

CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference: 18/00534/FUL
Date of Inspection: 31/01/2018
Date site notice posted: 31/01/2018
Date of press notice: N/A

POLICIES

Local Context: The adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) 2015, namely Core Policy (CP) 1 - Settlement Strategy, CP 2 - Delivery Strategy, CP 34 - Additional employment land, CP 48 - Supporting Rural Life, CP 50 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity, CP 51 - Landscape, CP 57 - Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping, CP 61 - Transport and New Development

National Context: National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012, Planning Practice Guidance

ISSUES

The principle issues to be assessed in the determination of this application are: the principle of the development, visual impact, highway issues, ecology and impact on neighbour amenity.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no planning history of relevance to this address.

REPRESENTATIONS

Keevil Parish Council: Supportive but added that "*Councillors had concerns about any future expansion of the site and access to the site from a very narrow road*"

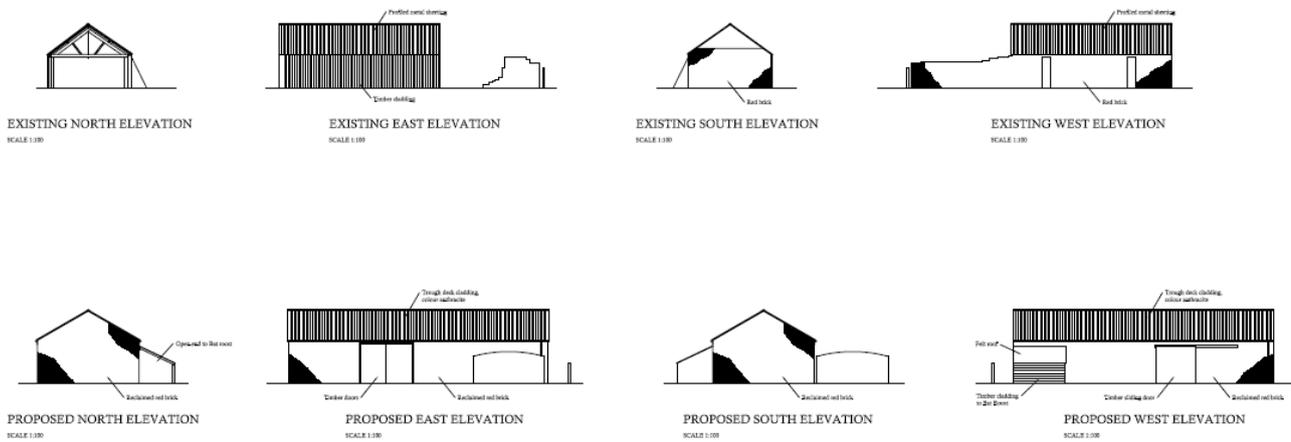
Wiltshire Council Highways: No objection subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Ecology: No ecological objection to the principle of the development proposals but requested a Phase 2 bat survey – which was submitted on 11 June and the Council's ecologist was asked to review it. No comments were received after 5 weeks.

Third Party representations: The application was advertised by neighbour notification and by the display of a site notice. No third party representations were received.

ASSESSMENT

Proposal: This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of an existing redundant agricultural building/barn to be replaced by a building for B8 storage use. The building to be demolished is a single storey, predominately red brick building, surrounded by an area of hardstanding, in the open countryside to the north-west of Bulkington. With reference to the submitted planning statement, the existing building is no longer needed or suitable for agricultural purposes. However, the applicant advises that there is a substantive storage requirement for the agricultural element of their business which includes installing slurry storage tanks, rainwater harvesting tanks and grain silos. The replacement building would be larger than the current building but would not extend significantly increasing form 3.7m high to 4.3m in height (as illustrated on the insert plan included on the following page).



The application is supported by a Phase 1 and 2 bat surveys. The first concluded within paragraph 4.1.3 that the *“barn is a confirmed bat roost for lesser horseshoe bat”* and the Phase 2 bat survey which was submitted to the Council on 11 June 2018 sets out baseline information contains mitigation and enhancement measures pursuant to the identified protected species. It is noted that the phase 2 survey was completed by a Natural England licensed bat worker and chartered environmentalist who is also a full member of CIEEM.

Principle of the development: Whilst the proposed replacement storage unit would be located within open countryside, due regard has to be given to the fact that an existing agricultural building is currently located on the site.

