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**Planning Supporting Statement**

**Down Farm, Wield Road, Preston Candover, RG25 2ER**

**The Construction of a New Grain Storage Building at Down Farm**

1. **Introduction**

As agricultural engineers specialising in agricultural buildings and on-farm grain storage, APECS Ltd has been asked to report and advise on and further improve the grain storage arrangements of the Moundsmere Farming business operating out of Down Farm.

The objective of the application is to obtain permission to allow the construction of a new grainstore at Down Farm to store arable crops harvested from the surrounding countryside.

**2.0 Site and Surroundings**

The proposed site is situated as part of an existing building group at Down Farm, comprising agricultural buildings. It is bordered by arable land and accessed by a private farm road.

Preston Candover is 0.9km to the North, Lower Wield 2.6km to the East, and Brown Candover 3km to the West

The farm has had a long history with stewardship schemes over the last 30 years, with a new implementation of a new more extensive plan with options that will help with flood risk mitigations and a more diverse wildlife population.

**3.0 Planning History**

No agricultural buildings have been erected on the farm site within the last 25 years.

**4.0 Proposed Development**

**4.1 Current Situation**

The farm produces approximately 6,000 tonnes per annum all of which is initially stacked in the buildings at Down Farm and the dairy buildings a mile up the road. As only 5,000 tonnes of immediate storage is available, and with limited ability to store grain for any time beyond the initial harvest period, most has to be immediately transported off site. The grain drier at Down Farm is used only when required to dry harvested grain, to minimise the use of fossil fuels used.

The UK’s agricultural policy sets requirements of agricultural storage buildings. Red Tractor Assured for food traceability and quality ensure storage buildings are fit for purpose. This classifies grain storage buildings into either short term or long-term storage depending on how well they meet requirements. The existing grainstores at Down Farm are not meeting the modern standards required for produce entering the food chain. With buildings of 1960 and 1979 vintage, Down Farm’s grain storage is in old buildings that are struggling to meet the criteria to be able to be used as even short-term storage.

With stores full to capacity at harvest, resulting in the need to sell and transport crops off farm very quickly, with the consequence of additional HGV traffic on the local road network at a time when roads are already very busy with both agricultural and holiday traffic.

As part of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), which replaced the Single Payment Scheme in 2015, new ‘greening’ rules apply to farmers. Part of these ‘greening’ rules focussed on crop diversification. Details on the BPS are available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). To sum up the requirements for farmers, if more than 10hectares of ground are in arable cropping rotation, a minimum of three different crops have to be grown. Whereas before some growers would be for example planting a full winter cereal rotation, now they are forced to diversify to other crops to keep within the boundaries of the ‘3 crop rule’. These additional crops require storage to be divided, further reducing capacity. Current cropping varieties in the farm’s rotation include winter wheat, winter barley, oil seed rape, winter oats, spring barley, beans, poppies and potatoes.

**4.2 Proposed Situation**

The proposal is to construct a new purpose built grainstore to store the farms arable crop produce. The site for the new building is in a corner of an agricultural field beside existing concrete yard area and existing buildings. Existing buildings on the site are all to be retained and continue in use for storage of seed, fertiliser, and machinery.

The basic design of the proposed building caters for the following functions:

* To provide modern, efficient grain storage for the Farm’s arable output.

*Advantages:*

* Sited adjacent to the existing farm buildings and infrastructure
* Good existing site levels
* Highway considerations - The ability to store a large proportion of the crop that is produced on the farm has many advantages. The outgoing movement of grain is spread throughout the year rather than during the harvest period, reducing lorry traffic on the roads during a time when the local roads are busy with both leisure and agricultural traffic.
* Global markets can be responded upon, allowing for the crop to be sold when its most advantageous
* A modern facility can be specially designed to cater for the arable crops grown by the farming company and to comply with increasingly stringent standards for the storage of crops destined for human consumption.

The proposed new grainstore will provide modern storage for approx. 2,000 tonne of grain. Enabling the business to store their produce for longer and market their crop most efficiently.

**5.0 Community Involvement**

It is anticipated that the applicant will fully engage with the Parish Council through the determination of the planning application. This will include attendance at the relevant Parish Council meeting and presenting the proposals should this be required, or making available any additional information which will assist the Parish in their consideration of the proposals.

In addition, the submission of this application does not signal the end of any potential dialogue between the applicant and the Local Planning Authority and other stakeholders. The applicant will therefore be happy to consider any reasonable request for amendments or clarification should these arise through the determination process.

**6.0 Examination of Principal Issues**

*Principles*

Local Plan and National Planning policy is broadly supportive of new agricultural buildings subject to a legitimate agricultural need. The agricultural need issues are further explained below.

*Use*

Agricultural is the dominant and preferred planning use within the countryside and as such is broadly supported by planning policy at all levels. The agricultural use of land does not require planning permission and therefore the use is not an issue for consideration here, only the building and other associated works.

*Design*

The proposal is to construct an up-to-date building to provide the Farm with additional grain storage facilities for arable crops.

The building will be designed and constructed to meet modern storage standards required for food production etc. Access to the grain storage areas will be through roller shutter doors positioned on the South-Eastern Elevation.

The proposed building will provide a total of 960sqm of floorspace. The building is a six bay structure.

Proposed roof and vertical cladding colours and materials have been chosen to match the adjacent buildings on the site and are common colours and materials for agricultural buildings.

*Layout*

The new building has been positioned adjacent to the existing yard with the roller shutters doors enabling access.

*Scale*

The proposed new building is a typical agricultural building in terms of both profile and appearance. Its overall height is 10.5m with an eaves height of 7.5m. This is similar to many other agricultural buildings and is the minimum height necessary for its intended use, which requires internal clearance height to allow the largest agricultural trailers to be tipped.

*Appearance*

We understand that there is a clear preference for rural buildings to blend with existing building groups and the roofs generally a muted colour. Adopting this guidance, the building will be clad as follows:

- New Grainstore

* Roof - Anthracite (dark grey)
* Vertical cladding – Juniper Green (dark green)

This material and colour combination is as on the existing buildings and is considered suitably muted for this rural location to minimise the visual impact of the development within its environment.

*Accessibility*

Vehicular access to the site remains unchanged.

**7.0 Conclusions**

The proposed new building is required for the essential continuation of agriculture, and is well designed and positioned adjacent to an established building group.

Subject to the imposition of appropriately worded planning conditions, the proposed development is considered acceptable and accords fully with Development Plan policy.

**8.0 Summary**

Full details of the proposed works are documented in the Application Drawings.

**We urge you to support this application, which is solely concerned with the necessary infrastructure improvement of this long established agricultural business. *Appendix 1 – Photographs***

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*Existing access from Wield Road.*

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*Down Farm Aerial View.*