
APPLICATION NO.	P08/W0765
APPLICATION TYPE	Minor
REGISTERED	25 July 2008
PARISH	Holton
WARD MEMBER(S)	Ms Anne Purse
APPLICANT	Mr P Hawes
SITE	Old Park Farm Buildings, Holton
PROPOSAL	Erection of new farm dwelling
AMENDMENTS	Amended by drawing nos.2158/01 and 2158/02 accompanying letter from Agent dated 5 November 2008).
GRID REFERENCE	460333/207186
OFFICER	Mrs E Hamerton

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the views of the Parish Council differ from the Officer's recommendation.
- 1.2 **Attached** at Appendix 1 is the site location plan. Old Park Farm buildings lies in a fairly isolated location at the end of a private farm track, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of Holton village. The application site is currently a field to the south of the farm yard complex of buildings. The access track to the site is in between two of the existing buildings.
- 1.3 There are a number of trees along the north boundary of the application site. The site also lies within the Green Belt.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The application is for a new farm house with an adjoining garage. Access to the house will be along the existing private track, which will be extended through the farm yard to the proposed house. The existing buildings at Old Park Farm comprise;
- A range of cattle yards
 - Two covered cattle yards
 - A 500ft grain store
 - Two straw and machinery sheds and a silage clamp
- 2.2 **Attached** at Appendix 2 are the elevations and floor plans of the proposed house and the supporting information that was submitted with the application. The front elevation of the house will be north-west facing. The house has an adjoining double garage and three bedrooms at first floor level. It has a kitchen, dining room, sitting room, wet room and farm office at ground floor.
- 2.3 Currently there are no electric or gas supplies to the site. Therefore it is proposed that power for the house will be generated from renewable energy. The application therefore includes provision for solar panels, which will be at ground floor next to the house and a rainwater harvesting tank.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Holton Parish Council

- Refused
- Amenity considerations
- Character of area – visible from village in open countryside

County Archaeological Services

- The proposal does not affect any presently known archaeological sites.
- Records do show the presence of know archaeological finds nearby, this should be borne in mind. Standard informative recommended.

Highway Officer

- The development will not have any significant impact on the highway.
- A residential dwelling in this location is not considered very sustainable, however given the purpose of this to accommodate farm employees, the alternative would be that farm workers travel to the site and increase\trip rates.
- The access to the site will remain unaffected and since farm vehicles use the access, the use of it by private car will be insignificant.
- The track leading to the farm is narrow and may not allow two vehicles to pass, especially if one is a farm vehicle. However the quiet nature of the area and low vehicles movements does not warrant refusal for this reason.

Forestry

- The trees on the site are not the subject of a TPO and are not within a conservation area
- No objection to this proposal providing a tree protection condition can be attached to any permission – no excavation, grading or ground level changes should take place within the root protection areas of the retained trees.

Environmental Services

- Contamination – no objection. Condition recommended
- The site may have experienced agricultural use and contamination may be present from storage and use of materials. Maintenance of agricultural or other vehicles may have also occurred in the barns. Therefore a land contamination survey is recommended through a condition.

Reading Agricultural Services

- Attached at **Appendix 3** is a copy of the full report prepared by Reading Agricultural Consultants. Below is a summary of the reports conclusion.
- There is a clearly established functional need for a worker to be readily available most times to supervise calving of 240 suckler cows and heifers over a ten-month period of the year and to provide appropriate care and assistance to young calves throughout the year; this need cannot be met by other dwellings on the unit or buildings suitable for conversion to a dwelling.
- It has been demonstrated that the unit is financially viable
- The functional needs of the existing enterprise relate to more than a full-time worker
- The unit has been established for more than three years, has been profitable in all of the last three years and can be expected to remain so

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 None

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Oxfordshire Structure Plan**

- G1 General policies for development
- G2 Improving the quality and design of development
- G4 Green Belt
- G5 Development outside settlements
- G6 Energy and resource conservation
- T1 Sustainable travel

South Oxfordshire Local Plan

- G1 General restraint and sustainable development
- G2 Protection and enhancement of the environment
- G4 Development in the countryside and on the edge of settlements
- G6 Promoting good design
- C9 Landscape features
- GB2 New buildings in the green belt
- GB4 Visual amenity
- EP8 Contaminated land
- D8 Energy, water and materials efficient design
- A6 Agricultural workers' dwellings
- T1 Transport requirements for new developments

South Oxfordshire Design Guide

Planning Policy Statement 3

Planning Policy Statement 7

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main issues to consider are:

1. Whether this new house is essential to support the farming activity and a need is proven in accordance with Policy A6 of the adopted Local Plan.
2. Impact on green belt
3. Design and sustainability
4. Landscape features
5. Highway safety and convenience

6.2 **Background**

Old Park Farm is part of an extensive farm holding of some 525ha (1,300 acres) which extends across Oakley, Moreton, Worminghall, Beckley Park and Holton. Old Park Farm is approximately 88ha (220 acres) and is in both pasture and arable cropping. The main farm buildings are located at Meads Farm, Oakley, this is also where the applicant lives in the main farmhouse. The farm business is operated as a partnership with his two sons, no other direct labour is employed, with contractors used at harvest time. This application is for a new house for one of his sons to occupy.

