

Design and policy statement in respect of the application for prior approval under Part Q, for the conversion of the existing Agricultural Barn at:

**Willows Farm,
Ginns Road
Stocking Pelham
Buntingford,
Hertfordshire
SG9 0GY**

Grid ref: 544657E 228353N

On Behalf of Ed and Fi Hudson.

December 2022.

1.0 Introduction

This application is for **Prior Approval Part Q Change of Use** of the existing agricultural barn from agricultural use to C3 residential use.

The Application is supported by evidence, drawings and photographs showing how the conversion of the barn would be achieved.

The building readily lends itself to adaptation.

The drawings which form part of the application illustrate how this would be achieved by the simple and minimal installation of windows, doors, water, drainage, electricity, gas or other services, to the extent reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse.

The roof and the external walls are retained, with the insulation, weathering and finishes installed internally.

Evidence is provided to explain and justify the proposal. Such evidence includes a simple chronology of ownership and use, mapping, reporting, owner statements and historic herd records.



The existing Agricultural Barn.

CURRENT LEGISLATION

Class Q, as it is now known, was first introduced on 6 April 2014 via the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment and Consequential Provisions) (England) Order 2014 (abbreviated to GPDO) as 'Class MB'.

It was renamed 'Class Q' in the subsequent Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 which came into force in April 2015. This statement takes into account current government legislation (2018).

Class Q allows the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses subject to certain conditions and limitations.

This application sets out how the existing agricultural building at Willows Farm qualifies for Class Q consent for conversion to C3 Residential Use.

The application is a notification for Prior Approval for the change of use from an agricultural building to a dwellinghouse and associated building operations, as permitted under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended).

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q allows the change of agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses. Class Q allows development consisting of –

- (a) a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order.
- (b) building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building referred to in paragraph (a) to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule.

In effect (a) allows the change of use and (b) allows operations reasonably necessary to convert the building to a dwelling.

QUALIFYING BUILDINGS AND LAND DESIGNATIONS.

The photographs and evidence demonstrate compliance with the qualifying criteria for Part Q approval.

This statement supports the application for Prior Approval.

This application seeks confirmation from the LPA that specified parts of the development are acceptable.

It is submitted that the last known use of existing barn was **solely** as an agricultural use on and before 20th March 2013, and had been an integral part of an established agricultural unit for a considerable period prior to that. See evidence to that effect.

The barn does not fall in either a Conservation Area, an Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) nor is it within a National Park.

The barn is not within the curtilage of a Listed Building although the nearby Willow Farm is a Grade 2 Listed Building. It is accepted that the barn does contribute marginally to the setting of the listed buildings and as explained below, the proposed design takes this into account.

The development does not constitute 'EIA development' for the purposes of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

Supporting evidence demonstrates that the development site was used solely for an agricultural use as part of an established agricultural unit prior to 20th March 2013.

The barn does not form part of an agricultural tenancy.

The proposal is for a single dwelling house of less than 450 sqm.

From a simple analysis of the planning history to Willow Farm, it can be seen that there is considerable evidence of other existing agricultural buildings within the farm being converted to C3 use. The LPA have recognised the conversions from Agricultural use to Residential use and this proposal represents a similar and consistent proposal.

The subject building is of an agricultural aesthetic and the balance of probability (supported by previous planning descriptions and decisions) clearly weighs in favour of the milking barn being an existing agricultural building within and as a part of the original farm.

It is submitted that this proposal for Class Q applies and meets the requirement in that the proposal consists of:

- (a) A change of use of the building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order.
- (b) Building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building referred to in paragraph (a) to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule.

As stated above, the supporting evidence demonstrates that the last known use of the building was as an agricultural building (milking barn) for the storage of cattle.

FLOORSPACE THRESHOLDS.

The existing barn is approximately 150 sqm., which is considerably less than the maximum threshold of 450 sqm.

This proposal is for a single dwelling house using only the existing structure. The conversion is contained within the existing volume and no extensions are proposed. As such, the development is entirely within the footprint and envelope of the existing agricultural building and the development would not result in the external dimensions of the building extending beyond the external dimensions of the existing building at any given point.

The 2018 amendment to Class Q makes a distinction between larger and smaller dwellinghouses and this proposal falls under a 'larger dwellinghouse'.

THE DESIGN

This conversion proposal confirms that the existing building is capable of functioning as a dwelling without substantial building works. The conversion works include:

- Replacement and installation of new windows
- Resizing of doors in their existing locations
- Retention of the roof
- Retention exterior walls
- Installation of internal partitions, insulation, weathering and flooring.
- Installation and replacement of water, drainage, electricity, gas and other services to the extent reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse. Existing services are available nearby (providing for the nearby houses) and connections are possible from within the site.
- Stripping out to enable the necessary implementation of building operations listed above.

