
7. FULL APPLICATION – ERECTION OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING, CLIFFE HOUSE FARM, LOXLEY ROAD, BRADFIELD, SHEFFIELD (NP/S/0316/0281, P.1252, 427668 / 391738, 22/04/2016/JK)

Applicant: Mr William Hague

Site and Surroundings

Cliffe House Farm is located in an elevated position on the northern slope of the Loxley Valley above Damflask Reservoir and about 1.1km to the south-east of High Bradfield. It is the base for the applicants extensive 1200 acre farm business comprised of a mix of arable crops and grassland. The farm sits close to the edge of an escarpment on the hillside and currently comprises of a large and tall modern agricultural shed, adjacent yard area and a smaller range of buildings to the south. Immediately to the south of the agricultural buildings there are two detached dwellings, Hill Top and the original Cliffe House Farmhouse, both of which are in separate ownership.

The application site comprises a roughly square area of field (about 120m by 120m) immediately to the north of the existing large farm building and adjacent to the main access into the farmyard from Kirk Edge Road.

The farm buildings are served by two accesses, the first is via a narrow track off Loxley Road to the south west. This serves the dwellings and the farm buildings and also carries a public footpath (forming part of the 'Round Sheffield Walk' route) which runs past the south side of the new farm building into the fields east of the farm. The second and now the main access for the farm buildings comes down off Kirk Edge Road to the north and also carries a public footpath which links with the one running west to east through the site.

To the north, east and south east of the site there are large fields used for cereal production. Fair Flats Farm, now a private dwelling, and its detached listed barn lies one field away to the east.

From the west the land falls away from the site and on this side the building group is largely screened by a combination of the landform, tree cover on the slopes of the escarpment and by a stand of mature trees on the south west corner of the building group.

Proposal

The erection of an agricultural building to house cattle together with associated access, yard area and landscape mitigation works.

Plans show the building would be sited immediately north of and at right angles to the existing shed. The rising ground would be excavated (96m x 67m) to sink the new building and the adjacent yard into the hillside to the same floor level as the existing shed. The ground rises to the north so the new shed and yard would be set into the ground by up to 12m at the northern end with the excavated material used to create a 15m wide bund running from the east gable of the existing building up the east side of the application site before feathering into the rising ground. This would then be planted to give a 15m wide shelter belt of trees and hedging from the east gable of the existing shed up around the new building to the access road and in a narrower band down the west side between the building and the access road. Further planting is proposed extending the existing tree planting on the bankside across the access track from the buildings, to the north and southwards.

The small stand of mature trees in the SW corner of the yard would also have its eroded and missing boundary walling reinstated to provide protection to them. Amended plans now also

show new hedge planting together with new and rebuilt walling to the south of the existing shed flanking the public footpath where it passes the existing building. Further off-site tree planting is also proposed on two boundaries east of the site and flanking the footpath to screen views of the application site and existing large shed in key views from the footpath. Finally, an area of the already undulating field north of the application site would be raised creating a 5m high gently sloping mounded area to provide further screening for views off Kirk Edge Road.

The building would be sited with its southern gable end spaced off from the existing shed by 20m to allow access from the existing farmyard and into the proposed new yard which would measure 95m x 37m. The new building would have a footprint identical to that of the existing shed at 27m wide by 75m long (1963m²) but have a lower 10m ridge height (2.7m below the existing shed ridge) and 6.5m to eaves. Materials would be concrete panelled walls with tanalised Yorkshire boarding above under a dark green coloured profile sheet roof laid to 15 degrees. The main access door would be a roller shutter style in the south gable. It is intended that the exposed concrete panel walls would be painted dark green to match the finish similarly employed on the existing building.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Statutory three year time limit for implementation.**
- 2. Development to be carried out in accordance with specified amended plans.**
- 3. Full implementation and maintenance thereafter of the submitted landscaping scheme with the bunding and mounding completed before the building is brought into use and all tree planting completed by the end of the first available planting season following the substantial completion of the building and the bunding.**
- 4. Excess spoil not used in the landscaping scheme to be disposed off-site via licensed waste operator.**
- 5. Building to be used for agricultural purposes in connection with the associated land and when no longer required for those purposes the building shall be removed and the land reinstated to its former contours and use.**
- 6. The concrete panelling on the southern gable end and the exposed east and west facing walling of the shed shall be painted a dark green colour to match the roof cladding within one month of the completion of the building works.**
- 7. The Yorkshire boarding shall be painted or stained a dark brown colour before or immediately upon erection and shall be permanently so maintained throughout the lifetime of the building.**
- 8. The metal roof, roller shutter door, pedestrian doors and wall sheeting to the buildings shall be pre-coloured dark green.**
- 9. All fencing shown to protect the line and users of the public footpath through the yard as shown on the amended drawings shall be completed before any work starts on the construction. Thereafter the segregation of the path from the yard and track shall be permanently so maintained throughout the lifetime of the approved development.**

Key Issues

- The effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the landscape setting.
- The effect upon the setting of the listed barn at Fair Flatts Farm.
- Whether having regard to local and national policy, the material considerations in this case would amount to the exceptional circumstances necessary to justify major development in the Peak District National Park.

Planning History

2012 – Approval for Demolition of a collection of existing concrete framed agricultural buildings at Cliffe House Farm and provision of a single replacement steel framed agricultural building with associated vehicle turning area and associated landscaping. This building was completed in 2014. (NP/S/0712/725)

2013 – Approval for Discharge of condition 4 – Landscaping scheme for the 2012 approval

2014 – Pre-application advice from officers lends qualified support for the principle of additional farm buildings at the site subject to a comprehensive landscaping scheme to demonstrate that the development could be satisfactorily integrated into the landscape.

2015 – Refusal of planning permission for the erection of two farm buildings and associated bunding and landscaping scheme. An appeal against the refusal was subsequently dismissed on grounds of harm to the landscape and to the setting of the listed building at Fair Flatts Farm. Furthermore, on the basis of the available evidence the Inspector felt unable to fully assess the scheme in accordance with the criteria in Paragraph 116 to the Framework in terms of any national considerations and the impact of permitting it or refusing it upon the local economy and furthermore the lack of information on the cost of developing outside the National Park. Consequently, the Inspector found that it had not been demonstrated that the proposed development would be in the public interest such that exceptional circumstances allow for major development in the National Park. The following are the main extract paragraphs from the decision letter:

“8. I acknowledge that the existing building would screen the proposed buildings from part of the public footpath and the hillside below. However, given the large scale, mass and height of the proposed buildings, I consider that they would appear dominant, intrusive and incongruous in the pastoral landscape of the countryside when viewed from part the public footpath and from the road to the north of the appeal site, Kirk Edge Road. In addition, the existing large building is already highly visible from across the Loxley Valley from roads on the hillside to the south especially when set against a pale harvest backdrop. Whilst I note that cut and fill techniques can often assist to provide a level platform on sloping topography, the impact of the scale of 2 such large buildings when combined with the existing building, would not be significantly reduced in this location close to the top of the hill.

9.....I consider that given the mass and form of the proposal and the amount of landscaping, the banking and bunding would alter the natural field topography and landscape patterns to the extent that it would emphasise the presence of these large buildings, especially at a distance, rather than screen them from view. To my mind, the proposed landscaping would appear jarring and discordant, as it would be concentrated around a large mass of buildings within a significantly large field away from traditional field boundaries when viewed against the traditional field pattern in the Loxley Valley.

11.I accept that to provide for a holding of this size, there is an agricultural need for buildings. However, the Framework requires that consideration of major developments should be refused in National Parks except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.

12. I note that the proposal would create employment for one full time worker and up to 4 seasonal workers and that the business will support the local economy in terms of providing servicing, plant and equipment. This is only a small public benefit.

13. The appellant states that there is no alternative siting for the farm enterprise and that there is not another established group of buildings within the land holding and any alternative siting would be random and not be functional. However, although I have been provided with a large scale plan of the entire landholding, it is not clear to me whether there are any alternative sites or not outside the National Park.....

14. On the submitted evidence, I am unable to fully assess the scheme in accordance with the strict and detailed criteria set out in paragraph 116 of the Framework in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy. Furthermore, no information has been provided regarding the cost of developing elsewhere outside the designated area. Therefore, I consider that it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would be in the public interest such that exceptional circumstances to allow for major development in the National Park.

15. Moreover, the Framework also states that the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas should be supported through well designed buildings. I have concluded that the design of the buildings in this location is unacceptable.

17. Therefore, the addition of two further large structures would create a huge mass of development on this visible plateau approaching the crest of the hill, which would fail to conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the National Park. This would not fulfil the statutory purposes of the Peak District National Park. It would conflict with relevant aspects of Policies GSP1, GSP3 and L1 of the Peak District National Park Local Development Framework (LDF) dated 2011. LDF Policy GSP1 requires that all development shall be consistent with the National Park's legal purposes and duty. LDF Policy GSP3 requires that development must respect, conserve and enhance valued characteristics of the site and buildings and reference is made to character and setting of buildings, scale of development, landscaping and materials. LDF Policy L1 requires, among other things, that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character.

18. The appeal proposal would also conflict with saved Policies LC4 and LC13 of the Peak District National Park Local Plan (LP) dated 2001. LP Policy LC4 states that development should be of a high standard of design that respects, conserves and, where possible, enhances the landscape, the built environment and other valued characteristics of the area. LP Policy LC13 requires, amongst other things, that development should avoid harm to the areas valued characteristics. These policies reflect the Framework and on that basis, significant weight can be given to them. In addition, the proposal would conflict with the Framework.

Setting of the listed building

19. Despite the distance between the buildings and the heritage asset, the cluster of buildings at Fair Flatts Farm and the cluster of buildings at Cliffe House Farm would be seen in the same views from a number of viewpoints and therefore, I consider it close enough to form part of the setting. Furthermore, the setting of the listed building can be defined by its function and hillside location as it was a small agricultural building within an upland farm setting. I consider that the proposed buildings and associated landscaping would undermine the ability to understand the

context and historic function of the heritage asset within the wider landscape. I acknowledge that the landscape has evolved into a more intensive form of agriculture with the introduction of a large agricultural building nearby and a significantly larger field system. However, the introduction of two further large agricultural buildings, which cut into the hillside and incorporate large screen bunds and banking, would dominate the hill top landscape to the extent it would undermine the generally pastoral setting of the heritage asset and would intrude adversely upon it.

22. Any harm to the setting of a listed building must be attributed considerable importance and weight in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

23. In the language of the Framework, I consider that the harm the proposal would cause to the significance of the heritage asset would be “less than substantial” on the basis that the proposal would not lead to substantial harm or total loss of significance of the designated heritage asset, the listed structure at fair Flatts Farm.

24. Paragraph 134 of The Framework states that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The Framework³ also states that as heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm should require clear and convincing justification.

25. The appellant states that the public benefit is the carrying out of agricultural operations in a reasonable and efficient manner, to benefit the nation as a consumer and as a producer of food. The appellant contends that the need for the proposal on the appeal site is, therefore, to the benefit of the wider public and a prosperous rural economy as required by the Framework. I note that the appellant contends that it would lead to the employment of 1 full time worker and several seasonal workers. This is only a small benefit as I cannot ascertain whether the appeal proposal in this location is necessary and would benefit the wider public, create additional employment and create a prosperous rural economy. Overall, it seems to me that the benefits outlined include a small public benefit. However, this is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.

26. The proposal would not preserve the setting of the listed building and thus would conflict with LDF Policy L3 which requires that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal the significance of historic assets and their settings. It would also be contrary to saved LP Policy LC6, which sets out the requirements for applications relating to listed buildings and their setting. LP Policy LC6 accords with the Framework and on that basis I accord significant weight to it. In addition, the proposal would not accord with the Framework.

29 I conclude that the proposal would have harmful impact on the character and appearance on the landscape of the countryside and the National Park. It would also harm the setting of the listed building. Therefore, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed. “

Consultations

Sheffield City Council

No response to current application, however in the last application – for two buildings – the rights of way officer had no objections as the proposal did not physically obstruct the nearby public footpaths but raised the following concerns: -

1) Questioned if the current track was suitable for increased farm traffic and whether the surface of the track is suitable for this extra use and not detrimental to its public use. Notes there is a particular danger area where vehicles turn in and out of the new yard area and onto the new track and suggests it may be useful to require the provision of a segregated footpath (protected by bollards or a fence) alongside the track from a point where the new yard commences to where the footpath meets the footpath running west to east.

2) The additional planting proposed in the south east corner near to the public footpath. Requests that no planting is done any closer than 3m to the public footpath.

3) Any damage to the public footpath in this same location should be made good and the path enhanced so as to have a firm surface and at a level that does not hold water.

Bradfield Parish Council

Recommend refusal - The applicants have not demonstrated the exceptional circumstances needed to build in the National Park.

Representations

4 letters of objection have been received to date which include ones from the Loxley Valley Protection Society and The Friends of the Peak District. One letter refers to carrying forward the writer's objections from the previous application for two buildings to this scheme which officers have not included in the following summary given this development is materially different and must be considered on its own merits. The grounds of objection are summarised below: -

1. There is no justification for the size and scale of the building.
2. The visual impact could easily be limited by reducing the height of the building.
3. Housing for cattle does not require a 10m high building. The guidelines in the D & A statement do not stipulate height requirements and there are plenty of examples of cattle kept in buildings of less than 3m height
4. Proposal causes harm to this protected landscape which we deem to be unnecessary. Whilst we do not wish to obstruct the operational needs of a working farm, the precedence of the National Park's obligations to conserve the landscape should apply, and a solution more sensitive to this location is needed.
5. A similar proposal has already been refused and also dismissed at appeal. The Grade II listed building at Fair Flatts Farm is immediately adjacent to the field where the site is located and the proposal for a large agricultural building will have an adverse effect upon the setting of the barn.
6. A building of this size is out of character with the rest of the development around High Bradfield. Although the new proposals include excavations to lower the profile of the building, when viewed from the west along Kirk Edge Road it will be highly visible and, in conjunction with the recent agricultural building or a similar size, it will constitute a rapid and insensitive change in the character of the group of buildings on the site.
7. Share Bradfield Parish Council's concern that the applicant has not demonstrated the exceptional circumstances needed to build in the National Park.
8. The reasons for both the refusal of NP/S/1214/1273 by the planning committee & the Planning Inspector dismissal of the application at appeal, also apply to this the latest application, which if granted could prompt the resubmission of the application for the 3rd barn.
9. Whilst we would support the argument that agricultural holdings in the valley should be viable, that viability should not be at the expense of the landscape, or heritage, particularly within the Peak Park.

10. Re Policy LC13, disagree that the siting of this development is appropriate in that it has been an established farm complex for at least 100 years. Until recently it has been a traditional farm with normal sized barns, not industrial sized units as proposed in this development which would be more suitable on an industrial trading estate NOT an area of ONB.
11. Re NPPF Paragraph 4, Provision of 1 extra full time job is hardly justification for a need for this development for its benefits to the local community.
12. There is scope for developing outside the National Park, and still be central to Hague Farming landholding on at least 2 other sites which would also meet the criteria of good access.
13. Contest that the permission granted in 2012 established Cliffe House Farm as the central hub. The description of this current proposal as “Phase 2” is incorrect as there was no mention in the 2012 proposal documentation for public viewing on the planning website, that it was Phase 1.
14. The building would also be in the curtilage of a 17th Century Grade II listed barn at the neighbouring property at Fair Flatts Farm. (Officer note – Whilst the application site may affect the setting of the listed building, it is NOT within its curtilage)
15. This extremely high building will further add to the inappropriate development on this site, which is in danger of turning an area of outstanding natural beauty into a site for industrial style developments that will blight the landscape for generations to come.