As referred to within the submitted planning statement, officers appreciate the potential for converting the existing building under Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 which permits a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from agricultural use *“to a flexible use falling within Class A1 (shops), Class A2 (financial and professional services), Class A3 (restaurants and cafes), Class B1 (business), Class B8 (storage or distribution), Class C1 (hotels) or Class D2 (assembly and leisure) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order”* subject to meeting the limits and criteria set out within Class R.

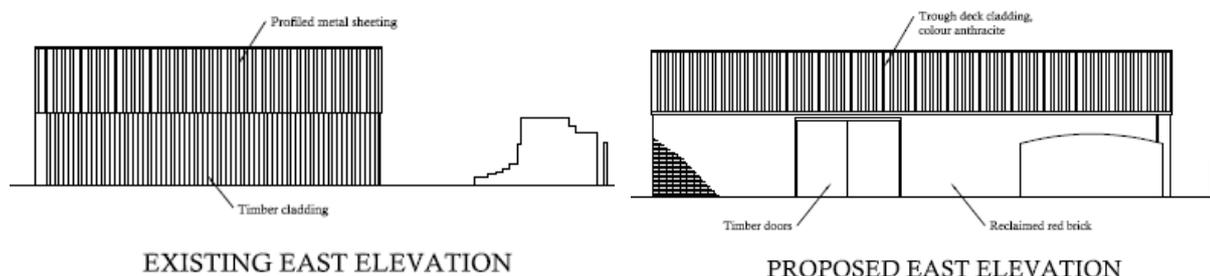
Following the above provisions, officers appreciate that the current building has an area which does not exceed the 150 square metres size limit stated under the conditions for Class R, and it is reasonable to assume that the current building could be converted into a flexible use, including a B8 use, under permitted development rights without the need to gain full planning permission.

It is noted that Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that local and neighbourhood plans should *“support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”*.

Officers are satisfied that the proposed new building’s increased size, height and scale would be ‘well designed’ and would not harm the wider character or appearance of the area. As such it is considered that the replacement building would be acceptable in principle. Officers do consider it reasonable and necessary to restrict the use of the proposed building to B8 use in the interests of good planning.

Visual Impact: The proposed replacement building would be larger than the existing building by approximately 200m³; however, as shown by the submitted drawings, the existing building was once much longer and would of had a length akin to that proposed for the replacement building (a length of approx. 15.35m). Mindful of this, officer are content that the proposed replacement building would be an acceptable size and scale.

The proposed replacement building would be visually similar to the existing building as shown by the extracts below and would be constructed from reclaimed red brick under a grey trough deck clad roof which is considered to be acceptable in this location as it would retain an agricultural appearance:



Mindful of the bat interest, the application proposal also involves the creation of a replacement night roost habitat that would comprise of a timber framed, open-fronted lean-to, attached to the rear of the building. This structure is considered to be of an acceptable size and scale, which would not harm the appearance of the open countryside.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed replacement building would be of a high standard of design, which would integrate well within its rural setting in the open countryside and would therefore comply with CP 57.

Highway Issues: The site is located on a classified road (C233) which is subject to a 60mph speed limit and seeks to use the existing access which currently has a single gate that opens out onto the public highway, meaning that vehicles could not pull off of the highway prior to opening the gate. As this application seeks permission for a change of use from a redundant barn to a larger storage unit, the Council requires assurance that the existing access would be suitable for the proposed new use.

A revised site plan was submitted in March 2018, which illustrated an extension to the existing access apron into the site, with the access gate being repositioned to allow vehicles to park off the highway whilst the gate is opened. Wiltshire Council highways state that although the visibility to the north could be improved with the removal of some vegetation, the proposed changes at this access would be a considerable improvement to the existing situation on site. Furthermore, it is not considered that the proposal would generate a considerable increase in vehicle movements, as access to the building would only be required as and when throughout each year. As such, no highway objection is raised, subject to conditions being attached to any permission granted.

Impact on Ecology: This application has been supported by Phase 1 and Phase 2 bat surveys, both produced by Malford Environmental Consulting. The Phase 1 bat survey concluded that the existing barn was a roost for the lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*). It is reported that it is “*highly likely that the barn interior is being used as an occasional summer night roost for an individual or very small numbers of bats*”; which was confirmed as part of the Phase 2 survey.

In line with bat mitigation guidelines, the provision of a replacement night roost habitat has been put forward as part of this application with the addition of a single bat roosting brick, which would be integrated into the fabric of an external wall of the proposed building to provide a roosting habitat for crevice-dwelling bat species such as pipistrelle species as enhancement. A license form Natural England would be required separate to this consent and in the interests of ecological safeguarding, a condition is required to bind the bat survey recommendations to the consent.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions