



PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: Planning Committee South
BY: Head of Development
DATE: 25 April 2017
DEVELOPMENT: Siting of temporary rural workers dwelling; erection of agricultural building; alterations to access.
SITE: Moralee Farm Haglands Lane West Chiltington West Sussex
WARD: Chanctonbury
APPLICATION: DC/16/1866
APPLICANT: Ms Claire Holloway

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: More than eight letters of representation contrary to the Officer's recommendation have been received.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant planning permission subject to conditions

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This application was originally considered at Planning Committee South on 20 December 2016. At the committee meeting Members deferred determining the application to allow for additional information to be submitted by the applicant in relation to:
- (i) justification for the particular location within the site chosen for the agricultural barn;
 - (ii) further information and clarification on the business plan.
- 1.2 The previous committee report is appended to this report.

2. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

- 2.1 Following the December committee meeting further clarification was sought. The applicant's agent has stated that with regards to the justification of the location of the proposed barn that the option to locate the farmstead close to the entrance onto Southlands Road was considered and rejected by the applicant for the reasons set out below:-

- “1. *The Southlands Road access is difficult for vehicles in that the land falls away from the road. It would have been necessary to build a ramp to provide a level access.*
- 2. *It is good practice to access a site from the road which carries less traffic. Southlands Road is busier and vehicles are travelling at a higher speed.*

3. *The visibility onto Southlands Road is limited. The Haglands Lane entrance is flat and with good visibility. The speed and volume of traffic is lower on Haglands Lane. In highways safety terms, Haglands Lane is clearly safer.*
4. *The Haglands Lane entrance has always been the main entrance onto the land - the Southlands Lane entrance was not actually open when the applicant first looked at the land and the agents arranged for a local farmer to open it up.*
5. *The trees on either side of the entrance are close together. It would be necessary to fell trees to make the access suitable.*
6. *There is no natural boundary hedging to shield the view of the barn and house from nearby residents. Whale Farm has an uninterrupted view of this land, as does the bungalow next to it and Sussex Roses.*
7. *It was assumed that services (inc. mains drains) were unlikely to be available close to the Southlands Road entrance. As it is beyond the run of houses it would be more expensive and disruptive to put in. Haglands Lane was obviously much easier with services available.*
8. *Functionally, its not such as good a position for the barn in that it would be a longer route to bring the animals from the fields behind Haglands Copse. The siting of the barn at Haglands Lane allows more land to be available for grazing rather than circulation.*
9. *From its site on the higher land the proposed dwelling has line of sight over most of the land and most of the length of the footpath, which is important in terms of animal welfare and security.*
10. *Finally, the land at the bottom of the shallow valley is wet and more prone to waterlogging/flooding as it takes the run-off from the surrounding hills and road. We also think there might be an underground spring here.”*

2.2 The applicant has also provided further detail with regards to the need for the proposed barn which is also set out below:-

“The size and height of the proposed building is entirely appropriate in the context of the alpaca breeding enterprise. This is a matter that has been tested at two planning appeals on similar enterprises at Holly Tree Farm, Northleigh, Devon (PINS ref. APP/U1105/C/06/1143702) and at Ashdale Farm, Dalwood, Devon (APP/U1105/A/08/2093005). In both cases, the Inspector found in favour of the appellants. In the case of Ashdale Farm, the proposed building was almost identical in size and height.

To be clear, the building is not intended to be used to make wine. The grape harvest will be taken to an existing winery to be made into wine. The proposed building is principally intended to used in connection with the alpaca breeding enterprise and in connection with the cultivation of the vineyard - not for the processing of the grapes into wine.”

2.3 With regards to the Members request for more information regarding the proposed Business Plan the following statement was submitted by the applicant’s agent;

“The well-established financial test is set out in the (now revoked) PPS7, Annex A, paragraph 12. The applicant is required to demonstrate that the enterprise 'has been planned on a sound financial basis'. I would remind you that the business plan was prepared by Tony Coke of APA Consultants Limited. Tony is a very experienced agricultural consultant who acts for both applicants and local planning authorities. The business plan has been reviewed for the Council by Alan Bloor of Reading Agricultural Consultants. RAC are one of the leading agricultural consultancies in the UK, advising the Government, many local planning authorities and farming clients. Alan Bloor has over 30 years relevant experience. Both Tony and Alan are satisfied that the enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis. No significant challenge has been raised as to the scope of the business plan or the figures included in the budgets, or the assumptions that underpin those figures.”