Main Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out core planning principles including supporting sustainable economic development and high standards of design taking into account the roles and character of different areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty within the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities.

Paragraph 28 in the NPPF says that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. It goes on to state that to promote a strong rural economy planning policies should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas through well designed new buildings as well as promote the development and diversification of agricultural businesses.

Paragraph 115 in the NPPF states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks along with the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.

The application is for an agricultural building within the National Park with floor space of 1963 square metres and therefore constitutes “major” development under the Development Management Procedure Order in a ‘designated area’ as defined within the NPPF. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that;

“Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

- the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.”

Paragraphs 126 -141 of the framework set out policies for conserving and enhancing the historic environment with para 132 setting out that great weight should be given to a designated assets significance pointing out that significance can be harmed by development within its setting. Any harm should therefore require clear and convincing justification.

Development Plan

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP3, DS1, and L1

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC4, LC6, LC13, and LT18

Relevant policies in the Development Plan are consistent with national planning policies in the NPPF because they promote sustainable agricultural development in the Peak District (including proposals for new buildings) where it is consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the National Park’s scenic beauty, cultural heritage and wildlife interests.

Policy GSP1 relates back to the Park’s statutory purposes and states that applications for major development within the National Park will only be permitted following rigorous consideration of the criteria in national policy. Where a proposal for major development can demonstrate a significant net benefit, every effort to mitigate potential localised harm and compensate for any residual harm would be expected to be secured. Policy GSP2 builds upon this by stating that opportunities should be taken to enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park and, (in part D) specific opportunities should be taken to remove undesirable features or buildings. This is expanded in policy L1 which relates directly to enhancement of landscape character, and policy L3 relating to the conservation and enhancement of features of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic significance.

Policy GSP3 refers to development management principles. Relevant criteria listed in this policy relate to appropriate scale of development in relation to the character and appearance of the National Park, impact on access and traffic, and impact on living conditions of communities.

Policy GSP4 recommends the use of conditions and legal agreements to ensure that benefits and enhancement are achieved.

In particular Local Plan Policy LC13: Agricultural or forestry operational development states that new agricultural buildings and associated working spaces will be permitted provided that they are a) close to the main group of buildings wherever possible and in all cases relate well to and make best use of existing buildings, trees, walls and other landscape features; and b) respect the design, scale, mass and colouring of existing buildings and building traditions characteristic of the area, reflecting this as far as possible in their own design; and c) avoid harm to the area’s valued characteristics including important local views, making use of the least obtrusive or otherwise damaging possible location; and d) do not require obtrusive access tracks, roads or services.

L1 says that all development must conserve and where possible enhance the landscape character of the National Park, as identified by the Authority’s Landscape Strategy and Action Plan. GSP3 and LC4 require all development to be of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the character, appearance and amenity of the site (or buildings) its setting and that of neighboring properties. LT18 states that safe access is a pre-requisite for any

development within the National Park.

Assessment

This application is a resubmission for a single agricultural building following the refusal of planning permission, supported at appeal, for two agricultural buildings last year. It is important to note the key changes in this application are that the overall footprint of building development is now half that of the previous application. Whilst the application proposal is for a similar cattle building as before, it is now re-sited further west into the site moving it away physically and visibly from the sensitive setting of the listed barn. The proposed landscaping has also been further strengthened along with ground re-profiling to better accommodate the building within the surrounding landscape.

Principle of Development

The application site lies in the open countryside outside the 'Natural Zone' and comprises an established base for an agricultural business farming some 1200 acres of land both inside and outside the National Park. Core Strategy policy DS1 states that agricultural development in the open countryside, outside the Natural Zone, is acceptable in principle. Policy L1 requires all development to conserve and where possible enhance the landscape. Saved local plan policy LC13 sets out the detailed locational and design criteria all agricultural developments must meet to be accepted. Consequently, the development of a further building at the site to meet the needs of the business is therefore acceptable in principle under the Core Strategy subject to compliance with other national and local policy considerations.

As the development comprises 'major development' in a protected landscape, the acceptability of the principle must demonstrate exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. In assessing such applications consideration should also include the three tests set out in Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework for such development. The paragraphs below assess the proposal against those tests in terms of the need, the opportunity and potential costs of developing outside the park along with consideration of the developments impact upon the landscape as well as the effectiveness of the mitigation proposed to minimise those impacts.

Agricultural need

The application proposes a further farm building at Cliffe House Farm, a site where the applicant has already invested heavily in following planning consent from the Authority for the erection of the existing large farm building. This currently is the only modern building on the farm and therefore has to meet all the storage needs for crops, machinery, feed, straw, fertilizer and fuels. That building formed the first phase of developing Cliffe House Farm as the base for the applicant's farm business. This followed a splitting of the former family business nearby at Prospect Farm just outside the Park. Cliffe House Farm was chosen because it was centrally located within the wider land holdings of the business, had good access up to the main Kirk Edge Road and also contained the only group of farm buildings on the holding. The site has been an established farmstead for a considerable number of years and in 2014 the former range of modern, but obsolete cattle sheds, were removed to make way for the existing shed. The current proposal represents the next phase of building development to meet the needs of the business following the relocation of the business away from Prospect Farm.

