

**8. FULL PLANNING APPLICATION: CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW AGRICULTURAL BARN FOR HOUSING CATTLE, ALONG WITH ASSOCIATED ACCESS TRACK, YARD AREA AND LANDSCAPING AT BROADMEADOWS FARM, LAWNS LANE, ALPORT (NP/DDD/0117/0053) P.3331 422542/364362 20/01/2017/TS)**

**APPLICANT: Mr Mark Walker**

**Site and Surroundings**

The site is an area within an established working agricultural holding known as Broadmeadows Farm. The site lies to the southern side of Lawns Lane and approximately 400 metres to the south east of Alport village. The site lies in open countryside and is bordered predominantly by open agricultural land. To the north of the site there is a farm known as Old Forge Farm, several residential properties and a static caravan park. To the south west there is a neighbouring farm known as Harthill New Farm.

The farm comprises of a detached farm house, a range of agricultural buildings, caravan and camping pod sites and approximately 380 acres of associated farm land. The farm operates as a beef finishing and sheep unit and currently has approximately 410 cattle and 500 breeding ewes.

**Proposal**

The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of a new agricultural barn for housing cattle, along with associated access track, yard area and landscaping.

The proposed new agricultural barn would be sited in a field to the south east of the existing group of buildings, approximately 120 metres away from the nearest existing farm building. The existing access track that runs through the farm yard would be extended through the field to provide vehicular access to the new building.

The proposed building would be 13.7 metres by 36.6 metres with an eaves height of 4 metres and ridge height of 6 metres. The building would be open-fronted, with concrete panel and timber boarding walls to the side and rear elevations and a fibre cement roof.

The submitted plans show an indicative future plan to have three further new buildings at the application site (four buildings in total). However, only one building is under consideration at this stage.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the application be REFUSED for the following reason:**

- 1. By virtue of its siting in a prominent position and remote from the existing farm buildings the building would appear as an isolated and intrusive feature in the landscape and would harm the valued character of the area contrary to paragraph 115 of the NPPF, Core Strategy policies GSP and L1, Local Plan policies LC4 and LC13 and advice in the Adopted SPD on Agricultural Developments in the National Park.**

**Key Issues**

- The principle of development
- Whether the new building is agriculturally justified
- Whether the visual and landscape impact of the development is acceptable.
- Amenity considerations
- Highways Issues

## **History**

**2015:** Application NP/DDD/1015/1006 for the installation of four camping pods in the corner of a field currently used for agriculture was approved.

**2013:** Application NP/DDD/1013/0915 for extension to an existing agricultural barn to cover existing outside feeding pens was approved.

**2008:** Application NP/DDD/1107/1109 for the erection of a farmworker's dwelling (reserved matters) was approved.

**2007:** Application NP/DDD/1104/1237 for the erection of a farmworker's dwelling (outline) was approved

## **Consultations**

Derbyshire County Council Highways: No objections.

Harthill Parish Meeting: No comments received

PDNPA Landscape Architect: *"Having looked at this on site, the buildings will be seen as an isolated block and not relate to any of the existing agricultural buildings either in their ownership or adjacent landowners. It will have an adverse visual impact within the wider landscape, especially from nearby roads and footpaths. Recommend refusal.*

*Although the rejected alternative location will still have visual landscape impact it relates well with the existing buildings and with careful landscaping I believe it could be integrated better into the wider landscape than the current application. If the alternative option is pursued then a landscape scheme will be required showing blocks of appropriate planting additional sections, some photographs to illustrate the site from key viewpoints with a couple of photomontages."*

Following receipt of the Landscape Architect's consultation response, the applicant submitted an amended landscaping plans which proposed significant amounts of new tree planting around the proposed building as well as an additional sectional drawing which shows the proposed building in relation to existing ground levels and the proposed additional tree screening. This plan also shows the creation of a cut and fill embankment in order to provide further screening. The Authority's Landscape Architect subsequently verbally confirmed that the proposed landscaping scheme was acceptable.

## **Representations**

During the consultation period, the Authority has not received any letters of representation.

## **Policy**

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Paragraph 115 in the Framework 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.

Paragraph 17 of the Framework 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 Framework says that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas and should take a positive approach to sustainable new development. Planning policies should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

### Core Strategy and Local Plan

GSP1 seeks that any development proposal will comply with core policies so that any development in the National Park must satisfy the statutory purposes of national park designation.

GSP3 states the overarching principles for development management to be considered in all circumstances and requires that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings that are subject to the development proposal.

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.

LT18 states that safe access is a pre-requisite for any development within the National Park.

LC4 established that developments should respect, conserve and where possible enhance the landscape, built environment and other valued characteristics of the area.

LC13 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.

Further advice is given in the Authority's Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on Agricultural Developments (SPD). It states that if inadequate information to justify proposals is supplied then applications may be refused. It also advises at paragraph 3.4.5 that it is best to keep new buildings close to existing ones where possible. Isolated buildings in the open landscape are the most difficult to accommodate. Skyline sites or sites prominent from public vantage points should be avoided.

### Assessment

#### **Key issue 1 and 2: Principle of Development and Agricultural Justification**

Authority's Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on Agricultural Developments (SPD) states that if inadequate information to justify proposals is supplied then applications may be refused. The submitted justification statement explains that the site currently holds around 410

growing and finishing cattle and 500 sheep. The growing cattle are usually kept outside in summer and housed inside during the winter. The finishing cattle are housed inside. The sheep are kept outside other than during periods of extreme weather. The applicant wishes to grow the number of cattle that are finished on a yearly basis from 400 to 500.

