

Supporting statement for erection of new agricultural barn

One aspect of the application relates to the erection of a new agricultural barn. The applicants have purchased 5 acres of land surrounding the barn, which they intend to continue to use for agricultural purposes. At present, there is no barn to support this parcel of land.

Policy AG2 of the 1996 Cherwell Adopted Local Plan states that barns should normally be sited so that they do not intrude into the landscape or into residential area. It goes on to say that where appropriate, a landscaping scheme should be included as part of the application and materials of construction should be chosen so that the development fits sympathetically into its rural setting. Paragraph 28 of the NPPF advocates a positive approach to sustainable new development in rural areas and promotes the development of agriculture.

Design of the Barn

The proposed barn measures approximately 144 sq m (12m x 12m). Two stables and a tack room are provided to the northern side and livestock pens are provided to southern side. A central access/storage area is proposed. The barn would be of modern and functional design and would be constructed from blocks and timber boarding to the walls and profile sheeting to the roof. These materials accord with the suggestions within the SPG titled 'Planning Advice for Farmers – Siting and Design of Farm Buildings'.

Siting of the Barn

The barn has been sited alongside an existing boundary hedgerow. It has also been sited to the west of the barn conversion. Not only does this siting have visual benefits in terms of clustering the built form and reducing the spread of buildings over the open countryside, but it has added benefits for surveillance and care of the livestock and also

minimises areas of hardstanding, as both the dwelling and barn will be served by the same access.

A public footpath runs to the south of the site, beyond the hedgerow. A more distance public footpath runs to the north-east. Public views would therefore be possible of the new barn, however it is agricultural in form and designed for purpose and therefore a structure which people would expect to see in a rural location.

To further absorb the development into the landscape, further soft landscaping is proposed to the north of the barn and details of this are shown on drawing 5560-03b.

Nature of agricultural activities

The applicants have provided the following statement setting out their agricultural activities, which clearly demonstrates a need for the barn and establishes why the scale and design of the barn has been proposed.

Introduction

We have kept rare breed sheep for the last 25 years, first a Soay flock, then Southdown sheep and for the last 10 years we have developed a lineage of Kerry Hill sheep. In addition we have kept horses for 30 years having no less than two over the last 25 years. We have run the sheep and horses together on the 16 acres of our former land at Lower Brailes where we have used a 60' x 40' steel framed barn agricultural building for stabling, lambing the sheep and accommodating our farm machinery. The flock varied between 10 and 50 breeding ewes with the land maintained under the Government's Higher Level Stewardship scheme. Our objective was to promote species rich grassland supporting wild flowers, insects and birdlife. No fertilizer was used for over 20 years other than that naturally left by the sheep. We cleared the horses' droppings.

Our objective was achieved and our Natural England advisor praised the work in maintaining what is now only 2% of the species rich grassland left in England since the last war.

Our Plan for Haynes Barn

We have purchased 5 acres that has Haynes Barn at its centre with the land on the east, north and south sides of the barn. It

has been used to grow arable crops for many years. We have bought "Cotswold Wild Flora" seed from Cotswold Seeds in Moreton-in-the-Marsh for sowing in the spring of 2016. It will create a traditional wildflower meadow of sufficient standard and quality to support up to 20 breeding ewes (the recommended stocking rate being 4 breeding ewes per acre) and our two horses. We will use no fertilisers and take a crop of hay off 2.5 acres of the land after 15 July each year (once the wild flowers have gone to seed) to feed the stock throughout the winter months. The haymaking process will automatically reseed the land. We will also plant a range of traditional mixed hedgerows and a number of indigenous broadleaf trees.

We wish to build a traditional steel framed agricultural building of circa 40' x 40' to lamb the sheep indoors, away from predation by foxes, from February to April annually, to store our hay and to stable our two horses. We also wish to keep our tractor and farm machinery, saddles, bridles, rugs and feedstuff in the building for safekeeping and away from the rigour of the weather. Importantly we want to ensure there is no ugly farm equipment in sight of those, including ourselves, who wish to enjoy the scenery and environment. We want to keep a clean and tidy aspect for all.

Conclusion

In short, we wish to farm our smallholding ethically and sensitively in keeping with the local environment. It is our wish to establish a modest functional agricultural building to support our work in keeping our livestock and promoting wild flowers, insects and birdlife.

Andrew and Josephine Finding
30 Sep 15

Conclusions

The applicants are experienced smallholding farmers and knowledgeable in agricultural practices. Their farming practice also provides wider ecological benefits. The proposed barn is modest in size, but appropriate in design and scale to serve the needs of the holding. It has been sited to minimise the visual impact on the open countryside whilst also logically sited in close proximity to the dwelling for functional reasons. The barn is considered to fully comply with Policy AG2 and paragraph 28 of the NPPF.