

Mr J & Mrs L Hitchcox
4 Weedon Hill Farm Cottages
Weedon
Aylesbury
Bucks
HP22 4DP

1st November 2021

**Supporting Statement for the removal of the Agricultural Occupancy
Conditions: 4 Weedon Hill Farm Cottages, Weedon, HP22 4DP**

We make this application for the removal of the agricultural occupancy conditions on the above property. *Planning permission AR/239/60 dated 28th September 1960* and the subsequent Deed of Variation dated 12th February 1996. We make this application for the unrestricted residential use of the property.

The unrestricted occupation of the Property complies with more up to date Government Policy, which encourages a significant boost in the supply of housing and promotes sustainable development.

Planning History of Weedon Hill Farm, land, and Buildings

Weedon Hill House (Easting: 481582.20 Northing:216412.50 used to be the main house for the holding which comprised of the surrounding land and farm buildings and 3 Cottages.

Over time the main house, land and farm buildings have been sold off from the main holding and the land has been rented by a local landowners who has a farm in Hardwick.

The yard and building which were also known as Hanstead Stud, weren't utilised as a farm but instead an equestrian stud and then later a DIY livery yard, until it fell into disrepair.

Weedon Hill House is separate from the farm building and is an unrestricted property.

4 Weedon Hill Farm Cottages (E:481459.90 N:216489.58)

Planning permission was granted in 1960 for 3 & 4 Weedon Hill Farm cottages (also known as 1 & 2 Evelyn Cottages) with the restriction of anyone residing in these cottages must work on the holding *See attached Historic*

In 1995 the permission was granted for a deed of variation as the holding was no longer a productive farm and the cottages had been left empty for many years as

there was no need for an agricultural farm workers cottage on the holding, as it was now being used as an equestrian DIY livery yard. The Deed of Variation allowed anyone working in agriculture in the locality (10-minute drive) to reside in the properties. See attached Deed of variation

We have been living in the property since 2014 and completed the purchase of the property in 2016. When we first moved into the property it was in a dilapidated state. The property has been renovated and extended (17/03975/AP) to make it a four-bedroom family home.

The garden albeit larger than an average garden (0.34 acres) is not larger enough to sustain any agricultural business activity and the surrounding land not available to use.

There are stipulations in our deeds that no farm animals or farm equipment can be kept on the property, which seems contradictory to the AOC on the property.

The Colt House

Which formed part of the initial holding was granted planning permission was in 1973, planning application No: AR/917/73 with an AOC restriction that anyone living in the house must work on the Hanstead Stud. This was later changed as the farm no-longer required the agricultural workers as it once did, and the AOC was changed to anyone working in agriculture within a 10-minute drive, to make it available to for agricultural workers in the wider area. The property was left empty for many years and there was no need for AOC house in this location.

In 2006 The Colt House, had the removal of its agricultural occupancy condition, unconditionally. *Application No. 06/01838/APP in 2006.*

The Justification for making this decision was:

The proposal is in accordance with Policy RA20 of the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan. There are no other material planning considerations of such weight to lead to a decision contrary to those policies.

The Colt House has now been demolished to make way for the redevelopment of its site and the farm buildings that surround it. The development is made up a 5-bedroom detached home (on the old Colt House site) and 5 luxury barn conversions all of which do not have any AOC.

Application No: 12/00576/APP and subsequent Non Material Amendments 12/A0576/NON

Since the extensive report that was made in 2006 for the removal of the AOC to The Colt House, many of farms in the locality have been taken up by The Berry Fields and Weedon Hill Major Development area which have up to 5000 homes.

When the AOC was put on the property (4 Weedon Hill Farm Cottages) in 1960 it was in a rural location and agricultural workers needed to be close at hand for the property. Farms and farming practices have changed since the original AOC was put on and the need for agricultural workers in the local area has reduced. With many of the next generation of farming families having to take to other careers in

commerce, as the traditional farms can't sustain multi-generations being reliant on the farm income, let alone employing a full-time agricultural worker who is supplied with a cottage; and more and more farms are having to diversify into light industrial, hospitality, or holiday accommodation to make the farm pay.

This was also shown in the Buckinghamshire Agricultural Study - Stress in Buckinghamshire Farming, David Campbell, 2001

- *Diversification has been undertaken by 62% of Buckinghamshire farmers of which 53% have diversified since 1995. The overwhelming majority from those who diversified stated that the principal reason for diversifying was that their 'traditional business was becoming unprofitable'*
- *The letting of Tenanted Buildings has been the most common form of diversification activity for farmers across the county. Equine and Off-Farm income also represent popular choices of diversification activity*

Conclusion

The planning application should be granted for the removal of Agricultural Occupation Condition and unrestricted residential use of the property should be granted.

- There is an absence of agricultural demand for a dwelling in the locality, this was proven in (*Application No. 06/01838/APP in 2006*) on the same site and this has set the precedence.
- There is no justified functional need for this dwelling to have an AOC based on the size of the associated plot.
- We feel that since the property was built 60 years ago, the AOC has outlived its usefulness, and it is no longer a rural location due to the developments that has been built around it and in the local vicinity.
- Even with a price reflecting the AOC on 4 Weedon Hill Farm Cottages there are more affordable homes locally for an agricultural worker to purchase with no restrictions, which are mortgageable and have purchase schemes which weren't available 60 years ago.
- The property is currently on the market with a local Estate Agent, at a greatly reduced price. It has been shared on Social Media to all Agricultural, Farming, Forestry and Local Village Groups to try find an agricultural purchaser. The property has been attracting a high volume of interest, with not one caller coming from an agricultural sector.

Please contact us should you wish to discuss anything in this letter

We look forward to hearing from your accordingly.

Yours faithfully

Jeremy and Lynn Hitchcox