



Additional Information in Support of a Planning Application for Commercial Re-Use of a Former Agricultural Building (Incorporating Design & Access Statement)

Site Address:

Parsons Barn Farm
Shutford Road
Sibford Gower
Oxfordshire
OX15 5AD

Prepared for:

S G White Farming

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Commercial Re-Use – Parsons Barn Farm, Sibford Gower

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is submitted in support of a planning application relating to the commercial re-use of a former agricultural building, without alterations. The subject building forms part of Parsons Barn Farm, Sibford Gower. Following the grant of planning permission in 2018 (18/00759/F) to enable use of part of a former agricultural building for B8 storage use by Gentlevan Removals, the business of the occupier has continued to thrive and this has persisted throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. Gentlevan Removals now wish to take on additional space to meet the growing storage needs of the business and this application is hereby submitted to seek planning consent for the change of use of an adjacent building for B8 storage purposes.
- 1.2 Since Mr & Mrs White purchased Parsons Barn Farm circa 11 years ago, the subject building has been used in connection with the agricultural business however, its use has been limited as its construction makes it unsuitable for livestock farming. Prior to the current owners, the building was used by the previous owner in connection with an equestrian based business.
- 1.3 With forthcoming changes to agriculture resulting from Brexit and the delivery of the Agriculture Bill, it is essential for agricultural businesses to diversify to enhance non-farming income and spread income risk, particularly in light of a planned phasing out of farming subsidy payments in the next few years. The Applicant therefore seeks planning permission to enable Gentlevan Removals to continue to grow its successful business whilst retaining the business as a tenant at Parsons Barn Farm. If the additional space requirements of the business cannot be met, there is a risk that Gentlevan Removals could be forced to relocate, with subsequent detrimental impact on the income of the farm business.

2. The Site

- 2.1 Parsons Barn Farm is situated to the north-east of both Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris, and to the south-west of Shutford. A location plan is submitted with this application.
- 2.2 The farm extends to around 75 acres in all and is owned by Mr S G White who operates an agricultural business from the holding. In light of the scale of the farm and the returns from agriculture, it has been important for the business to diversify and this has led to use of one of the buildings by Gentlevan Removals for commercial purposes, in accordance with the permission under 18/00759/F, together with associated vehicle parking in connection with the commercial use. The growing demands of the tenant's business now results in a need for additional storage space.
- 2.3 The farm includes a range of buildings that were originally constructed for agricultural purposes, extending to around 1,896 sqm (20,408 sqft) in all. This application relates to only one building, extending to around 250 sqm (2,690 sqft).

3. Planning History

- 3.1 The planning history relevant to the subject building all relates to activities taking place at Parsons Barn Farm before the Applicant purchased the holding.
- 3.2 The subject building was originally constructed for agricultural purposes. Subsequently, the former owners of Parsons Barn Farm diversified their agricultural business to support their income from farming. This resulted in the operation of a commercial equestrian enterprise. This led to the submission of planning application 06/01069/F, a retrospective planning application for change of use from agricultural to equestrian. The application site included all of the buildings at the farm.
- 3.3 The change of use to equestrian was supported by the local planning authority. Neither the Parish Council or the local highways authority raised any concern with the application.
- 3.4 The previous use necessitated deliveries to site with large lorries. The photographs included with application 6/01069/F (available on the Cherwell DC website) give an indication of the level of activity, with palletised delivery and onward distribution of horse bedding and other equestrian stocks. The photograph below is taken from application 06/01069/F in 2006 and shows some of the former equestrian storage and distribution use, as well as the building which is the subject of this current application.



2006 Commercial Equestrian Use (Prior to Current Ownership)

- 3.5 The commercial use taking place at Parsons Barn Farm by Gentlevan Removals is considered to be a lot less intrusive than the former commercial equestrian use shown in the photograph above. All of the current storage takes place within the building space already approved (under 18/00759/F) and there is no external storage other than the removal vehicles, in accordance with the consent. The space within the consented building is full and Gentlevan Removals require additional, low key storage space.

4. The Proposal

- 4.1 This planning application seeks to accommodate the growth of the business of Gentlevan Removals by enabling the occupation of additional building space at Parsons Barn Farm. This is to meet the demands of customers to store furniture and personal belongings longer between moves.
- 4.2 It should be made quite clear that the level of activity on site will remain unchanged. Gentlevan Removals continue to operate the same number of vehicles, employ the same number of staff, and traffic movements to the site will remain in line with current levels and as allowed for under the previous consent. The need for additional storage space only arises as a result of the needs of customers for longer term storage.
- 4.3 This application therefore seeks consent for the re-use of the subject building for B8 storage use in connection with the business of Gentlevan Removals. The parking of the vehicles operated by the occupier is already approved under 18/00759/F.
- 4.4 The building comprises a steel portal frame, clad externally with dark green box profile steel cladding. The roof is grey fibre cement cladding. There is a roller shutter door to the southern gable elevation. The building is shown in the photographs below:



Subject Building – South Elevation



Subject Building – South & West Elevations



Subject Building – North & West Elevations



View along farmyard to Subject Building



View from farm entrance on Shutford Road

- 4.5 The proposed use will take place wholly within the building. No customers of Gentlevan Removals visit the site, all loading and unloading is undertaken by the staff of the business using the vehicles seen in the photographs and approved under the 2018 planning consent.