6.3 The area farmed has increased by about 50% since 2001. The main enterprise on the farm is beef suckler herd. The current livestock records show a total herd size of 555. The arable land produces combined crops for sale and for feed for the suckler herd and growing cattle as well as the entire herd's bedding requirements. As set out in the business appraisal report at appendix 2, the farm has decided to split the suckler cows and calves from the growing and finishing cattle in order to ease the management of a large number of cattle and also maintain and improve bio-security. It is proposed that Old Park Farm will become the maternity unit housing all the

suckler cows and their young calves, with those at Meads Farm and Court Farm used for growing and finishing cattle. The proposed house is intended to enable the supervision of 240 suckler cows and their calves.

Whether this new house is essential to support the farming activity and a need is proven in accordance with Policy A6 of the adopted Local Plan.

- 6.4 One of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development in the countryside may be justified is when the demands of the farming work concerned make it essential that a farm worker lives at or very close to the site of their work. In these circumstances planning permission may be granted for a new dwelling in locations where new housing would not normally be permitted. Policy A6 of the adopted Local Plan sets out the criteria that must be met for new farm workers houses to be permitted.
- 6.5 **Attached** at Appendix 2 is a copy of the Report prepared by Lambourne Agricultural Consultants Ltd. This report is a business appraisal and assessment of need which was submitted in support of this application. The full background to the farm is set out in this report.
- 6.6 In order to assess the need and financial test set out under Policy A6 and to assess the information that was submitted in support of the application, your officer contacted Reading Agricultural Consultants (RAC) to give an independent assessment on the application. The full report by RAC can be found at appendix 3.
- 6.7 RAC's report found that there is a clearly established functional need for a worker to be readily available at most times to supervise the calving of the 240 suckler cows and heifers over a ten month period of the year and to provide appropriate care and assistance to young calves throughout the year. Information that was submitted with the application and subsequently checked by RAC demonstrates that the unit is financially viable. This therefore complies with criteria (i), (ii) and (vi) of Policy A6.
- 6.8 Criteria (iii) of Policy A6 requires that there is a need for a full time worker. The functional needs of the existing enterprise relate to more than one full time worker, therefore the new house would be occupied by someone who would be employed full time in agriculture.
- 6.9 Financial information that was submitted in support of the application shows that the unit has been established for more than three years and has been profitable in all of these and can be expected to remain so. This complies with criteria (iv) of Policy A6.
- 6.10 Although this is a location where new houses are not normally permitted. There is a proven need for a new agricultural workers house and the financial test requirements under policy A6 have been met.

Impact on green belt

- 6.11 Within the green belt there is a presumption against inappropriate development. This is set out in Policy GB2 which also sets out the forms of development which, under certain circumstances, may be acceptable within the Green Belt. Agriculture is identified as being appropriate development. The new house is modest in terms of its size and could be classed as an average sized house. It will be sited close to the existing buildings in the farmyard. Given its purpose, siting and size, this development is not considered to be harmful to the openness of the area and therefore by definition is not harmful. This accords with policies GB2 and GB4 of the adopted Local Plan.

Design and sustainability

- 6.12 As set out under Policy D8 of the adopted Local Plan and in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide, all new development should demonstrate high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water and materials, through its siting, landscaping, building design and orientation.
- 6.13 Currently there are no electricity cables running to the site. Therefore this new house will need its own energy supply. This is proposed through solar panels. In order to reduce the visual impact of the panels, a solar panel ‘bank’ is proposed, which will be sited at ground floor level to the north east of the proposed house. A rain water harvesting is also proposed to deal with the water requirements for the house. The majority of the glazing is on the south east elevation of the house, taking advantage of passive solar gain. The proposed materials are also common to the area. These aspects of the proposal accord with Policy D8 of the adopted Local Plan and advice set out in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide.

Landscape features

- 6.14 To the north of the site, along its boundary is a row of Chestnut Trees and along the western boundary is a sparse Wych Elm. As part of this proposal the trees and hedge will be retained. The Chestnut Trees are not protected by a TPO and the Forestry Officer has not raised any objection to this proposal. A condition has been recommended to ensure the trees are protected both during and after construction.

Highway safety and convenience

- 6.15 The Highway Officer has not objected to this proposal. Although a house in this location is not considered to be very sustainable, as its purpose is to accommodate a farm employee the alternative would be accommodation elsewhere which would increase trip generation to the site.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This application is for a new house in an isolated location, where normally planning policy restricts such development. However the house is for a farm worker and its occupancy would be conditioned as such. The information that was submitted in support of the application, which has been independently assessed by RAC show a need for a farm workers house and that the enterprise is economically viable and is likely to continue to be.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 **That planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. Commencement 3 years**
- 2. Agriculture worker occupancy**
- 3. Sample materials walls and roof**
- 4. Tree protection measures**
- 5. Landscaping scheme**
- 6. Remove permitted development rights**

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