At Prospect Farm the business formerly had access to 5,558 m² of buildings but for the reasons above those buildings are no longer in the ownership of the applicant or available to him. The first phase of the redevelopment of Cliffe House Farm to consolidate the site as the base of the farming operations comprised the existing grain storage and general purpose building built in 2014. This now provides 1963m² of modern working space. The current proposal would provide a further 1963m², giving a total of 3926m². This would not provide all the floor space (5557m²)

that was lost to the business at Prospect Farm or meet the storage needs of the current business hence the agent explains that there will still be a need for some outside storage of straw, silage and machinery.

The agent's supporting statement, which has been supplemented by additional information, sets out that the existing building on the site currently has to accommodate all the farm storage needs. The building stores straw, grains, machinery, equipment, fertilizers, pesticides and fuel, all of which need to be kept sufficiently separated from each other and some of which farm regulations require to be stored in separate buildings due to their volatility.

The new building would principally provide space to house 200 beef cows. Following the refusal of the last application this proposal, in responding to the Inspectors objections on grounds of scale and impact has halved the proposed scale of development by omitting the larger storage building in the previous refused proposal. Whilst this has enabled the building to be tucked further behind the rear of the existing shed which considerably reduces the visual impact, the proposed building, in addition to housing the cattle would now have to provide the storage space for those volatile materials that have to be stored apart from each other. Consequently, the agents supporting statement sets out that the resultant shortfall of storage space in the proposed building would now have to be met by the storage outside of a number of items such as baled straw, silage for the cattle and some machinery. Whilst this is not ideal from a farming perspective it is accepted by the applicant as necessary in order to address the Inspector's and Planning Committee's objections to the previous scheme.

The height of the cattle shed (10m ridge height) is stated to be necessary to ensure a satisfactory degree of welfare for the cattle in terms of enabling adequate ventilation. In particular, the agent points out that a lower height shed would have required a compensatory increase in the floor area to accommodate the livestock use.

The evidence submitted with the application demonstrates that there is an agricultural need for the proposed development and it is noted that the Planning Inspector also accepted that the business had established an agricultural need for the larger development in the previous application.

The consideration of whether there are exceptional in this case to justify Major development on the site

The Framework is clear that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty as well as cultural heritage in National Parks (para 115). As a result of its footprint being over 1000m² the proposed building is classified under the General Development management procedure Order as 'Major Development'. The agent has however argued that determination of whether a development is major or not should not simply be a technical matter of using the GDMPO definition which relates simply to procedural matters. Given that the normal meaning of major is a reference to significance and scale, the agent points further to the fact that the first building was not regarded as major development by the Authority. He points out that in the current proposal the scale of development has been halved from that previously proposed, is now tucked further behind the existing building and being 'submerged' into the surrounding land form on its merits the proposal could be regarded as not being major development.

Whilst officers note the agent's view, nevertheless the Authority's policy is clear that in the National Park the GDMPO is the adopted definition for the purposes of policy application. Consequently, in considering this application it is appropriate and necessary to assess the proposal against the tests in the NPPF para 116. The wording of the Framework and Authority policy is necessarily restrictive and reflects the need for a wider and more detailed consideration of likely impacts arising from such major developments in sensitive landscapes like National Parks. It places a high bar for their acceptance in stating that major development should be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances and that it can be demonstrated that the

development would be in the public interest, furthermore it states that consideration of such applications should include an assessment against three main tests which are applied to this case as follows.

The first test is *“the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy.”*

It is clear from the evidence submitted with the application that there is an agricultural need for the scale and type of building development proposed to meet the requirements of this farm business. This was also accepted by the inspector in the appeal for a development of more than twice the scale of the current proposal. However, although accepting the agricultural need, the Inspector went on to state that she did not have enough evidence before her in the last application to be able to assess the scheme in terms of any national considerations and the impact of permitting it or refusing it on the local economy. Furthermore, the Inspector went on to say that no information had been provided regarding the cost of developing elsewhere outside the park – the second test in para 116 - and concluded that the application had not demonstrated that it would be in the public interest such that there are exceptional circumstances to allow for major development in the Park.

In his supporting statement the agent considers the Inspector’s reasoning to be seriously flawed and suggests that the Authority is entitled to dismiss it as a material consideration on the basis that it is facile to suggest that every application for major development necessarily has to demonstrate that there are direct benefits in the national interest. The agent goes on to state that only major infrastructure or economic proposals can have a discernible impact upon the national interest which cannot be the intention of para 116. He goes on to suggest that in the case of the current proposal it is sufficient to state that the development will make a large farm viable and diverse to respond to market sector fluctuations, ensure livestock presence in the local area and blood lines of traditional British breeds are maintained. The agent goes on to add that the proposal will ensure agricultural infrastructure is in place to provide the raw resources to feed the nation and provide a ‘sustainable’ and ‘prosperous rural economy’ in accordance with the requirements of the Framework.

Regarding the local economy, the agent’s planning statement sets out further reasoning than before and in particular states that “This farm will not be able to fulfil its potential without this development and its overall future will have to be reassessed putting four full time and further seasonal jobs on the farm at risk. Furthermore, the spin-offs for the local economy in relation to employment connected with servicing of machinery, pest control and building maintenance will be lost” Finally the agent comments that the proposal will provide agricultural skills and knowledge to be retained in the local economy and ensure a platform where the skills and knowledge can be shared with generations to follow in this agricultural settlement of Bradfield.

The officer conclusion in the last application accepted that were exceptional circumstances and that the development was in the public interest to meet the agricultural need and provide for a prosperous farming business contributing to the viability and vitality of the local rural economy. However, the Planning Committee and the Inspector came to a different conclusion to officers and with the Inspector’s findings being a strong material consideration, officers have had to consider them carefully and place appropriate weight upon them in assessing the current scheme. Whilst Officers have some sympathy with the agent’s case that the Authority’s approval of the existing building has effectively accepted the principle of major development on the site, nevertheless, in the light of the Inspector’s findings officers must consider afresh the merits of this particular application in relation to the tests in paragraph 116 and the Authority’s policies.

The current proposal is for a further large scale building which, although carefully sited and well landscaped, would nevertheless have a cumulative visual impact with the existing building and excavation for some years until the proposed landscaping grows to effectively screen the building and yard, fully mitigating the immediate visual impact. It is important to note however that the

short terms landscape impact is limited to defined views from restricted sections of the footpaths passing through the site and in some views of the site from the east. Equally importantly the landscaping in the current proposal would go a long way in mitigating the considerable landscape harm being caused by the existing building which would otherwise go on unchecked for the lifetime of that building. That fact in itself would be a considerable public benefit for users of the footpath through the site and for those enjoying the scenic beauty of the wider landscape as it would result in an appreciable reduction in the buildings dominant presence upon its immediate and wider setting. This would represent a landscape enhancement which your officers, as in the last application, still place weight upon in support of the application.

The local rural economy is largely based on agriculture and would therefore benefit in terms of this application from the stated creation of a further full time job. Furthermore, it is clear that the investment in these new buildings will likely provide greater security for the existing jobs and outside servicing jobs as the business gains a more sustainable footing as it realises the benefits from the economies of scale and from cutting operating costs by operating from a single central site.

There is a general requirement placed on local authorities by government via the Framework to adopt policies and make decisions that would promote a healthy and prosperous rural economy. Local policies in the Development Plan therefore support the principle of farm building development provided they can be accommodated without harm to the landscape of the park. In this case the justification for major development comes from the local needs of a farm business to develop a viable and sustainable operating base on land which it owns and is which is suitably located in the context of the wider land holdings. The site is a long established farmstead and the business has already invested heavily on the site following the Authority's approval in 2012 for the new building. That was effectively established the principle of both major development in this location as well as the principle of the farms relocation and consolidation at this site. It is clear that the business would incur additional costs in terms of both a continuing financial burden and operational difficulties if it were forced by refusal of this application to develop elsewhere and operate a split operation with other buildings outside the Park. Clearly the impacts would be unfavourable and not in the interests of promoting or supporting a prosperous rural economy as required by national policy. For the above reasons, officers conclude that there is an agricultural need for the development to be on this site and that there would be a net positive impact upon the local rural economy which would otherwise be lost if the development were to be refused and the applicant forced to reconsider the future of the farm business.

Landscape considerations

The farm is located within the 'Slopes & Valleys with Woodland' area of the 'Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe' in the Authority's Landscape Character Assessment. This area is described as small scale but extensive pastoral landscape which is heavily wooded in places. There is a varied undulating, often steeply sloping topography. Interlocking blocks of ancient semi-natural and secondary woodland are a characteristic feature of this landscape, together with patches of acid grassland and bracken on steeper slopes.

In this case the farm is part of an established building group on the edge of a steeply sloping hillside which to the west and south retains its semi-natural scrub woodland where it rises up steeply from the lower slopes which remain as a small scale pastoral landscape. Together with scrub woodland on the slopes, further trees around the site and a stand of larger trees on the south-western edge of the building group provide effective screening and shelter to the building group from the prevailing winds and views from the SW. To the north and east of the site the former small scale pastoral landscape has been changed to the detriment of the landscape by the removal of boundary walls/hedges to create large open fields to facilitate the applicants large scale arable farming operation.

In more distant views across the valley from the south the older farm buildings and houses in the

group can be seen on the escarpment with the new shed standing behind. Those buildings partly mask the new building which although obviously large, at this range is not overly intrusive in the wider landscape as its dark colour and the fact that it is below the skyline help to mitigate the impact. In closer views of the site along the footpath from the east the building group is dominated by the large scale of the gable end and tall flanking wall of the new building which dwarfs the scale and low form of the traditional dwellings seen in the rest of the building group.

