
APPLICATION NO.	P11/E1237
APPLICATION TYPE	Full planning application
REGISTERED	26 July 2011
PARISH	Harpsden
WARD MEMBERS	Malcolm Leonard Robert Simister
APPLICANT	Mrs C Engbers
SITE	Thames Farm, Shiplake
PROPOSAL	Change of use from agricultural barn to warehouse/storage (Class B8) with associated servicing, vehicle circulation and parking areas with alterations to access.
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	476936/180008
OFFICER	Mrs H Moore

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the Officer's recommendations conflict with the views of the Parish Council.
- 1.2 The site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) lies in an area of sporadic development to the west of the village of Shiplake. Buildings within the site comprise of the barn which is proposed for conversion, and a polytunnel which lies to the west. Land to the south is open grassed land. Access to the site is taken directly from the A4155 and there is also a locked access exiting onto the bridleway which runs along the northern boundary of the land.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is to change the use of the barn from agricultural use to warehouse/storage (Class B8). An existing gravelled and grassed area in front of the building is proposed to be surfaced with tarmac to provide a parking, servicing and manoeuvring area. A strip of land to the west of the building is included in the application area to facilitate access to the doors in the western elevation of the barn. The existing access to the A4155 is proposed to be widened and the access road to the barn is proposed to be constructed in the position approved in 2004 and widened to facilitate use by larger vehicles. No alterations are proposed to the external appearance of the building. Some pruning of trees at the entrance to the site is proposed to improve visibility at the entrance.
- 2.2 An extensive Design and Access statement accompanies the application. The statement rehearses National and Local Planning Policies. The agent advises that a warehouse/storage use of the building would attract larger vehicles and accordingly enhanced access and manoeuvring areas are required. Good sized parking, circulation and manoeuvring areas are proposed to service the barn. The agent concludes that, in his view, the proposals do not conflict with national and local plan policies designed to regulate the re-use of rural buildings and the protection of the countryside.
- 2.3 Copies of the plans accompanying the application are **attached** as Appendix B. Other documentation associated with the application can be viewed on the council's website, www.southoxon.gov.uk.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Harpsden Parish Council – Objection raised. Comment –
Provided that the second access to the A4155 is closed, as it should have been, we would have no objection to the barn being used for the storage of small items from small vehicles. HGV's, however, would be completely out of place in this semi rural area and a great danger to other users of the A4155, which is a very narrow A road. A speculative venture for extensive HGV use would be out of character for the area. A depot for HGV's needs to be served by a major road in an industrial environment.
- 3.2 Shiplake Parish Council (adjoining Parish) – Objection raised. Comment –
Such a development would create noise, smell and light pollution through the movement of HGV's and fork lift trucks on a commercial 24/7 basis, adversely affecting the amenity of neighbours and the neighbourhood. The movement of large HGV's onto and off the A4155 would create traffic and safety issues on what is already a dangerous stretch of road. Such a warehousing commercial development would be totally inappropriate in this rural location – similar to the inappropriate Highlands Farm (Henley) development.
- 3.3 Forestry Officer – No objection raised. The extent of the tree works proposed will not be too obtrusive or have a detrimental effect on the trees. However, to avoid excessive pruning a planning condition should be attached requiring specifications for tree works to be submitted for approval.
- 3.4 OCC Highway Liaison Officer – No objection raised subject to imposition of conditions requiring appropriate vision splays to be provided, the provision of turning and parking areas constructed with a permeable surface, closure of the access onto Bolney Lane, modification of the existing access onto the A4155 prior to the commencement of the use. Further comments are contained in the main body of the report.
- 3.5 Monson Drainage Consultants – Comment –
Foul drainage – details need to be submitted and approved by condition.
Surface water drainage – It is important that there is no runoff from the parking, servicing and manoeuvring areas. These should be subject to an approved SUDS system.
- 3.6 Thames Water – Recommendation that petrol/oil interceptors should be fitted in all car parking/washing/repair facilities.
- 3.7 Neighbour responses -
15 letters of objection have been received. The objections raised include the following concerns –
- There is a big difference between the permitted B1 office and agricultural uses of the barn compared with the proposed B8 warehouse/storage use currently proposed.
 - A depot for HGV's is totally out of character in this rural area and would be better served in an industrial environment. The use will result in an increase in noise and disturbance from fork lift trucks and large vehicles, including the repair of HGV's, possible external fabrication and light pollution.

