



## **Planning Statement**

**Conversion of existing agricultural building into holiday lets, erection of stables and store buildings, the formation of an arena and the change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian.**

**The Concrete Barn, Field Assarts**

**For: Mr Richard M Guy**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by JPPC on behalf of Mr Guy in support of a full planning application for the conversion of an existing agricultural building into two holiday lets, erection of stables and store buildings, the formation of an arena and the change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian at The Concrete Barn, Field Assarts.
  
- 1.2 With reference to the character of the application site and surrounding area, an appraisal of the prevailing planning policies and planning history and an assessment of the planning issues raised by the proposal, this statement sets out why the proposed development is deemed to be acceptable.

## 2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site consists of an actively worked agricultural land parcel, a redundant Nissen hut, a redundant concrete framed agricultural barn and timber garage. Access is served by an existing access track to the north of the agricultural barn leading onto the highway. The agricultural barn that is subject to this application has a concrete frame and a corrugated sheet roof.
- 2.2 The site lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The structure subject of this application is not a listed building, nor is it located within a Conservation Area. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and there are no public footpaths in close proximity of the site.



Google Earth imagery showing location of site

### 3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The planning history of the application site is detailed below:

<b>Reference / Site</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Status</b>
17/01301/FUL	Change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian use	Approved 23 May 2017
20/02099/FUL	The cladding and recladding of an agricultural barn and associated works	Approved 12 November 2020
21/00070/PN56	Change of use of building and land within its curtilage from use as an agricultural building to a flexible use, initially falling within Class B1 (business) and Class B8 (storage).	Prior Approval Not Required 3 March 2021

#### 4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The proposal involves the conversion of an existing agricultural building into two holiday lets, erection of stables and store buildings, the formation of an arena and the change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian.
- 4.2 The holiday let building would be clad in timber and black metal sheeting for the walls and black metal sheeting for the roofs. Windows and door openings would be created on all elevations. The holiday lets have been designed in such a way that they can be used as two units, one with three bedrooms and one with one bedroom, or one larger four-bedroom unit. The building would have accommodation across two floors.
- 4.3 The stables building would be located to the northeast of the holiday let. It would be clad in timber and black metal sheeting for the walls with a black sheet metal roof and would have four stables in total.
- 4.4 The storage building is proposed to the north of the agricultural building on the site of the existing garage. The building would be constructed from black metal sheeting and timber cladding.
- 4.5 An arena is proposed in the southwest of the site, to the south of the existing Nissen Hut. The arena would be accessed a track leading to The Ridings to the northeast.
- 4.6 The area of land that is proposed to change use to equestrian is smaller than that which was permitted under 17/01301/FUL.
- 4.7 The scheme has been developed following consultation with neighbours and the Parish Council. The scheme would provide improvements to the entrance, agreed position of the stables and the cladding, which were all mentioned as preferences in our [village questionnaire](#).

## 5.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 Planning law (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, including any local and neighbourhood plans that have been brought into force and any spatial development strategies produced by combined authorities or elected Mayors, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.3 Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements. Other statements of government policy may be material when preparing plans or deciding applications, such as relevant Written Ministerial Statements and endorsed recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (“the NPPF”) was revised in July 2021. It has, at its heart, a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 confirms that for decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless;
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed (the relevant policies are listed in a footnote in the NPPF); or
  - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

- 5.5 Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
- 5.6 Section 12 of the NPPF deals with design and confirms that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 5.7 Paragraph 84 states that planning decisions should the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

**West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 (WOLP 2031)**

- 5.8 The Local Plan was adopted in September 2018. Applicable policies are considered to be as follows:

OS1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

OS2 – Locating development in the right places

OS3 – Prudent use of natural resources

OS4 – High quality design

H2 – Delivery of new homes

E2 – Supporting the rural economy

E3 – Reuse of existing buildings

E4 – Sustainable tourism

EH1 – Cotswolds AONB

EH2 – Landscape character

EH3 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

## 6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 The key issues for consideration in this case include:

- Principle of development
- Design and Impact on the Cotswolds AONB and character of the area
- Neighbour amenity
- Highway safety

### **Principle of Development**

#### *Conversion of agricultural building*

6.2 The application proposes to convert the existing agricultural building to two holiday lets. Primarily the holiday lets would function as one three-bed and one single-bed holiday let, but alternatively it could be used as one four-bed holiday let. Policy OS2 states that development in the small villages, hamlets and open countryside will be limited to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location and which respects the intrinsic character of the area. Field Assarts is considered to be a small village as it is not included on Table 4b as a Village for the purposes of the Local Plan.

6.3 The policy goes on to state that proposals for non-residential development that can be regarded as appropriate include:

- Re-use of appropriate existing buildings which would lead to an enhancement of their immediate setting, with preference given to employment, tourism and community uses; and
- Proposals to support the effectiveness of existing businesses and sustainable tourism.

6.4 Policy E3 specifically relates to the reuse of non-residential buildings. This policy is split up into two parts, one which relates to the reuse of traditional buildings and the other relates to the reuse of non-traditional buildings.

6.5 Paragraph 6.49 states that *'it is not the Council's objective to prolong the life of buildings that are harmful to the appearance of an area. Non-traditional or modern agricultural buildings are typically unworthy of retention due to their form and unsympathetic materials'*.