- 4.6 The proposed use is considered to have a very minimal impact on the surroundings. As can be seen in the photographs above, only the roof and gable elevations above eaves level can be seen from the road due to the contours and existing landscaping. This results in any use of the building going largely unnoticed from outside the ownership of the Applicant.
- 4.7 The general hours of operation of the business are Monday to Saturday, 07:30 to 18:00. There are currently seven staff, who arrive on site in the morning to collect the commercial vehicles and then return in the evening. The number of staff and the number of vehicles remains unchanged from the planning consent granted in 2018.

5. Planning Policies

- 5.1 Planning policies on both a local and national scale are generally supportive of the development that has taken place at Parsons Barn Farm. It is considered that the use can be accommodated without an adverse impact on the surrounding area and whilst supporting the income of a small agricultural business.

5.2 National Planning Policies

- 5.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that the Government is broadly supportive of development that helps to build a strong, competitive economy, and that supports a prosperous rural economy.

- 5.2.2 Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states:

"Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

- 5.2.3 Gentlevan Removals has been operating from Parsons Barn Farm for the last seven years or so. The business is successful and the application site works extremely well as a base location.
- 5.2.4 The commercial re-use of the subject building by Gentlevan Removals will make good use of an otherwise under-utilised building, and at the same time it provides a rent to the agricultural business operated by the Applicant, helping to support its finances.
- 5.2.5 The commercial use taking place is therefore considered to be in keeping with the principles and policy guidance contained in Paragraph 83 of the NPPF, in particular under (a) and (b).

5.2.6 It could further be argued that the proposal does, in fact, fall within the permitted development rights enabled under Class R of the General Permitted Development Order (as amended).

5.3 Local Planning Policies

5.3.1 We are not aware of any specific planning designations that affect the site.

5.3.2 The Cherwell Local Plan is aligned to national planning policy guidance and it is therefore considered that the proposal is broadly in line with local planning policies. This is reflected by the fact that the initial consent for commercial use by Gentlevan Removals was granted in 2018 (18/00759/F).

5.3.3 The commercial use is already taking place at Parsons Barn Farm within a consented building and this latest proposal seeks to enable the success of the removals business to be accommodated and to enable additional storage space to be occupied without visual alterations to the subject building, without an increase in vehicle movements and vehicle numbers and without an increase in staff numbers on site.

5.3.4 The building takes the appearance of a typical agricultural building and this will not change. It is therefore deemed visually acceptable in its surroundings and not out of character. The photographs enclosed illustrate that the building is already well masked from public view by the ground contours and existing landscaping. The building is also closely related to other agricultural buildings at the farm and the commercial use already taking place (with planning consent) therefore goes largely unnoticed.

5.3.5 The current proposal is also deemed to be acceptable from a highways perspective. In the previous consent (18/00759/F) the local highways authority did not object and stated:

"The proposals are unlikely to have any adverse impact upon the local highway network from a traffic and safety point of view, therefore I offer no objection."

5.3.6 On the basis the current proposal can be accommodated without intensifying use of the site access and local road network, it is hoped the local highways authority will also consider this proposal acceptable.

6. Design & Access Statement

6.1 Design

6.1.1 The Process & Use

The subject building is to be used for the temporary storage of domestic and commercial furniture and effects in connection with the business of Gentlevan Removals, a removals business assisting with domestic and commercial property moves. All proposed storage will take place internally within the subject building.

The removals business already makes use of a building and parks commercial vehicles at the application site under planning permission 18/00759/F.

6.1.2 Amount

The building forming the basis of this application extends to approximately 250 sqm.

6.1.3 Layout

The subject building is of regular shape and forms part of the existing complex of buildings. It therefore has a close relationship with other buildings on the site and its layout is in keeping with the surroundings.

6.1.4 Scale

The subject building is considered to be of a scale that is appropriate for the site and locality. The subject building has been identified to meet the increasing storage needs of the commercial business that is already based at the application site.

6.1.5 Landscaping

Due to ground contours and existing landscaping, the application site is relatively well screened. The use is low key and will take place within the confines of the subject building. No additional landscaping is therefore proposed.

6.1.6 Appearance

The building is of steel frame and clad externally with dark green box profile steel cladding. The roof is grey fibre cement cladding. It therefore takes the appearance of a typical steel framed agricultural building and is not out of keeping with the local area. No alterations are proposed to accommodate the use proposed.

6.2 Access

6.2.1 Parsons Barn Farm is accessible from Shutford Road. The application site is accessed via the main tarmac drive to the house and buildings. There are no changes proposed to the access and the local highways authority raised no objections when planning consent was originally approved.

6.2.2 There will be no increase in traffic movements as the scale of the removals business will remain unchanged. The application is submitted as a result of the demands of customers for longer term storage, therefore storage space on site is not being freed up as quickly, resulting in a need for more storage space.