

Pirton Parish Council



Parish Clerk:
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Mr Thomas Howe  
Planning and Conservation  
NHDC  
Letchworth Garden City

16 October 2024

Dear Mr Howe,

Re: West Lane Farm, Pirton 24/02074/PNQ

Thank you for consulting the Pirton Parish Council.

The Pirton Parish Council objects to the grant of planning permission.

Councillor Rowe recently wrote to Shaun Greaves on the 8th October, in advance of our formal response, asking that this application should be checked against the overall Class Q aggregate limit for the site. Please could that be included as part of our response.

On the last application, we wrote on 21st July 2021 that we believed that this limit may have been exceeded and urged NHDC to verify whether previous development under Reference 18/02017/PNQ (the 2018 Application) exceeded the 461 square metres stated. This limit could only have been reached if one barn (Barn B in the application ) had been reduced in size by 161 square metres, which does not seem likely from the photos in the Sales Particulars.

We believe the 2018 Application was applied for and granted on the basis of two barns with an aggregate size of 461 sq metres. Both the Applicant and the Planning Officer stated that this was the case. This was just below the then overall limit for a single dwelling which was 465 square metres. It was surprising therefore that both Chris Braybrooke and Stephanie Blunt have stated that the car-port/storage area did not form part of the 2018 Application and would need separate planning permission before they could be brought into use. Both stated that it would likely be granted.

Since doing research for this formal response, I have come across some FOI requests made by another village resident. This throws into doubt the situation with regard to the 2018 Application. Of note is an email from Ben Glover dated 10th November 2020 to the Applicant (the recipient's name is redacted ). In it Ben Glover, when refusing another application in 2020 in respect of the barn(s), the subject of the 2018 Application, on the grounds it was a rebuild (as it had been stripped to a steel skeleton ) also stated that Chris Braybrooke had opined the following ;

**" In addition to the above, Chris Braybrooke, our Senior Planning Compliance Officer, has been in contact with me regarding application**

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Parish Councillors:
Miss J Rogers (Chairman),
Mrs D Burleigh, Mrs A Goodman, Mr S Maple, Mrs M Parkin, Mr N Rowe, Ms N Topliff

reference 18/02017/PNQ. Chris is of the opinion that the conversion does not comply with the conditions of the provision and is tantamount to a total reconstruction of the barn, which is not permitted development. The site would therefore require planning permission and without planning, any work to the site would be considered unauthorised and subject to enforcement action."

We agree with this statement. Indeed this forms part of Councillor Rowe's complaint (Ground 1) to Stephanie Blunt in September 2023 which still has not been fully dealt with.

We have repeatedly voiced our concerns at the situation. Please see our last formal response dated 21st July 2021 to the previous application (Reference No 21/02673/PNQ).

We are frankly at a loss of how to respond to this application.

Can NHDC please clarify its position as there seem to be a series of alternatives i.e:

- a) that both barns in the 2018 Application fell under Class Q or
- b) that neither barn fell under Class Q and both require separate planning permission or
- c) that only Barn B under the 2018 Application requires separate planning permission as not falling under Class Q.

Both the Applicant and the PPC are entitled to a clear definitive statement on these points. The Applicant is marketing the current barns under the 2018 Application, as one unit i.e. the dwelling house and the Cart Lodge (Barn B). We do not know what the Applicants have been told. We understand from an email sent by Chris Braybrooke to Councilor Rowe, that he was going to inform the agent for the Applicant that the Cart Lodge (B) required separate planning permission before bringing into use.

Now it appears from the FOI quoted above that the Applicant may also have been informed that Barn A required planning permission. If so the problem for the Applicant goes wider than the current application and whether the overall Class Q limit has been exceeded.

All have different consequences to the approval currently requested, in terms of whether the aggregate limit under Class Q has been exceeded. In this context, we believe that the aggregate limit is not 1000 square metres but the previous limit of 865 square metres. As there is already an existing Class Q conversion for a large dwelling house in excess of 150 square metres, we believe the transitional arrangements apply here.

The PPC has been seeking clarifications for four years on these and other points. These confusions need to be resolved in the interests of all parties involved.

As to the current application, we repeat all our previous objections.

Both Barns A and B under the 2018 Application, as shown from aerial photographs, were stripped back to skeletal frameworks and rebuilt rather than converted. We are understandably less than convinced that this barn will not be treated similarly.

In our opinion, the level of demolition goes beyond that which is reasonably necessary for building operations and goes beyond the interpretation of a conversion and constitutes another rebuild.

Much of the "lean to" section of the barn will be demolished.

The roof and some cladding (which we understand contains asbestos) will be replaced.

The demolition of walls to provide car ports and storage areas cannot, in our opinion be interpreted as necessary for building operations.

In addition, there is, of course, extensive new fenestration.

Our fear is that what will be left will be, once again, a skeletal structure as with Barns A and B - albeit in this instance, concrete rather than steel.

On a final point, we have previously mentioned flooding in West Lane and the surrounding area. This is not only continuing but increasing in severity and frequency.

Yours sincerely,

Jill Rogers,
Chairman, Pirton Parish Council