- The use will result in significant areas of outside storage which will be unsightly.
- The servicing/ parking and manoeuvring areas proposed are far too extensive to service the building, and could be some one third of the size, with the remainder used for landscaping. A semi permeable surface should be used instead of tarmac.
- Traffic coming along the busy A4155 travel at speed and the proposals will result in danger from the manoeuvring of large vehicles. The A4155 is a narrow road and is already at saturation point as regards traffic volumes. The line of sight to/from the entrance is restricted as the road is not flat, or straight, and the entrance is only a short distance from the Shiplake Memorial. Any significant increase in traffic along the A4155 would exacerbate existing queuing problems at busy times. The development of the Wyevale site will increase the danger on this road.
- It is already possible for large vehicles to access the site. The changes to the access to the land would result in the loss of some agricultural land and allow large scale re-development of the surrounding land.
- It is unacceptable to destroy trees and vegetation and increase hard surfacing with the consequent impact on wildlife and increase in run-off.
- The owners have made no attempt to use the barn for B1 purposes, and they should try harder.
- The second entrance onto Bolney Lane has not been closed and is still in constant use, contrary to the requirements of previous permissions.
- If permission is granted it should be on the basis of a single occupier as multiple occupation can become unsightly and involve more traffic.
- If permission is granted, the LPA should impose a condition precluding the insertion of a mezzanine which would double the floor space of the building, and impose a condition concerning the storage of refuse.
- Thames Farm consists of 11 acres of land. Residents are concerned that approval of this application will lead to the remainder of the land being developed.
- The continual attempts of the owner to change the use of the building are distressing and do not offer any enhancement.

Full details of submissions and consultation replies can be viewed on the Council's web site at www.southoxon.gov.uk

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P10/E1755 – Change of use of building from agricultural barn to residential dwelling, with external alterations. Refusal of planning permission.

P08/E1357 – Change of use of barn to B1 use. Planning permission granted.

P05/E0831 – Change of use from agricultural building to farm shop with new front porch. Refusal of planning permission and dismissal at appeal.

P04/E0938 – Closure of existing access and provision of new access onto Reading Road – Planning permission granted.

P02/S0447, P02/S0207, P02/S0012 – Construction of two storey farm manager's dwelling. Planning permissions refused.

P00/S0815 – Demolition of existing agricultural buildings. Construction of horticultural building in connection with wholesale nursery business (retrospective). Planning

permission refused. Granted at appeal.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP), Policies:

G2 – Protection and enhancement of the environment.

C1 – Landscape character

C4 – The landscape setting of settlements

C9 - Landscape features

EP8 – Contaminated land

D1 – Good design and local distinctiveness

D2 – Vehicle and bicycle parking

D8 – Energy, water and materials efficient design

R8 – Public rights of way

E8 – Re-use of rural buildings

T1 - Vehicle access

PPS1: Delivering sustainable development.

PPS4: Planning for sustainable economic growth.

PPS7: Sustainable development in rural areas.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Officers consider that the building lies outside the main confines of a settlement, and accordingly the proposals would fall to be assessed against Policy E8 of the SOLP which sets out criteria against which conversion of rural building should be considered. In this case the principle issues to be considered are –

1. The authorised use of the building.
2. Whether the principle of conversion to B8 warehouse is acceptable in terms of planning policy.
3. Whether the construction and character of the building is suitable for the use proposed.
4. Whether the proposal is satisfactory in terms of environmental impact on the amenity of the area.
5. Whether the proposed access to the property is satisfactory in terms of highway safety and convenience.
6. Other issues which have been raised.

The authorised use of the building.

6.2 Planning permission was granted at appeal for the erection of the building under application reference P00/S0815. Conditions imposed on that consent include -
Condition 7 – The building shall be used for agricultural purposes only and not for any other purpose without the written consent of the LPA.

Condition 8 – If within 10 years of its substantial completion the use for agricultural purposes permanently ceases and planning permission for an alternative use has not been granted within 3 further years, the building shall be demolished.

6.3 Under planning application P08/E0831, planning permission was refused for conversion of the building to a farm shop. An appeal against the refusal was dismissed.

The inspector considered that the proposal would not be small scale, would not be required to sell goods produced on the farm, locally produced goods would not constitute the majority of the sales, and the building would appear more apparent in the landscape than at present due to increased use, thereby causing harm to the local setting.

