

STOWE CASTLE FARM, MK18 5AB
CHANGE OF USE FOR ANCILLARY ANNEX ACCOMMODATION
SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Background

The applicant purchased this property as a domestic residence in September 2022. At the time there was a newly built stable block, which had been erected by the previous owner in the mistaken belief that it was covered by permitted development. The applicant has subsequently addressed that through a retrospective application, followed by a further application to convert the stable block into ancillary accommodation which was granted on December 7th, 2023. (23/03229/APP)

The application was made on the basis of the accommodation being available for use by the applicant's parents-in-law, now in their late-70s and living in Milton Keynes. However, the applicant now realizes that the conditions applied to the approval only allow for this use, whereas even when the conversion is complete, the parents-in-law may not be ready to move out of their current home, and at some future point, they clearly will pass. The application for change of use is therefore to allow the accommodation to be used flexibly, whether for long-term accommodation for the parents-in-law or holiday lets.

The accommodation

The stable block is located on the boundary line between the applicant's house and the adjacent Stowe Business Park, with a high hedge and 6 feet fence largely concealing the view in both direction between users of the Business Park and the accommodation. The block cannot be seen from Stowe Castle Road due to fencing, gates and other buildings. To the south/south-west, the accommodation looks onto the applicant's own field, beyond which there is arable land, currently farmed on a tenancy basis by the owners of Bycell Farm. To the east, the accommodation faces onto the main house of the applicant. There is no fencing or walls separating the two properties, and it is not the intention to erect any formal separation.

The accommodation will be totally dependent on the main house for all services, sharing an electricity supply, mains water supply and connecting into the surface water and grey waste plumbing, the latter routed through a Klargestor unit located in the south-eastern corner of the garden. Access will be through one of the two gates that face onto Stowe Castle Road, the single one closest to the accommodation being set back from the road by approximately 8 metres, allowing a car to be fully clear of the road whilst waiting for the gates to open. Once through the gate there is immediately an area at the northern end of the block (coloured in green on the General Arrangement drawing provided) which is currently grass, having been created at the same time that the stable block was built in 2021. The intention of the applicant is to return this area to gravel, matching the rest of the drive area that sits behind the fencing. This will allow two cars to be parked securely within the property with no impact to the available parking for the main house, which includes a triple garage as well

as the rest of the large driveway. The impact on vehicle traffic using Stowe Castle Road will be minimal, when put in context with the significant traffic generated by the activities of Akeley Wood School a short distance away, or the Stowe Castle Business Park next door.

Opportunity through Change of Use

The property is located close to the National Trust property at Stowe Gardens which attracted over 213,000 visitors during 2020/21. There is a wide network of public footpaths in the area which allow easy access from the property into Stowe Gardens, as well as other less well-known but still attractive locations like Akeley Woods. The surrounding area is generally flat, and very popular with cyclists, suggesting that for visitors who wanted to explore the area by bike, the accommodation would be ideally suited.

Slightly more distant are the historic market town of Buckingham, including the University (less than 3 miles), Clayton House, also owned by the National Trust (9 miles), Silverstone motor racing circuit and Milton Keynes with a range of attractions including the Bletchley Park museum, Snozone and Gullivers Land theme park (both also 9 miles).

The applicant is therefore confident that there is a demand for simple accommodation for visitors to the area, primarily for leisure purposes, but potentially also for visitors to the University and local businesses.

There are a number of local hotels in Buckingham, Brackley and Silverstone, but relatively little accommodation that would offer a simple self-catering option, particularly in a rural setting. The closest options are yurt and shepherd's hut-style offers in nearby Chackmore, Leckhampstead, Boycott Farm, and two studio/barn conversion style offers on the opposite side of Stowe. The applicant does not therefore see that allowing tourist accommodation in Stowe Castle Farm would compromise the position of these businesses, though they do demonstrate that Planning has viewed such developments within the curtilage of other residential properties as appropriate.

The applicant believes that allowing the change of use is consistent with the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, including the following:

Paragraph 6.32 – “There may be cases where built tourist accommodation may be justified in a more rural location through conversion of existing buildings. Such developments will increase the stock and variety of accommodation the area has to offer, can bring back into use buildings that may otherwise be left vacant, help maintain historic buildings and have a positive impact on the surrounding area.”

Paragraph 6.33 – “It would also be unduly restrictive to limit the development of existing accommodation in the countryside. In order to support existing businesses therefore, the expansion of built tourist accommodation and sites in a way that will improve the quality of the accommodation on offer and the appearance of the site, as long as there is no significant harm, to the surrounding area, may be allowed subject to the details of a proposal.”

Policy E8 – “Tourist accommodation in smaller villages, other settlements or in the countryside outside the Green Belt will be supported where:

- c. It would involve the conversion of existing buildings in accordance with policy C1
- d. It would be sustainable and accessible by a choice of transport modes
- e. The applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that the facilities are required to support a particular rural tourist facility or countryside attraction
- f. It would support sustainable tourism or leisure development, benefit the local economy and enhance community facilities, and
- g. The scale, design and use of the proposal is compatible with its wider landscape, surrounding environment or townscape setting and would not detract from the character or appearance of the area.”

Conclusion

The applicant believes that providing the option for the ancillary accommodation now approved at his home to be used as tourist accommodation is appropriate, presents no detrimental impact to neighbours, traffic load or the environment, and is consistent with the declared Planning Policy for the area.

Stephen Young

December 20, 2023