



Design & Access Statement

PROPOSAL:
CONTINUED USE OF FORMER
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING
FOR THE STORAGE OF A PRIVATE
COLLECTION OF MILITARIA

SITE:
WOODFIELD FARM
WANDLEYS LANE
EASTERGATE
W SUSSEX PO20 3SE

APPLICANT:
MR & MRS HUGHES

The Design Component – Amount of Development

Retrospective consent is here sought to use an existing cattle building at the holding for the storage of the applicants' private collection of militaria. The building measures approximately 585m².

Context Appraisal

The application building is one of two agricultural buildings located to the southeast of Woodfield Farm. Woodfield Farm is a small agricultural holding located on the south-eastern side of Wandleys Lane, in a rural position. The Farm is approached via an access road running between the two frontage residential properties, Woodfield Place and Nuthatch. Woodfield Farmhouse sits in a recessed position behind Woodfield Place. The farmstead and associated land extend beyond the dwelling and are accessed via a track that runs along the southern boundary of the holding.

In addition to the application building, there is a further general purpose open fronted agricultural building located immediately to the west. There is a yard area to the east and the associated land holding comprises two fields measuring approximately 3.7 hectares.

The nearest neighbouring site is a travellers' site immediately to the south of the application building.

The building is a modern, steel framed structure constructed in a mix of blockwork and profile cladding. It has main doors on both end elevations.

The applicants have purchased the holding with a view to running a small horticultural unit and, to this end, were recently granted planning consent for a large polytunnel with an associated parking area. They require a general storage building for associated agricultural equipment and this is adequately provided for by the open bayed storage building abutting neighbouring the application site. The former livestock building is surplus to agricultural requirements and was erected by the previous owner at a time back in the 1970s when Woodfield Farm was run as an intensive beef cattle rearing operation run in association with other rented land in the area.

Mr Hughes has a collection of military equipment and this includes a number of vehicles and other equipment. He requires a storage facility for this collection and the former livestock building would provide sufficient space to accommodate this at Woodfield Farm. Some of his collection has already been accommodated within the application building.

Planning Policy Context

Advice relevant to this proposal is contained within the NPPF 2012. Section 3 of the document is entitled, 'Supporting A Prosperous Rural Economy'. It requires planning policies to support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. In order to promote a strong rural economy Development Plans should, inter alia:

- Promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based businesses.

A strong support for the commercial re-use of former agricultural buildings is evident at national level. This is embodied in the most recent changes to the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). By statutory instrument that came into force on the 30th May 2013 Class M Part 3 was introduced to the General Permitted Development Order. This allowed for the submission of Prior Notification applications on agricultural buildings of between 150m² to 500m² where the change of use sought fell into a variety of commercial Use Classes, including A1, A2, A3, B1, B8, C1 and D2. Under the Prior Notification procedure, Planning Authorities only had the opportunity to consider limited matters, including transport and highways impacts, noise impacts, contamination risks and flooding risks.

In this case, the Prior Notification procedure cannot be followed as the change of use has already partly been undertaken and because the floor area is marginally above the specified limit.

The relevant Development Plan for the area comprises the saved policies in the Arun District Local Plan 2003. The most important policy within this Plan is **DEV1**, which concerns the conversion of rural buildings for industrial or business uses. The policy is reproduced in full overleaf.

Countryside Development

POLICY DEV1 Conversion of Rural Buildings for Industrial or Business Uses

Proposals for conversion of buildings for industrial or business uses outside the built up area will be permitted provided that:-

- (i) the building is structurally sound, of permanent construction, and capable of conversion without rebuilding or significant alteration or extension;
- (ii) the resultant building and use will not have an adverse effect on the rural character of the area in respect of the nature and level of activity likely to be generated, including the resultant traffic level;
- (iii) the resultant building is sympathetic to its setting in terms of form, bulk and visual design;
- (iv) where the building is of historic or architectural importance, there is no adverse effect on the character and appearance or features of architectural or historic interest, internally and externally, which the building possesses, or its setting; and
- (v) the traffic to be generated by the new use can be safely accommodated by the site access and the local road system.

A structural survey may be required to demonstrate that the building is capable of conversion.

Provision for bats and/or owls should be incorporated into the scheme.

Where necessary, planning conditions will be imposed removing relevant Permitted Development Rights under the General Permitted Development Order.

All large scale proposals must be accompanied by a landscape assessment.

Evaluation

The application building is a large, former livestock building for which there is no longer an agricultural need. The former owner had run a large-scale beef cattle enterprise from the holding but he retired from farming some while ago and the new owners do not wish to run a livestock operation from the Farm. In any event, the Farm always had a limited land holding (see the submitted location plan) and, clearly, an intensive livestock operation is not possible on such a small Farm.

Rather than leave the cattle building empty, Mr Hughes wishes to use it for the storage of his private collection of militaria equipment. This is, strictly speaking, not a commercial use as it is not run as a business but is, rather, a hobby. He has a number of pieces of military equipment and machinery, which require dry storage and the application building offers an ideal solution to his requirements.

For the most part, the collection would remain in situ and the use will generate no traffic movements on a normal day-to-day basis. Occasionally, a piece of equipment may be driven from the barn if the applicant is attending an event or show. However, traffic movements would be minimal and only very occasional. This would compare favourably to the time the holding was an intensive livestock unit when large, agricultural vehicles would have been travelling up and down the access track on a daily basis.

The storage use would not generate any noise and it is intended that all equipment would be stored within the application building, thereby protecting visual amenity.

The re-use of a modern, agricultural building, such as this, is ideally suited to a bulky storage use where traffic movements to and from the building would be limited. Planning policy is generally supportive of the re-use of the building for storage purposes as evidenced by saved policy DEV1 of the Arun District Local Plan 2003 and general advice regarding the re-use of rural buildings contained within the NPPF 2012.

No substantive changes to the external appearance of the building are proposed, although general repairs and maintenance will be undertaken in order to keep the building wind and weather-tight. The needs of this small agricultural holding for general purpose agricultural storage would be met by the newer, open-bayed structure located adjoining the application building. The applicants' small horticultural business to be run from the holding would have its reasonable needs met by this building, which would also act as storage facilities for equipment and machinery needed to maintain the small area of associated pasture.

It has been acknowledged that the access track at the front of the site runs between a relatively narrow gap between two frontage residential properties. However, this storage use will create minimal traffic movements with the collection staying in situ for the most part. This use would imply far fewer traffic movements than were associated with the farmstead when it was run as an intensive livestock unit.