The barn is a secure space and the works required to achieve the change of use are less than substantial

It is submitted that the existing building is suitable for conversion to residential use in that it is of 'permanent construction' benefitting from an existing solid floor, existing walls and an existing roof.

The location of the barn is set alongside existing residential dwelling houses and the access is shared with Willow Farm. It is entirely appropriate that the use of this building should be aligned in use with its neighbours.

The design and external appearance of the building will not be demonstrably or harmfully altered. In particular, the elevations which face the open countryside and the listed buildings are proposed to be largely unaltered. The building will remain recognisable as an agricultural building as is expected in the countryside. In planning terms, there will be no material changes to the appearance or aesthetic of the barn.

The design of the proposed conversion will complement the utilitarian origin of the building, and would remain compatible with the wider setting.



There will be no material harm to the setting of the nearby Grade II listed building.

The barn is sufficiently distant from the Listed building to have only a negligible impact.

The building is clad in timber making it weathertight, secure and visually subdued.

The barn sits well in the countryside. It is an established feature of the existing range of buildings and contributes positively to the setting and evolutionary story of Willow Farm.

The east elevation remains untouched with the exception of the addition of a ground floor bedroom window. Additional landscape and screening will reinforce the privacy of both buildings.



The milking barn is supported internally by a concrete portal frame and the building is capable of taking residential loadings without further adjustment.

The existing structure will be retained and the spaces and volumes will be as existing.

The existing building is of permanent construction and is readily capable of conversion by minimal intervention.



Access to the barn remains as existing, which is off street, established and secure.

The access drive will have the potential of use by agricultural vehicles removed by the change of use, thereby relieving the existing Willow Farm of the potential for disruption, loss of amenity and physical harm.



There is adequate space for parking, cycles and bins, and this is shown on the proposed site plan.

There is appropriate space for outdoor and private amenity space. This is minimised in order to prevent the unwanted spread of residential paraphernalia.

The transport and highways impacts of the development are neutral in that there is already an established vehicle access point. The proposal will remove heavy agricultural use from the site and add two cars, which in this location is a 'de minimis' reduction in traffic intensity.

There will be no noise impact as a result of the development. The change of use represents a 'de minimis' reduction in the potential for noise nuisance to nearby residential properties.

There are no contamination issues with this proposal.

There are no flood risk issues (Flood zone 1) with this proposal.

The location and siting of the existing building is sufficiently remote from nearby dwellinghouses as not to harm their residential amenity and privacy. The change to residential use will align all neighbouring uses to C3 and remove the potential for nuisance from agricultural activity.

LAND OWNERSHIP, USE AND CHRONOLOGY.

The subject agricultural building originally was built as a milking barn associated with Willow Farm.

The barn was probably constructed in the 1950's and it is typical of the concrete framed Atcost structures that proliferated during that time.

Willow Farm originally consisted of 25 acres and supported a Jersey Herd of cattle.

In 2000, Willow farm was purchased by the owners of the adjacent Walsh Farm and the land and buildings were merged into Walsh Farm.

In 2007, the current owners and Applicants, purchased Willow farm and 5 acres of agricultural land including the milking barn.

Since 2007, the milking barn became orphaned from the host farm and ceased to function as a working milking barn.

The milking barn has been vacant and unused since 2007 with its last known use as an agricultural barn in 2007.

The Jersey Herd remains part of Walsh Farm, along with the additional 20 acres purchased and merged in 2000.

As evidence, the following documents are also submitted as a material part of the application.

- a) Ordnance Survey maps predating 2013, showing the milking barn in place.
- b) Aerial photographs circa 2000 showing the barn in place.
- c) Home check survey dated 2007 referring to the milking barn.
- d) Agricultural holding number for both Willow Farm and Walsh Farm.
- e) Statement from current owners as to the chronology and use.

CONCLUSION

The regulations now contained in Class Q have been introduced by the government to allow agricultural buildings to be converted into dwellings without the need for full planning permission, subject to specified procedures being completed and subject to certain limiting provisions, and to consideration of relevant provisions.

In this case, the proposal is fully compliant with the procedural requirements and the relevant considerations. In particular, the Appellant has provided sufficient information with the notification to show that the building was last used for agricultural purposes as part of an established and recognised agricultural unit.

The building is well maintained, structurally sound and lends itself well to the proposed use.

The proposals to effect a compliant conversion are minimal and mostly internal. The proposed construction is sustainable and building will not materially changed from that which exists.

There is no harm to the setting of the Listed building

There is no harm to neighbour amenity and privacy.

There are no wider issues that would prevent consent being granted (e.g. contamination, ecology, Arboricultural, flooding etc.)

The proposal removes the potential for the reuse of the barn with more harmful activities in this location.

Parking, cycles and bins are accommodated.

The proposal provides additional housing.

The location is appropriate to the proposed use.

The access exists.

This statement, and the material which accompanied the Application, demonstrate that the proposal is acceptable in the context of the relevant requirements, and there is therefore no reason why prior approval should not be granted for the proposal.