- 6.6 There is no definition within the Local Plan as to what constitutes a traditional building. The concrete barn is at least 50 years old and planning consent has been recently granted by the Council for the cladding of the building (20/02099/FUL). Given the age of the building and the recently approved recladding of the building, it is assumed that the Council consider the building to be worthy of retention. The reuse of the building for tourism purposes would therefore comply with Policies OS2 and E3.
- 6.7 Furthermore, the change of use of the building to commercial uses has been approved under 21/00070/PN56. This allows the building to be used for office or storage use. Under this application, the long-term retention of the building was secured. The change of use of the building to commercial uses has therefore been previously approved, which complies with Policies OS2 and E3. This application seeks to change the building to an alternative use within this policy and is therefore acceptable.
- 6.8 Paragraph 40 of the NPPF encourages engagement between applicants and their local communities. The applicant has engaged with the Parish Council and neighbours prior to this submission. Both the Parish Council and neighbours have expressed a preference for a holiday let use over the permitted commercial use, as the holiday let would have significantly reduced activity. Given the policy compliance and the siting of the development, the proposed holiday let use is considered to be more appropriate for the site.
- 6.9 The principle of development of the conversion of the agricultural building is therefore considered to be acceptable.

*Change of use of land to equestrian and formation of an Arena*

- 6.10 Policy OS2 states that development in the small villages, hamlets and open countryside will be limited to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location and which respects the intrinsic character of the area. The supporting text for policy E2 states that equestrian development is a suitable farm diversification activity.
- 6.11 Policy E2 goes on to state that development proposals which are necessary for agricultural production, or which make a positive contribution to farm or country estate diversification will be supported where they:

- are supported by or operate as part of and will continue to add value to a viable core farm/estate business; and
- remain compatible and consistent in scale with the farm/estate operation and a countryside location; and
- re-use existing buildings where feasible in accordance with Policy E3.

6.12 The nature of the use of the land would not be altered significantly with the change from agricultural to equestrian and the majority of development would be contained at ground level. The proposals represent a sustainable form of development which would support the rural economy through diversifying an agricultural business.

6.13 Furthermore, the change of use of the land to equestrian was previously permitted by the Council under 17/01301/FUL. This related to a larger area of land than is now proposed, but given that this use was recently considered to be acceptable and there have been no relevant policy changes since this time, the principle should remain to be acceptable.

6.14 The principle of development for the holiday let and equestrian use are therefore considered to be acceptable, subject to the other materials considerations discussed below.

### **Design and Impact on the Cotswolds AONB and character of the area**

6.15 Policy OS4 states high design quality is central to the strategy for West Oxfordshire and that new development should respect the historic, architectural and landscape character of the locality, contribute to local distinctiveness and, where possible, enhance the character and quality of the surroundings.

6.16 Policy EH1 states that in determining development proposals within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and proposals which would affect its setting, great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty, landscape and countryside, including its wildlife and heritage. This will include consideration of any harm to the contribution that the settlement makes to the scenic beauty of the AONB.

6.17 The site is located within the Cotswolds AONB. The converted barn would have a similar appearance to the recladding scheme approved under 20/02099/FUL.

The principal change from this scheme is the creation of additional openings, which are necessary for the proposed holiday let use. The openings have been limited in number to ensure that the building would still retain an agricultural appearance. The materials proposed are largely the same as those permitted under the cladding scheme, with the principal change being the introduction of timber cladding. It is therefore considered that the conversion of the agricultural building would enhance the character of the Cotswold AONB by improving the appearance of the existing building.

6.18 The stable building would accommodate four stables and is of a simple design and a minor scale. The building would be timber clad with a metal sheet roof and these materials are suitable for such a building in the countryside. The storeroom would be of a similar design and scale and for the same reasons would sit comfortably in this rural setting.

6.19 The change of use of land to equestrian and the formation of the riding arena would have a minimal impact on the character and appearance of the countryside and the AONB. As set out previously, the majority of the equestrian related development would be contained at ground level, with the exception of the fence surrounding the perimeter of the arena. However, post and rail fences are common features within rural areas and this feature would therefore not cause any harm.

6.20 The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area and the AONB is therefore considered to comply with Policies OS2 and H2 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and the NPPF.

### **Neighbour amenity**

6.21 Policy OS2 states that all development should be compatible with adjoining uses and not have a harmful impact on the amenity of existing occupants

6.22 The agricultural building is located over 20m away from the closest neighbouring dwelling (5 Home Farm Cottages). Given the separation distance and the proposed fenestration on the holiday let, it is considered that the development would not cause harm to the amenities of the occupier of this dwelling.

- 6.23 The dwellings to the north of the proposed holiday lets are in excess of 25m from the northern elevation. This separation distance is considered to be more than sufficient to protect the amenities of these neighbours.
- 6.24 The impact on neighbours is therefore considered to comply with Policy OS2 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and the NPPF.

### **Highway safety**

- 6.25 The development would utilise the existing access onto The Ridings, with the application proposing to slightly widen the access to improve highway safety. A parking and turning area would be created to the north and west of the holiday let and an access track would continue to the southwest to the riding arena. There is sufficient parking and turning provision for the development, and the access serves a number of existing properties, with sufficient visibility to both the east and west.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 This statement has examined the planning background of the site, the context of the site, the surrounding area, the relevant national and local planning policy framework in respect of the proposed development at The Concrete Barn, Field Assarts.
- 7.2 The proposal results in the conversion of an agricultural building to two holiday lets, the change of use of an area of land to equestrian and the formation of an arena. This planning statement demonstrates that the development would result in an improvement to the character and appearance of the AONB and wider area.
- 7.3 The proposals are considered to be a sustainable form of development in accordance with both the NPPF and the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.
- 7.4 In light of the above, we respectfully request on behalf of our client that the Council approves the proposal.