however, characterised by its relatively quiet and rural setting, with little light pollution. Suitable conditions are therefore recommended to ensure that the site is not brought into commercial livery use, which would attract far more activity, and to prevent the installation of lighting, which could prove intrusive to nearby properties as well as impacting negatively on the general character of the AONB.

Impact on highway safety

The access and highway implications of the scheme have been examined and are considered acceptable. The proposed splayed access will afford adequate turning space and visibility, allowing a single vehicle to pull off of the highway entirely for the gates to be

opened, thus avoiding obstruction. It is also noted that the Grasscrete to be installed provides a sufficiently robust surface on which to manoeuvre a vehicle and/or horsebox in all weathers, enabling both site access and egress in a forward gear. Greens Lane is an adopted, although unclassified, road supporting several properties and therefore the minimal level of vehicular movements anticipated as a result of this proposal is considered acceptable. For these reasons, the Council's Highways Officer has confirmed that no objection is raised, subject to conditions to secure an upgraded access.

Impact on site drainage

It is acknowledged that the site may have in the past been subject to limited and localised flooding during extreme weather events and, with such events likely to increase in frequency and severity, it is reasonable to require adequate measures to offset the impact of the development and, if possible, gain some improvement in this respect. For this reason, the proposal in its current form has attracted an objection from the Council's Drainage Engineer on the basis that the proposed soakaway is unlikely to be adequate due to the heavy clay soil. However, the consultee has confirmed that a suitable solution could be realised in principle by incorporating the drainage from the stables and hard standing with that from the ménage and redirecting this to a nearby watercourse. The Grasscrete area and manure store could then drain at their own rates, providing a net improvement to the overall resilience of the site. Whilst the proposal does not make adequate provision in this respect at the present time, therefore, it is reasonable to impose a condition to secure a suitable alternative arrangement prior to any future use of the development, effectively preventing implementation of any permission until the site can be adequately drained.

Conclusions

In summary, it is considered that the proposed use is typical of its setting, with many private equestrian facilities established in such areas of the countryside, including designated landscapes such as AONBs. The revisions to the design of the stables make adequate concession to the building's private use and the proposed cladding will weather to a regressive appearance in the context of the wider landscape. The ménage and areas of hard standing are also typically associated with a development of this type and are not out of character in terms of their proportion or appearance. Adequate arrangements have been made for safe access to and egress from the site, and it is considered that subsequent approval of a suitable scheme of drainage will mitigate against the risk of flooding, so that the proposal is consistent with both national and local planning policy.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission is GRANTED, subject to the following 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 not be brought into use until details of the finish to external timber, including any paint or stain to be used on the external walls and window joinery have been inspected on site and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the development being first

	<p>brought into use and maintained as such thereafter.</p> <p>REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.</p>
3	<p>The development hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use until the first five metres of the access, measured from the edge of the carriageway, has been consolidated and surfaced (not loose stone or gravel). The access shall be maintained as such thereafter. The access shall be made to drain away from the highway, details of which should be approved in writing by the Local Authority.</p> <p>REASON: In the interests of highway safety.</p>
4	<p>Any gates shall be set back 4.5 metres from the edge of the carriageway, such gates to open inwards only, in perpetuity.</p> <p>REASON: In the interests of highway safety.</p>
5	<p>No external lighting shall be installed on site unless 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.</p> <p>REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site.</p>
6	<p>No development shall commence on site until a scheme for the discharge of surface water from the site (including surface water from the access), incorporating sustainable drainage details, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be first brought into use until surface water drainage has been constructed in accordance with the approved scheme.</p> <p>REASON: To ensure that the development can be adequately drained.</p>
7	<p>The development hereby permitted shall only be used for the private stabling of horses and the storage of associated equipment and feed and shall at no time be used for any commercial purpose whatsoever, including for livery, or in connection with equestrian tuition or leisure rides.</p> <p>REASON: In the interests of highway safety and to protect the living conditions of nearby residents.</p>
8	<p>No portable buildings, van bodies, trailers, vehicles or other structures used for storage, shelter, rest or refreshment, shall be stationed on the site overnight.</p> <p>REASON: In order to protect the living conditions of nearby residents and the rural character of the area.</p>
9	<p>No fences or jumps shall be erected on the site without the prior approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.</p>

	REASON: In order to protect the rural character of the area.
10	<p>The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:</p> <p>1085 Sheet 1 rev 2 - Proposed Plans and Elevations and Location Plan 1085 Sheet 2 rev 2 - Proposed Block Plan</p> <p>Received 7 October 2013</p> <p>REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.</p>

Appendices: Site Location Plan

Background Documents Used in the preparation of this Report: None