- 6.4 Under planning permission P08/E1357, planning permission was granted for the B1 use of the building. B1 use includes office use, research and development, and light industry. This permission is a three year permission expiring on 6 February 2012. The permission has not been implemented.
- 6.5 Under planning application reference P10/E1755 planning permission was refused for the change of use of the barn from agricultural use to a dwelling, with external alterations.
- 6.6 Having regard to the above, the building can be used for agricultural purposes or B1 purposes. The current use of the building as declared on the application forms is agricultural barn.
- 6.7 It is difficult to assess how the building has been used since it was constructed as it has been kept locked. However, the agent advises that since his involvement with the site in 2005, the building has been used for the storage of agricultural plant and equipment, with some storage of palleted agricultural materials. An agricultural notification application was approved for a new barn when an application was made for the conversion of this barn to a farm shop. The agent advises that the new barn would have been used to compensate for the prospective loss of the existing barn to farm shop use. In these circumstances, the agent gives his opinion that the low key agricultural use of the barn was implemented not long after the permission was granted at appeal in 2001.

Whether the principle of the conversion of the building to B8 warehouse use is acceptable in terms of planning policy.

- 6.8 Policy E8 of the SOLP states that proposals for the conversion of rural buildings will be permitted provided that certain criteria are met. The relevant criteria are discussed in the following sections. The supporting text of Policy E8 of the SOLP confirms that in accordance with Government Guidance, the Council will generally support the re-use of rural buildings for employment use, making provision for small firms of up to 500 sq.m floor space. The supporting text for Policy E8 also confirms that B8 uses are often appropriate for barns which often provide large open spaces. Barns can also provide suitable accommodation for public gatherings such as village halls, indoor sports halls or other community uses, subject to public accessibility.
- 6.9 Government Guidance on ‘Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth’ is set out in PPS4, published in 2009. Policy EC12 relates to the determination of planning applications for economic development in rural areas. The Policy advises that ‘Re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations and for some types of building’. It goes on to say that, in determining planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should support development proposals which enhance the vitality of an area and support small scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages or other locations that are remote from local service centres. In terms of impact, the Policy confirms that Local Planning Authorities should ‘approve planning applications for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside for economic development, particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns or villages, where the benefits outweigh the harm’. Examples of impact to be considered include the potential impact on the countryside, local economic and social needs and opportunities, accessibility to service centres, the need to conserve heritage assets, the suitability of the building.

- 6.10 Planning permission for a B1 business use of the building was granted in 2009 under planning permission P08/E1357. That permission was in accordance with relevant planning policies and current government guidance, and establishes the principle of a commercial use of the barn. In these circumstances, officers consider that the principle of conversion to warehouse/storage use is acceptable in terms of planning policy.

Whether the construction and character of the building is suitable for the use proposed.

- 6.11 The existing building is constructed with a brick and flint plinth, weather boarded walls supported by a steel frame, and a clay tiled roof. The building is permanent and substantial in its construction. In terms of its appearance in the countryside, when allowing the appeal in 2001, the Inspector concluded that the building, although a slightly idiosyncratic feature, would not harm the character and appearance of the countryside.
- 6.12 The building is very substantial in size, with a length of some 40m and a width of 10.5m. The eaves of the building are 4m in height, the ridge is 9m in height and the interior of the building comprises one open space. Access to the building is primarily by roller shutter doors on both ends of the building and no alterations are proposed to the external appearance of the building. Accordingly, the nature of the building is ideally suited to a storage use which would make use of the large open area within the building for the stacking of goods. Daylight to the interior of the building is provided by the existing dormer windows. In these circumstances, officers consider that the construction and character of the building is suitable for the use proposed.

Whether the proposal is satisfactory in terms of environmental impact on the amenity of the area.

- 6.13 The building is located in the corner of a field and is screened by mature trees to the north and west. A bridleway runs along the northern boundary and the A4155 road along the eastern boundary. In terms of potential noise and disturbance, the nearest residential properties to the barn are located on the other side of this bridleway and road. Whilst there is currently little activity at the site, permission exists for a B1 commercial use of the barn which would result in activity in and around the building, and an intensive use of the barn for agriculture could equally have an impact locally. The nearest residential properties will also be currently subject to traffic noise from vehicles using the A4155. A warehouse/storage B8 use of the building would not permit any noisy manufacturing processes to be undertaken at the site. The application does not specify the provision of lighting, and this could be controlled by the imposition of an appropriate condition.
- 6.14 In terms of impact on the appearance of the site in the countryside, the parking and manoeuvring area in front of the building is already separated off from the remaining agricultural land by post and rail fencing. Although the parking and manoeuvring area is currently overgrown, permission exists for it to be hard surfaced as part of the B1 permission in 2009, and a landscaping condition could be imposed to improve the appearance of the hard surface in the countryside. The access track from the main road to the building was permitted in 2004, and although the access track is now proposed to be some 1.5m wider than permitted, officers consider that the impact on the countryside of the access track would be very similar to the approved scheme. With regard to concerns about open storage occurring around the building, a planning condition could be imposed to preclude this happening. The proposed development would not involve the loss of any trees on the site, and accordingly the building would

remain screened in the locality. The agent has clarified that pruning of trees at the access and possible crown lifting would be required to ensure visibility splays could be provided.

