
APPLICATION NO.	P10/W1125
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL
REGISTERED	26.07.2010
PARISH	STANTON ST JOHN
WARD MEMBER(S)	
APPLICANT	Mr & Mrs J Belcher
SITE	Breach Farm Stanton St John
PROPOSAL	Erection of an agricultural workers dwelling.
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	458461208342
OFFICER	Mrs E Hamerton (W)

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This planning application has been referred to Planning Committee as the views of the Parish Council differ from the Officers recommendation. A site visit has been arranged on Monday 18 October 2010.
- 1.2 The application site lies within the Green Belt to the south of Stanton St John and to the north of Forest Hill. Breach Farm consists of a holding of 141.3ha comprising a mixed arable, sheep and cattle farm. There are public rights of way across the farm. An OS plan showing the sites location is **attached** at Appendix 1.

1.3 **BACKGROUND**

The current owners acquired the site in 2005; prior to this the farm had been in long term set aside and out of productive agricultural use for a period of some 10 years. Over the past five years the owners have regenerated the farm and returned it to a mixed holding comprising cereal production and animal rearing. As a result of this there have been a number of planning applications over the past five years for various agricultural buildings and a temporary agricultural workers home. Details of these applications are set out in section 4 of this report.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 This application is for the erection of an agricultural worker's house. The proposed house will be sited to the south of the existing livestock buildings, where there is an existing temporary agricultural workers dwelling.
- 2.2 The proposed house will have a lounge, dining room, kitchen and breakfast room with a utility and shower room at ground floor and three bedrooms and three bathrooms at first floor. Adjoining the side of the house is storage space for bikes and bins. The house will be constructed from natural stone, beneath a slate roof. A copy of the floor plans and elevations are **attached** at Appendix 2.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Stanton St John Parish Council**

- This application breaches significant planning controls as detailed in PPG2 (1.5, 3.7, 3.8 a, b & d, 3.15) PPG7 2.18 and PPS7
- This house is sited in such a position that it compromises the guidelines set out in PPG2
- There is a stone barn that could be used, which has already been extensively rebuilt without planning permission. There are other areas of land on the farm that sit at a lower level where a new house could be located that would have less visual impact on the landscape than the dwelling indicated in this application.
- Recognise the need for two agricultural dwellings to support the farm business, however the Parish has consistently, since 2006 objected to the siting of a dwelling on the higher land to the south-east of the farmyard.
- The application to build in this open location is at odds with the ongoing development of the farm buildings in a sheltered hollow sympathetic to the immediate environment.

Environmental Protection (Contamination)

- There is potential environmental protection issues relating to contaminated land.
- In accordance with the PPS23 a precautionary approach should be taken, therefore a condition requesting further investigation is recommended

Monson Engineering Ltd

- No comment on surface water drainage
- A septic tank is proposed for this development. A septic tank and associated land drainage system may result in pollution to the adjacent ditch. A package treatment plant is preferred. Condition recommended requesting details.

Neighbour

- 2 letters of objection
- Strong concern about the long term break up of the Green Belt which could open up damaging development opportunities in the convenient and potentially accessible swathes of land throughout the South East.
- This part of the Green Belt is under threat by piecemeal multiple applications such as those put forward at Breach Farm.
- The farm has been expanded enormously within the space of four years
- Unlike the new cattle sheds, this house would stand proud on the landscape and be visible from miles around, particularly from Forest Hill and the B4027. It would detract from the openness of the landscape and have a detrimental visual impact upon the broad horizon of farmland and ancient woodland beyond.
- It would damage the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt under PPG2 and stand out as a blot on the landscape.
- No objection to a dwelling being here in support of the farm enterprise, however the Green Belt needs to be safeguarded
- The proposed dwelling is prominent in the landscape and dominates the south western face of the farm.

- It does not follow that where a development is sited on a temporary basis that this site is deemed valid for a permanent siting, by virtue of the temporary approval. The siting of this dwelling is inappropriate on the grounds that both the existing and proposed developments seriously effect the amenity of the Green Belt setting of the farm.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P06/W1353 - Use of land for stationing a mobile home for occupation by agricultural worker - Planning Permission 2008

P07/W0954 - Erection of livestock buildings comprising of two cattle barns, assoc yard and isolation boxes. Planning Permission 2008

P08/W0538 - Erection of livestock building No. 3 and associated yard. Planning Permission 2008

P08/W0540 - Erection of livestock building No. 4 and associated yard. Planning Permission 2008

P08/W0590/RET - Erection of temporary accommodation. Planning Permission 2008

P08/W0759 - Erection of walling to form a compound for storage of feed and bedding. Planning Permission 2008

P08/W1162 - Erection of livestock building no. 5. Planning Permission 2008

P08/W1163 - Erection of livestock building no 6 and associated yard. Planning Permission 2008

P09/W1141 - Erection of a pair of semi-detached agricultural workers dwellings. Withdrawn prior to determination on 15 January 2010

P09/W1224 - Extension to agricultural building to provide secure store and diversion of public right of way. Planning Permission 2010

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **South Oxfordshire Local Plan**