2.4 Further information has been received from West Chilton Parish Council raising concerns with regards to the need and size of the proposed barn, and the soundness of the business plan. In response to these points the Councils Agricultural Adviser has advised as follows:-

1. Need for 24 hour supervision – It was previously noted that APA Consultants had produced an assessment of the essential need for the alpaca enterprise at Moralee Farm, this covered breeding, birthing, security and day-to-day management of the enterprise, and this assessment was agreed. Legislation requires that the applicant has a duty of care for animal welfare and that the animals' needs are not compromised.

It remains the view that specific issues create an essential need for a worker to be readily available at Moralee Farm at most times for the projected number of 32 breeding females, this included, mating, abortions and still births, birthing, rearing, health, unforeseen emergencies and security of the site. The applicant has produced a number of appeal decisions where Inspectors have considered and accepted the functional needs of alpaca enterprises where the unit comprises of 25 plus breeding females.

2. The size of the barn – The proposed agricultural building would provide shelter for the livestock during periods of inclement weather, handling area whilst carrying out stock tasks, or isolating animals when required. In addition the building would be used for storage of agricultural machinery, feed and fodder and that part of the building would be used for feed preparation, wash down and sterilisation of equipment and would house a small farm office. The proposed building measures 22.5m x 12m providing floor area of 270m².

This would be able to hold the projected number of animals (116) at any one time if and when required. Alpacas require a floor area of approximately 1.8m² per animal (total area required 208m²). Alpacas require supplementary feed in the form of hay throughout the year equivalent to approximately 300kg per head per year per adult animal. The applicant will need to store approximately 25 tonnes of hay in addition to any bedding, concentrates or minerals. A medium sized tractor will require 40m² to allow for safe manoeuvring and a quad bike 20m². The size of the proposed building is considered reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture at Moralee Farm.

3. The lack of detail in the applicant's business plan – It was previously considered that the applicant's business report was sound and robust. The business plan demonstrated over a seven year period how the applicant's alpaca and vineyard would be developed over the next few years, and follows a recognised format used by many agricultural consultants.

The business plan indicates that by the end of year 3 the alpaca enterprise will be in profit and that the combined income in year 4 will provide sufficient profit to pay for the applicant's unpaid labour, which is calculated at £15,000 per annum and a return on capital invested (excluding land). In agriculture a notional return on capital invested is generally accepted as 2.5%. The current level of capital invested by the applicant is some £117,000 which amounts to a £2,925 per annum. This will increase as further capital is invested in the business. In addition to this a notional rental charge for land at £150 per hectare is added, which amounts to £1,440. It is clear that the projected figures from year 4 of the applicant's business plan these notional charges are met. The success or failure of the proposed development will be determined by the end of year 3 and more likely by the end of year 4 (*and this reflects the temporary consent being sought*).

Any further items, which have previously been suggested as necessary, would not normally form part of a business plan, but are more commonly found in a set of trading accounts which the applicant will have to produce on an annual basis and would form part of any assessment in the future for a permanent dwelling on the site.

4. The price of alpacas - The latest Agricultural Budgeting and Costing Book (83rd Edition) November 2016 provides details of Alpaca enterprises as 'Alternative Livestock'. It notes that there are at least 15,000 animals in the UK in herds ranging from 2 to 2,000 animals. It also notes that current prices for breeding females are up to £5,000 per head and that stock values have remained robust. The figures used by the applicant in the business plan are realistic.
- 2.6 It is considered, taking into consideration the details submitted and the clarification provided by the Council's Agricultural Adviser, that the proposed barn would be reasonably required for the purposes of agriculture on the unit, and that a temporary agricultural workers dwelling would be realistically required for the welfare of the livestock on the unit. It is considered that the provision of a condition requiring the removal of the barn if it is no longer required for agricultural purposes would be fair, reasonable and practicable in this instance, and that a temporary permission for an agricultural worker's dwelling would enable the business an opportunity to establish itself.
- 2.7 It is therefore considered after taking into consideration the matters set out in the report above, and the committee report dated 20 December 2016, that the application complies with policy 10, 20, 26, 33 and 34 of the HDPF.
- 2.8 The recommendation therefore remains as set out in the attached reports, to approve planning permission.

Background Papers: DC/16/1866