- 6.15 Having regard to the above, officers consider that the proposal would be satisfactory in terms of environmental impact on the rural character and the amenity of the locality.

Whether the proposed access to the property is satisfactory in terms of highway safety and convenience.

- 6.16 Planning permission was granted for the construction of a new access to the site under planning permission P04/E0983. That access has been constructed, although the approved access track across the field to the building has not been formed. Whilst concern has been expressed by the Harpsden and Shiplake Parish Councils and local residents that the access is not suitable for use by articulated lorries, no objection is raised to the proposal by the Highway Authority. Attention is drawn to the fact that a 'Road Safety Audit Report' was submitted as part of the 2004 application for the new access. This Report investigated safety issues relating to the access proposed for farm shop use under the 2004 application. The Road Safety Report demonstrated that the access which served the barn onto the Bolney Lane bridleway was not suitable for intensification of use, and that the then proposed access onto the A4155 afforded better visibility and therefore safety. As the report was submitted in 2004, it is recommended that the provision of vision splays, which may now be somewhat overgrown, is required to be provided as a condition in the event that planning permission is granted. A condition should also be imposed requiring the proposed alterations to the access to be undertaken prior to the first use of the building for warehouse purposes.
- 6.17 Permanent closure of the access onto the Bolney Lane Bridleway was a condition of the 2004 permission for the new access. Residents have advised that this access is still in use, and in the interests of highway safety, a condition requiring the Bolney Lane access to be permanently closed should be imposed in the event that planning permission is granted.
- 6.18 In terms of traffic generation, for buildings up to 235sq.m., the 'permitted development' regulations permit the change from a B1 use to a B8 use without the grant of planning permission. Although this wouldn't apply to this barn because of its size (429sq.m.), the legislation implies compatibility between these uses, which is an important factor in the consideration of this proposal. In these circumstances, officers consider that the proposed B8 use is unlikely to have a materially greater highway impact than the approved B1 use. HGV movements associated with a B8 use are likely to be slightly greater than a B1 use, but the proposed alterations to the access should accommodate this difference without adverse highway implications.
- 6.19 In view of the above, and subject to imposition of appropriate conditions, officers consider that the proposal is satisfactory in terms of highway safety and convenience.

Other issues.

- 6.20 Local concern has been expressed that approval of this scheme would set a precedent for further housing development on adjacent land. However, this conversion proposal is considered under planning policies for the conversion of existing buildings, and would not set a precedent for the development of the adjoining land for residential development. Consideration of land for the erection of new houses would be assessed through the Local Development Framework process.

6.21 Whilst concern has been expressed that the premises has not been marketed for B1 purposes properly, the current proposal is for a different use which has to be considered on its own merits.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The proposal complies with the relevant Development Plan Policies and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the proposed development would not materially harm the character and appearance of the area or the living conditions of nearby residents.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

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

1. **Commencement 3 years**
2. **Compliance with submitted plans**
3. **Vehicular access alterations to be undertaken prior to first use of building.**
4. **Provision of vision splays.**
5. **Provision parking and manoeuvring areas.**
6. **Permanent closure of existing access onto Bolney Lane by removal of all vehicular gates and replacement with post and rail fencing.**
7. **No insertion of mezzanine floor without the further grant of planning permission.**
8. **No goods, materials, plant or machinery to be stored, repaired, operated or displayed outside the building.**
9. **No external alterations to the building without planning permission.**
10. **Specification of proposed tree works to be submitted for approval.**
11. **Submission, approval and implementation of landscaping scheme.**
12. **Foul drainage details required.**
13. **Surface water drainage details required.**
14. **Contamination investigation, and if required, remediation, in accordance with a scheme to be submitted and agreed.**
15. **No lighting to be provided without prior approval in writing by Local Planning Authority.**

N.B. Thames water requirement that petrol/oil interceptors be fitted.

Author: Mrs H Moore
Contact No: 01491 823732
Email Add: planning.east@southandvale.gov.uk