Although having a dominant impact in some views the screening effect of the existing landform and tree cover around the site mitigates its impact in key views from the west where although the gable is clearly visible within the trees, the fact that it is dark coloured and no higher than the trees serves to ensure it is not intrusive in these views. However, the building undoubtedly remains a clearly visible structure in the wider landscape from a number of other public and private vantage points, particularly from the north and east. In close views from the footpath passing through the site and approaching the site along the footpath from the east it is a hugely dominant feature at present in the absence of any intervening landscaping. The applicant has recognised this and has helpfully painted the building to darken its tone. The previously approved landscaping will mitigate some of the impacts in time, although this will take many years and still have a limited effect.

The current proposal to site the new building tucked well behind the existing building, accessed off the existing track and yard meets the locational requirements of Local Plan policy LC13. This siting also makes best use of the screening effect of the existing tree cover on the western slopes and the cover provided by the existing building and landform. The amended landscaping scheme significantly enhances the proposed screening by incorporating the advice of the Authority's Landscape Architect and Planning Officer in adding off-site planting to screen the buildings in public views from the key vantage points along the footpath carrying the 'Round Sheffield Walk'. In addition the proposed hedgerow on the raised banking down the length of the existing building would significantly reduce the current overbearing impact it currently has when passing through the farm on the footpath. The new and rebuilt walling beside the path will further enhance the immediate built environment. These works, along with the improved landscaping to the east gable of the existing building would represent a significant improvement to the planting scheme approved in 2014 and would bring wider public benefits in terms of reducing the adverse impacts the building currently has upon the surrounding landscape.

Currently, in views of the site from Kirk Edge Road to the north, a row of *Leylandii* trees alongside the existing building provide it with only a partial foil but are themselves a wholly inappropriate species in this landscape. From this viewpoint the application plans propose the removal of these *leylandii* followed by the very substantial excavation of the rising ground in order to site the new building and adjacent sunken yard down into the ground at the same floor level as the existing building. The rising ground around and above the site coupled with the 15m wide shelter belt of trees around the whole excavation would quickly screen both buildings. This screening would be further enhanced by the proposed 5m high gently sloping raised mound in the field north of the site and ensure that in views from Kirk Edge Road both the new and existing building would be immediately screened from view. This remodelled land form would significantly improve screening of the existing building and the proposed building and represent greater enhancement to the landscape setting in contrast with the landscaping scheme in the previous application.

Down the eastern side of the site the depth of the excavation would screen the majority of the new building although in the short term it would be partly visible in views from the east where it lies closer to the existing building. However, the building would be set well back into the excavated area and the landscaped bund down this side would quickly provide very effective screening, extending as shown down around the site to the south and across the gable end of the existing building to remodel the present steep earth bank with a more natural looking slope. Whilst it is acknowledged that the new planting would take some time to grow to maturity it would not have to grow too tall to quickly screen the proposed new building. During this time the dark

colouring of the sheeting and the Yorkshire boarding will ensure the building appears recessive in glimpsed views of the site and furthermore the off-site planting now proposed to the east will quickly screen the existing building in the more distant views approaching down the footpath. In the officers view an important landscape consideration in these views is how the additional landscaping scheme in front of the existing building would represent a significant improvement to the appearance of that building in the landscape and go a long way to mitigating the continuing objections/concerns local residents have raised about its intrusive appearance in the landscape.

In addition to the planting to the north and east sides of the development, the application also proposes enhanced tree planting on the bankside across the access road to the west of the proposed buildings. This would take the form of extending the existing planting northward and southwards to give greater depth and continuous tree cover in views from the west. The applicant has also confirmed that the existing stand of mature trees within the SW corner of the site would be protected by repairs to perimeter walling.

The Planning Inspector considered the proposed planting in the previous application would appear jarring and discordant as it would be concentrated around a large mass of buildings within a significantly large field away from traditional field boundaries when viewed against the traditional field pattern in the Loxley Valley.

Your officers have considered the Inspector's view carefully but after further site inspections from all nearby locations, your officers have to disagree with the Inspector's conclusion. The farm is sited on the edge of an escarpment which to the west and south west corner is heavily covered in trees providing substantial screening to the building group. In views from the south the valley sides below are also heavily wooded. In the officer view therefore the proposed landscaping will be seen in this context and complement the existing setting subject to appropriate species choice. The new trees will appear simply as an extension visually forming part of the existing wooded areas and/or as shelter belt planting around farmstead one typically sees in the landscape. For this reason, your officers have no objections to the landscaping scheme which is considered appropriate and proportionate to the need and landscape setting.

In addition to the amended landscaping scheme the applicant has also offered up a parcel of land to the north west of the site over the other side of the hill which he would be prepared to enter into an agreement with the Authority to manage in a manner which would maintain and enhance is condition to the benefit of the wider landscape. Officers initially welcomed this initiative as it potentially provides some off-setting of the impacts of the application scheme and a net overall benefit to the environment. There are concerns about how it would reasonably relate to the development in question so currently officers have not placed any weight on this offer in formulating their recommendation.

In terms of the design the proposed building is typical of modern agricultural buildings and matches the existing building. The colouring of the roof sheeting and use of Yorkshire boarding would give an appropriate dark recessive visual appearance to further mitigate the visual impact of the development. It is considered that the design of the proposal is therefore acceptable. As a single building of half the footprint of the previous scheme, tucked in behind the existing building at the western end of the site, it has a much reduced landscape impact and one which is clearly materially different from the previous scheme for two buildings which the Inspector found so unacceptably intrusive on the landscape.