G2 Protection and enhancement of the environment

G4 Development in the countryside and on the edge of settlements

G6 Promoting good design

C4 The landscape setting of settlements

C9 Landscape features

GB2 New buildings in the Green Belt

GB4 Visual amenity

EP7 Groundwater protection

EP8 Contaminated land

D8 Energy, water and materials efficient design

South Oxfordshire Design Guide

National Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 7 – Rural Areas

Planning Policy Guidance 2 – Green Belt

Planning Policy Statement 23 – Pollution Control

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main issues in this case are whether: -

- The principle of a new house on this site is acceptable
- Impact on the visual amenity of the Green Belt
- Design
- Contamination

6.2 **The principle of a new house**

This site lies within the Oxford Green Belt, where under Policy GB2 of the adopted Local Plan, the basis of development control is a presumption against inappropriate development. Policy GB2 sets out the forms of development which, under certain circumstances, may be acceptable within the Green Belt. This policy reflects advice given in PPG2. Agricultural buildings are one of the categories of development that are deemed appropriate in the Green Belt.

6.3 Annex A of PPS7 specifically relates to new agricultural dwellings. Paragraph 10 of PPS7 makes it clear that new houses in the countryside require special justification for planning permission to be granted. One of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development may be justified is when accommodation is required to enable agricultural workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of their place of work.

6.4 Given the specialist nature of this application, Reading Agricultural Consultants (RAC) were employed by the Council to advise whether the proposal met the criteria set out in Annex A of PPS7. Reading Agricultural support the need for two workers to be readily available at most times and advise that at least one worker should be available at all times.

6.5 In this case given the scale of the farm enterprise and the amount of investment there is a functional need for labour to be ready at all times in order that the enterprise can function properly and to provide the necessary animal husbandry. RAC advised that it is likely that there will be the need for two units of accommodation to enable sufficient cover for holidays and travel to and from markets. At the moment when two workers are required by members of the applicant's family have to travel from Hurst; however this is not a realistic proposition in the longer term.

6.6 Confidential information in relation to the accounts of the farm has been viewed by RAC and your officers. This information included a trading profit and loss accounts prepared and signed off by the applicant's accountant. Based on this information the applicant has demonstrated that the financial test has been met.

6.7 The dwelling will provide accommodation for an agricultural worker. RAC have advised the Council that the size and nature of this enterprise means that two units of agricultural accommodation are required, although this application only proposes one currently. A condition is recommended to restrict the occupation of the dwelling to an agricultural worker.

6.8 **Impact on the visual amenity of the Green Belt**

Stanton St John Parish Council have objected to this application due to the siting of the proposed house and the impact they consider it will have on the Green Belt. However, they do recognise the need for two agricultural dwellings to support the farm business.

- 6.9 In 2008 planning permission was granted for the erection of temporary accommodation for an agricultural worker. This permission expires in January 2011. This temporary accommodation is sited in a similar location to where this current new house is proposed. Paragraph 13 of Annex A of PPS7 states that planning authorities should not normally give temporary permissions in locations where they would not normally permit permanent buildings.
- 6.10 The new house will be sited close to the existing cluster of buildings on the farm and will be accessed off the existing farm track. From public view points within the area the new house will be visible, however it will be viewed in the context of the existing farm complex.
- 6.11 In accordance with paragraph 3.15 of PPG2, Policy GB4 of the adopted Local Plan states that where new development is permitted within the Green Belt it should be sited and design in such a way that its impact on the open nature and rural character and visual amenity of the Green Belt is minimised. It is your Officer's view that the proposed house is sensitively sited close to the cluster of existing buildings. A landscaping condition is recommended to help the development assimilate into its surroundings.
- 6.12 **Design**
One of the fundamental aspects of the design of a new agricultural workers house is the size. Paragraph 9, Annex A of PPS7 states that agricultural dwellings should be of a size commensurate with the established functional requirements. Dwellings that are unusually large in relation to the agricultural needs of the unit should not be permitted. The proposed house is a modest three bedroom property that is proportional to its functional requirements.
- 6.13 The Design and Access Statement that accompanies the application states that the house will be finished in natural stone beneath a slate roof. Both the size and design of this house is considered to be in accordance with PPS7 and Policy G6 of the adopted Local Plan.
- 6.14 The applicant has also included some information on the Code for Sustainable Homes. The supporting information states that at this stage the house has been designed to achieve code level 1. This is below the requirements set out in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide and below Building Regulation requirements. Therefore a condition is recommended requiring details to be submitted that demonstrate the house will meet at least Code Level 3.
- 6.15 **Contamination**
Given this site is a farm there is the potential for some of the land to be contaminated. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has recommended a precautionary approach is undertaken in line with PPS23. Therefore a condition requiring further investigation is recommended.
- 7.0 **CONCLUSION**
- 7.1 It is recommended that planning permission is approved as there is a need for at least one full time worker to be present on the site at times. There is a functional need for this dwelling and the applicants have demonstrated financial soundness. The house is sited close to an existing cluster of buildings and will be viewed as part of the larger farm complex. For these reasons the development is not considered to be harmful to the appearance or the visual amenities of the Green Belt.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

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

1. **Commencement 3 yrs - Full Planning Permission**
2. **Sample materials required (all)**
3. **Contamination (investigation)**
4. **Foul drainage details**
5. **Agricultural Occupancy restriction**
6. **Landscaping condition**
7. **Sustainable design details**

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