

## Design and Access Statement

Proposed Agricultural Building at Watercombe Farm, Brimpsfield,  
Gloucestershire

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## Background

The proposal seeks consent for an agricultural building of approximately 556m<sup>2</sup> to provide agricultural storage for a growing farm business. Associated works include a small area of hard standing and the extension of an existing farm track to the east of the proposal and associated landscaping.

The land owned by the applicant at Watercombe Farm is located between the village of Brimpsfield to the south west and the A417 to the north. The holding extends to 88 hectares owned by the applicant in a ring fence and a further 110 hectares of rented permanent pasture in the wider surrounding area. This rented land is used for a combination of summer grazing and haymaking for winter feed. Additional produce in the form of straw from cereal crops is purchased from neighbouring farmers, baled and transported back to the farm for winter bedding. All this is necessary to support the growing beef herd at Watercombe Farm, which now extends to some 250 head of beef cattle, which form the mainstay of the farm business.

Currently storage of the hay and straw needed at the farm over the winter is either stored outside, which results in spoilage and waste due to weather or off site at a neighbour's farm. This results in increased agricultural traffic throughout the year as the produce is transported off farm to the neighbours shed in the summer months and then collected throughout the winter. Neither of these options are sustainable or practical for the long term success of the business and this application seeks to address this by providing a central store for the produce needed by the farm year round.

Over the course of the last 30 years the main farm yard at Watercombe Farm has expanded to cater for the needs of the growing farm business. Space for additional farm buildings at the main yard has now run out as the farm yard is a linear development which has filled the natural space available. Careful consideration of the options for the siting of this new agricultural building have been weighed up and it is felt that this location is the best choice for both the farm business and the local landscape.

## Location

The site is located off the Brimpsfield Road approximately 300m to the north of Brimpsfield.

## Site Analysis

As outlined previously the holding extends to 88 hectares in a ring fence with a fairly equal split of arable land and permanent pasture.

Access to the proposed site is gained from an existing green lane which runs from an existing field gate to the immediate south west of the site back to the Brimpsfield road around 100 metres to the south.

The application site is flat in the context of the surrounding area and this proposal seeks to make use of one of the most level areas available to the applicant. A natural dogleg in the existing hedge line at the boundary of the field presents an ideal location for the agricultural building proposed with the hedge line screening the building well from the road to the south.

The existing green lane terminates at the field gate adjacent to the site application site with a rough farm track continuing across the field to the west. It is proposed to continue this farm track from the field gate to the east to join a small area of hardstanding around the agricultural building.

The application site and surrounding area falls within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and this means potential landscape impact is a primary consideration.

## Amount

Consent is sought for the erection of a single clear span portal frame agricultural building and the creation of a small area of associated hardstanding with an access track from the field gate.

## Layout

The layout of the site and its context in relation to the wider area is shown on the attached planning drawings.

## Scale

The scale and nature of the building is directly influenced by its function which is to allow sufficient space for the storage of agricultural produce allowing sufficient height for access and handling by modern farm machinery. This produce will primarily be livestock feed and bedding in the form of hay and straw gathered from the fields in the immediate surrounding area. This central location to the farm makes sense from a logistics perspective, as the produce will be gathered to a store easily accessible and central to the farm as a whole.

The scale of the building has been informed by the actual needs of the farm over the last few years as cattle numbers have gradually grown and the business has expanded. A small section of the shed is ear marked for machinery storage, which currently sits outside year round at the main farm yard. The business will benefit from being able to store the most valuable farm machinery under cover year round.

Elevations of the proposals are included as part of the attached planning documents.

## Landscaping

Both hard and soft landscaping measures are proposed to mitigate against the potential impact of the proposed works. The hard standing proposed will extend to the minimum area which is practical for modern farm machinery to access the front of the shed throughout the year especially in winter when ground conditions are poor. The building will be set close to the native hedge boundary to the south of the site with space left between the boundary and hedge to allow hedge cutting and maintenance to the boundary fence.

As per the attached elevations the proposals include for three native trees to be planted adjacent to the west elevation to help screen the proposal from the field gate and existing footpath. The building will be nestled in the natural dog leg of the field boundary with the scale of the proposed shed responding well to the existing in hedge trees.

## Appearance

The appearance and construction of the proposed building is typical of modern agricultural buildings with a steel frame and timber yorkshire boarding to 2 metres above ground level on three sides with the north elevation fully open to allow access. Roof cladding will be corrugated anthracite grey fibre cement roof sheets with translucent roof lights.

The hard standing will be of local Costwold stone hardcore which is suitable to provide good machinery access, is permeable and a local material.

All building roof water will be considered clean and dispersed into a soakaway on site.

## Access

An existing access to the site will be utilised in the form of the green lane to the south, which runs back to the Brimpsfield road from the field gate. A small farm track will be extended from the gateway to the proposed building to allow year round access.

Other than activities associated with the actual construction of the building few additional traffic movements will be generated directly by this proposal. It is anticipated that there will be a reduction in traffic movements following the construction of the building as currently the applicant has to rent storage space from a neighbouring farmer in the nearby village of Birdlip.

## Precedent

A local precedent for this application is 12/01874/FUL at Hawcote Hill, a few miles towards Birdlip. This similarly scaled application was approved following some minor amendments to the proposed landscaping and site levels. At Hawcote Hill, previously to this there was no agricultural building on the site although there was an existing farm track much like this application.

In terms of planning policy, the Cotswold District Council Local Plan 2001 (adopted 2006) seeks to allow development outside of settlement boundaries providing the following criteria are not met;

- a) result in new-build open market housing other than that which would help to meet the social and economic needs of those living in rural areas
- b) cause significant harm to existing patterns of development, including the key characteristics of open spaces in a settlement
- c) lead to a material increase in car-borne commuting
- d) adversely affect the vitality and viability of settlements
- e) result in development that significantly compromises the principles of sustainable development.

As the site is located within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Policy 7 of the Local Plan will also apply to the proposed development. This policy requires that priority be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside, alongside consideration for the economic and social well-being of the surrounding area and its communities.

The National Planning Policy Framework, brought into effect on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012 also has relevance to this proposal, and it indicates in section 3, that development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses should be encouraged, and that a positive approach should be taken towards sustainable new development in rural areas.

This proposal is for justified agricultural development in a rural area and is considered to be compliant in principle with both local and national planning policy.