

James Gardner  
Planning and Development  
Dacorum Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Marlowes  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire HP1 1HH

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

16<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (by email)

Dear Mr. Gardner,

**Application No. 20/02464/FUL**  
**Proposed change of use of existing agricultural stable block**  
**into residential dwelling**  
**Six Acres Farm, Hollybush Lane, Flamstead, Hertfordshire, AL3 8DG**

CPRE Hertfordshire have concerns regarding this proposed change of use in the Green Belt adjacent to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The documentation accompanying the application raises a number of questions on which the Council will have to satisfy itself before determining this application.

According to the Planning Statement, the stated aim of the proposal is to convert the existing derelict stable to a residential unit to meet a requirement for on-site residential accommodation to support the associated land operation. Derelict buildings do not meet the requirement for 'permanent and substantial construction' in National Planning Policy Framework para. 146(d). The adjacent barn (allegedly under construction) will be used for storage and to help manage livestock.

A number of relevant points arise from that statement which are not explained in the application documentation:

- (i) What is the associated land operation? The documentation does not say, though there is reference to livestock.
- (ii) If so, what livestock and why do they need an on-site twenty-four hour presence by the landowner? No farm management plan is presented.
- (iii) Why has the approved barn not been built in the intervening period and why has the stable been allowed to fall into dereliction?
- (iv) What has changed over the eleven years since the as yet unbuilt barn was approved to require this development now?

(v) Was the stable for genuine agricultural use or private equine use, as this affects the use categories which will be changed?

All of these points will have to be ascertained by the Council before determining the application.

To return for a moment to the barn approved under Application no. 4/01021/09/FUL. It is stated that this barn was intended to fulfil the agricultural operations for the site in a fit for purpose building. That application was approved in 2009 and the barn is not yet built. The applicant says that "A meaningful start was made to the construction of the barn in 2011" yet Google Earth images after that date show the ground on which the barn is to sit undisturbed and the existing barn and coop which were to be removed within 3 months of the commencement of the new barn still in place. Again the Council will have to verify the status of the barn before determining the application.

We assume that what is being requested here is approval for conversion of an existing barn on the site under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 from Class Q to Class C3. Such a change of use is not permitted by Class Q if the site was not used solely for an agricultural use as part of an established agricultural unit on or before 20 March 2013, which is why it is essential for the Council to establish whether the use of the stable was genuinely agricultural, or private equine.

Section Q2 (e) of the Act requires the Local Planning Authority to determine whether the location or siting of the building makes it otherwise impractical or undesirable for the building to change from agricultural use to a use falling within Class C3.

This site is currently subject to an Article 4 Direction, as is shown on the Council's GIS mapping. This controls development in sensitive areas such as this, which is immediately adjacent to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is no recognition of either the Article 4 Direction or the proximity of the AONB in the documentation.

In terms of intensification of development in the Green Belt, the conversion of the stables in itself will cause no harm, but it will bring with it domestic paraphernalia which will impact on openness. The Council will have to decide what weight to ascribe to that.

On sustainability, the site is some distance from social, retail, health and educational services and will therefore be car dependent. The applicant says that on approval they will appoint "a specialist engineer in order to develop a self-sufficient dwelling ... Subject to this appointment and further site investigation, the aim will be to achieve a Zero Carbon development." That is not sufficient to meet the criteria set down in the NPPF. The building as currently presented is not demonstrably environmentally sustainable. It would be



inappropriate to approve it on the assumption that it may become so in the future. The applicant needs to demonstrate that it is so before determination of the application.

Consequently, in our view, this application raises more material issues than it answers and should be rejected.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving