

Planning Statement

for replacement barn at Dunns Pitts Farm, Hollis Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 2JY

Submitted by Dr Michael Keeler and Stephen Keeler

We aim to seek retrospective planning permission for development at the above property. We have replaced an old, dilapidated agricultural building (shown in the photographs submitted) into a slightly bigger building to create a safe and secure place to store and maintain tools, our produce, wood and valuable equipment to directly support an agricultural smallholding. This is to be a small family enterprise only. The previous barn had been in situ for many years. It was made of rusted metal and in a frail condition which meant it could no longer be used for its intended purpose. The previous rusted building, which the new barn directly replaces, was in the exact same location for decades. We have provided photographs and plans to show this.

The equipment floor plan sets out just a few of the things that we would need to store. This includes but is not limited to: axes, baskets, boxes, buckets, canes, chainsaw, chainsaw sharpener, chicken wire, compost bags, fencing materials, first aid kit, fuel for various tools, garden forks, garden hoe, hand shovels, hand towels, hay forks, trimmer, hoses, irrigation tap, labels, leaf blower, log splitters, oil, pick axe, plant nutrients, plant pots, produce packaging, rakes, saws, sledge hammer, rotavator machine, spades, strimmer, wheel barrows and a trailer. This equipment needs to be protected from wildlife and the weather which was not possible with the old structure as it was extremely frail and unsafe. The top level of the building provides us with extra storage for crops, and additional equipment. We have installed a small window on the top floor for light and ventilation. Produce will be stored in the barn to keep it dry, for quality purposes and for packaging. Garlic, onions, potatoes and squashes can be stored and cured on racks. Crops such as onions and apples will require dry, breezy and predictable storage conditions, which is why we installed a window which can be opened and closed. The barn will also be used for the seasonal storage of hay. We hope you can appreciate the volume and expense of the equipment we intend to acquire. This equipment would have no place to be stored if the barn did not exist. The floor plan shows that we were going to store a small compact tractor in the barn. We have decided against this as it is detrimental to the environment and will do the work by hand. When choosing various tools to purchase, we will be buying used equipment as this reduces the environmental impact of manufacturing new equipment.

The development of the barn will allow us to plant and grow crops which we could not do so before. Being able to carry out more horticultural and agricultural work will have a positive impact on the environment as it lowers greenhouse gas emissions. This will also help offset climate challenges and protect ecological systems. This development has no effect on any listed building or conservation areas and does not create a disturbance to anyone.

We are considering selling some of the organic produce locally to help make this project self-sustaining, and to demonstrate the wider issues of sustainability. This will be a family and friends run project with the focus being sustainable and providing eco-friendly food, habitat restoration, soil improvement and a well-maintained carbon trap.

When redeveloping the barn, we were mindful to choose a building material which was better for the environment as well as being suitable for our agricultural smallholding. Timber does not break down into an environmentally damaging material. It is a greenhouse positive product with a lower net environmental impact than most other building materials. This is one of the only building materials that contributes to the long-term reduction of carbon emissions which positively addresses climate change. A barn made of wood is not only pleasing to the eye but blends into the habitat and is sturdier and safer

than a metal construction. Unlike a metal building, strong winds will not rattle a wooden barn and it is also relatively easy to perform minor repairs.

To ensure that the impact on wildlife and plants was minimal when erecting the barn, we were careful not to remove hedging nor trees. As it replaced an existing structure this was not necessary. We have also planted fast growing hedges to further screen the building and protect surrounding wildlife. We will be planting additional trees in conjunction with the Woodlands Trust and Forestry Commission. We have set up bird houses with bird feed and intend creating a meadow with flowers such as Bugle, Nasturtium, Hardy Geraniums and Mint to for the benefit of bees and insects. Creating this additional meadow and woodland will provide food and shelter for wildlife and will increase their habitat. We will not use any pesticides when growing our fruit and vegetables to also help protect the surrounding wildlife on the farm as they upset the natural balance of the environment. We will only use ecologically friendly pest controls and biological fertilizers to help grow and control our crops which will also help reduce air and soil pollution. On multiple occasions, our neighbour, Mr Adam Beresford-Browne of Service Cottage Dunns Pitts Farm, has commented that the original rusting, metal building was an eyesore and that he was happy for the new wooden barn to be built. We have also agreed with him that we will paint the new barn green to ensure that it blends in with the surrounding environment.

We plan to have 15-20 designated sub plots within plots A-D, each providing a growing environment for a particular crop. As the smallholding progresses, each sub plot will hopefully then serve multiple crops per year as the soil quality improves and our skills and experience develop. For example, once the tomatoes or chilli peppers are harvested from plot B, something else can be planted in their place.

As members of the Woodland Trust, we plan to plant apple, fir, hornbeam and field maple trees in the rear most paddock (plot E) as a wildlife habitat and as an area for sustainable coppicing. We are expecting advice shortly from the Forestry Commission regarding a woodland management plan which will help us further. The proposed new trees will go some way toward offsetting the loss of habitats and trees that HS2 has caused only a few hundred meters away from us as well as soaking up carbon emissions. It is a very worthwhile project but we will obviously need the barn for storage.

With regard to the possibility of a bat roost in the old barn, we can confirm that there was no evidence of them being there. It would not have been an attractive habitat given its unstable nature and the fact that it was extremely drafty due to gaps in the structure. We would, however, be delighted to encourage bat nesting in the future and are currently investigating the possibility of putting up bat boxes.

In our view it would cause greater harm to the surrounding environment and wildlife if this building had to be removed. We understand that we may have inadvertently committed a planning breach and apologise for this but we hope that there may be a mutually acceptable route to regularise the position. Hedges, plants and habitats could potentially be destroyed if we had to remove the building. Noise and disturbance would also inevitably be caused to our neighbouring properties.

This project can only be of benefit to the locale. It will not however be feasible nor sustainable without a sheltered and secure structure to support these activities. It will have a positive long-term environmental impact in terms of flood risk prevention, soil improvement, nature recovery, climate change resilience, ammonia capture, sustainable organic food production and enhancement of air quality.

We hope that, based on the above, planning permission may be granted.

Dated 6 April 2022