The submitted information goes on to set out that the current farming operation generates a requirement for 2288 square metres of cattle housing. The intention to expand the business would increase this demand to 2874 square metres. However, at present, there is only 1620 square metres of housing provided by the existing buildings. This means that there is currently a shortfall of 668 square metres, which would increase to a shortfall of 1254 square metres if the intended expansion was to be achieved.

The proposed building would provide 503 square metres of additional space and would therefore meet a large proportion of the identified existing shortfall.

The submitted plans show that it is the applicant's intention to construct three further new buildings, providing 2000 square metres of additional space in total. This would meet the need for additional cattle housing that the business expansion would create and also allow for the provision of additional feed and machinery storage. However, only one building is proposed under this application.

It is considered that the submitted information demonstrates that there is a need for additional farm building space based on the current farm activities. Furthermore, this need for additional space will increase if the intended business expansion is achieved. As such, It is accepted that there is a genuine agricultural justification for a new building of the scale proposed.

### **Key Issues 3: Landscape Impact**

Policy LC13 establishes that new farm buildings should be 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 that they should not require obtrusive access tracks, roads or services.

In this instance, the proposed new building would be set well away from the existing farm buildings and therefore would result in encroachment of development away from the existing cluster of buildings and into undeveloped open land. A new access track to the building would also be required

The submitted supporting information sets out that there is not sufficient space within the existing group of buildings to accommodate the proposed building. Furthermore, a new building to the east of the existing group of buildings and closer to the farmhouse was considered. However, the submitted information sets out that this area is not suitable because of the steep gradient of the land and that a significant amount of earthworks would be required which would lead to impacts on the landscape and the need to dispose of significant amounts of spoil. Also, it is stated that this would move the livestock housing closer to the existing caravan and camping pod facilities which is not conducive to the use of these facilities.

The applicant's concerns about the steeply sloped nature of the land to the rear of the farm house and acknowledged and it is agreed that significant earthworks would be required to provide a new building in that location. However, the applicant's concerns about siting the new building closer to the caravan and camping pods are considered to carry little weight. The caravan site and camping pods have been inserted into an agricultural landscape in which visitors would expect to be close to agricultural activities. The provision of caravan and camping pods within farmsteads should not impact on the primary agricultural activities.

In terms of the proposed location for the new building, the submitted information sets out that this site has been selected because the topography is more gently sloping so a lesser amount of earthworks would be required and it is also suitable to accommodate all the additional barns that are anticipated to be required in the future. Furthermore, the site is slightly below the high point in the local topography and there is an existing woodland to the east and shelter belt to the west which would provide some screening. The supporting information also goes on to put forwards that the separation distance between the proposed building and the existing buildings would prevent the two sites from appearing as one large area.

The above points are noted. However, it remains the case that the proposal would lead to the creation of a new building within an elevated position in open countryside, well detached from the existing farm buildings at the site. It is noted that there are existing farm buildings at a similar elevation to the west of the site at Harthill New Farm. However, these building are approximately 150 metres away from the application site and separated by open land. As such, the proposed building would not relate visually to this group of buildings and would appear isolated from them. It is considered that the new building in the proposed location would have an adverse visual impact within the wider landscape, especially from nearby roads and footpaths.

In order to mitigate the landscape impact, the applicant is proposing a significant amount of new tree planting that would link to the existing woodlands to the existing woodland, as well as new hedging and cut and fill earthworks to provide an embankment. It is acknowledged that the proposed landscaping scheme would provide additional screening to the new development. However, the proposed new building would still be apparent in views from surrounding roads and footpaths and it is considered that the visual impact could not be entirely mitigated.

As a result the proposed building would be harmful to the established landscape character of the area contrary to policies GSP3, L1 and LC13.

It is therefore considered that there is a genuine need for the new building but the building in the proposed location would result in harm to landscape character. It is therefore necessary to balance the benefits of the new building to the agricultural business against the harm to the landscape that would arise.

In this instance, on balance, it is considered that the harm to the landscape character would be such that it would not be outweighed by the agricultural justification. In coming to this conclusion, Members should also be aware of the applicant's stated intention to make the proposed site the main agricultural base, with three other buildings shown for illustrative purposes on the submitted plans.

#### **Key Issue 4: Amenity considerations**

The nearest third party properties are around 150 metres from the application site. Given this, it is considered that there would be no harm to the amenity of any nearby occupiers or users. It is considered that there would be no conflict with policy LC4 in this respect.

#### **Key Issues 5: Highway Issues**

The farm has an existing access point directly from Lawns Lane and this would continue to be used. A new track would be created from the existing farm yard to the new building.

The Highway Authority has raised no concerns with the scheme. As such, it is considered that the proposal would result in harm to highway safety or efficiency. The proposal is considered to accord with policy LT18.

## **Conclusion**

On balance it is considered that an agricultural need has been demonstrated for the building proposed. However, this does not outweigh the fact that by virtue of the isolated siting of the building and its prominence from public vantage points the building would be harmful to the valued character of the area. The proposals would not represent sustainable rural development as supported by paragraph 28 of the Framework, and would harm the valued character and appearance of the area contrary to policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, LC4, and LC13, the Adopted SPD and to paragraph 115 of the Framework.

## **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