Considering all of the above, your officer, on balance and supported by the Authority's Landscape Officer, has concluded that the amended plans now demonstrate that the proposed development, although acknowledged to be substantial, can nevertheless be satisfactorily assimilated into the local landscape. Furthermore, the amended landscaping scheme would also bring long terms benefits in terms of additional bunding and tree planting to help improve the screening and integration of the 2014 building into the landscape.

Other material considerations

Access issues

There are no changes to access with the main access continuing to be down from Kirk Edge Road which has already been improved following the last application. There is adequate parking provision on the site within the large working yard area which is set down into the land and therefore screened from views outside the site. Currently the route of the public footpath through the yard is undefined. In response to the concerns of the footpaths officer about potential conflicts between users of the footpath and the inevitable increase in farm traffic, the plans have been amended to incorporate fencing to protect and segregate the route of the right of way where it passes through the yard.

Amenity Issues

The site is already a long established working farmyard and previously had an extensive range of cattle buildings which have been largely replaced by the present building. The application site is physically screened from the houses in the rest of the building group by the existing building and remaining range of older barns which will limit noise and sight of the operations. There will obviously be an increase in farming activity on the site from that which existed more recently which will be noticeable from the houses from time to time, however this needs to be considered in the context of the previous level of farming activity on the site and the fact that it is a long established working farmstead. On this basis, it is considered that the impact upon the neighbouring amenity security or privacy will not be such to warrant any changes to the application or restrictions to the business operation.

Setting of Fair Flatts Farm barn - Listed Building

Fair Flatts Farm, which has a grade II listed barn in its garden, is situated some distance to the east of the site across the large arable field within which the site sits. In the last application the two buildings would have been seen very clearly alongside the gable of the existing building and as a result the cumulative visual impact of the resultant building mass, albeit landscaped nevertheless led the Inspector to conclude harm to the setting of the heritage asset.

In this revised application although the building will be initially visible from the Fair Flatts Farm, it is considered that as a single lower building and set well back from the gable end of the existing barn it would not have the same cumulative impact as before. This revised siting also moves it out of the setting in some views of the two sites and enables the building to be more effectively screened by the landscaping such that officers consider the revised development would not harm the setting of the listed building. Furthermore, the landscaping scheme developed for this current application would, in time, screen the new buildings and significantly improve the visual appearance of the existing building in views from Fair Flatts Farm.

Conclusion

The proposed development is required to meet the agricultural needs of the current farm business operating from the site and progress the applicant's plans to consolidate the farm business at this site have already been implemented with the significant investment in the construction of the existing building in 2014.

The high bar provided by the tests in para 116 that major developments must overcome by proving exceptional circumstances and to be in the public interest is important because, as members and the Inspector noted in the last application/appeal, such developments will often have wider impacts on the surrounding landscape by supporting a scale and type of farming that is incompatible with the landscape first purpose of National Parks. The exceptions test in the major development policy recognises the impacts these developments have and by requiring

these stringent tests purposely place a high bar for such development to pass in order to prevent the type of negative impact upon the National Park landscape as evidenced by the harm caused to the landscape by the Authority's approval of the existing building.

The supporting planning statement explains why locating the application building on another site outside the park would not be an option for the business because of the increased costs in monetary terms, operational inefficiencies and manpower implications of operating a split site. All of these would be damaging to the long term future viability of the business and would conflict with local and national policy aims to support a prosperous thriving rural economy. In contrast approval would meet those aims and bring those benefits to the wider public interest as well as bringing an additional local employment opportunity. It has therefore been concluded that the applicant has demonstrated an exceptional need for the development to be on this site inside the National Park to accord with local and national policy guidance (GSP1 and NPPF paragraphs 115 and 116).

Furthermore, the amended landscaping scheme has demonstrated that the proposed development can be satisfactorily accommodated on this site without harm to the wider landscape as well as bringing some additional enhancement to substantially ameliorate the unmitigated landscape harm being caused by the existing building and the subsequent harm this causes to the setting of the listed barn. The proposed new building would be well located to take full advantage of the screening provided by being sited well behind the existing building by being dug into the rising ground. It would be further well screened by earth bunding and tree planting such that the building would not be prominent from either local vantage points or in the wider landscape. Officers have therefore concluded the landscape impact of this revised proposal to be acceptable.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with relevant policies in the development plan in terms of the main issues of need and landscape impact (policies DS1, LC13 and L1). The proposed development would not have any adverse impact upon highway safety (policy LT18) or the amenity of the nearby neighbouring properties (policy LC4). Whilst the previous proposal did have an adverse impact upon the setting of the listed building the reduced scale of development, the re-siting of the building and the additional landscaping ensure that the setting of the barn is at least conserved and officers argue would in fact be enhanced as a result of the improved landscaping reducing the current highly intrusive impacts of the existing building on the setting of the listed barn which would otherwise remain for the foreseeable future (policy LC6). In this case relevant policies are in accordance with the more recently published National Planning Policy Framework which allows for agricultural development which conserves the National Park.

Therefore, in the absence of any further material considerations, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, the proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions outlined in this report.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil