

Mr Shaun Greaves
Planning and Conservation
NHDC
Letchworth Garden City

8 October 2024

Dear Mr Greaves,

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

I thought it best to write to you in advance of a formal response from the PPC bearing in mind the tight time-scales on Class Q approvals.

I have made a number of complaints regarding the barn at West Lane Farm (Reference 18/02017/PNQ). Currently, I have an ongoing complaint being processed by Stephanie Blunt which includes (among other things) questioning the status of the second barn (Barn B in the application) which has been converted to a car port and storage area. In the original application both barns are included in calculating the maximum limit for a dwelling house under Class Q.

In the previous application (Reference 21/01942/PNQ) reference is made to the 2018 application above viz;

"The cumulative floor space of the existing building changing use will be 365m². It is proposed to create four "smaller" dwellings (each no more than 100m²). The Red Barn is under conversion under Class Q consent 18/02017/PNQ and will provide a "larger" unit and therefore with the proposal, the Class Q allowance will be fully utilised."

Therefore, if the second barn (used for a car port and storage) is larger than declared then the overall limit may be exceeded. We believe from photographic evidence on the Sales Particulars that, contrary to the original approval, much of that barn was not demolished and, as a result, the maximum limit may have indeed been exceeded both as to the original 2018 application for a single dwelling as well as the overall Class Q limit which would affect the current request for approval.

We appreciate that the overall Class Q limit may now be 1000 square metres in certain cases but we do not think it applies here. The former Barn B in the 2018 application was supposed to have had 161 square metres demolished and if this was not done (as we suspect) then this **probably means that the previous approval for four dwelling houses was not valid as it was wrongly based on the applicant's figures which presupposed extensive demolition of Barn B**. At the time we made the point to NHDC **in writing** that we felt much was opaque on this and other points and that the situation required verification

We ask again that a site visit is made as a matter of urgency (as time is short) to determine what has been used in relation to overall Class Q square metreage, as this may be critical in relation to the eligibility of the current application.

You may be aware that both Stephanie (and Chris Braybrooke before he left) have argued Barn B did not form part of the original application and would need separate planning permission which they both stated would likely be given.

From our point of view, both the planning officer and the applicant clearly thought otherwise in the 2018 application. Indeed, the reference to the "Red Barn" above and the above reference to the utilisation of the full Class Q allowance demonstrates that the applicant still believes or appears to believe Barn B is part of the 2018 application. There were even plans for the car port/storage area included in that application. We do not understand the legal basis for treating Barn B in this manner.

In relation to Barn B, Chris Braybrooke wrote to the PPC stating that he was going to write to the Agent for the applicant warning him that Barn B could not be brought into use without planning permission and yet the Sales Particulars marketing the property state that it is included.

Can we please have a firm position from NHDC on the status of Barn B (as was). We feel that it is abundantly clear what was intended (i.e. both barns were included) and we would want a legal explanation for a contrary view bearing in mind the wording of the 2018 application and the applicant's subsequent conduct.

Again, we would stress that a site visit should be made to establish the size of the former Barn B as that may be critical to the current application/renewal.

We are deeply concerned at this continuing saga. The applicant built the original barn maintaining that it was fit for conversion. It was not. We then had the strange result of NHDC refusing the same barn (see 20/01733/PNQ) on the grounds;

"The barn situated to the north east of the site and proposed for conversion is only a steel skeleton with a concrete base, but no roof or walls and is therefore not capable of functioning as a dwelling in its current state. It is considered that substantial buildings works would be required including the construction of new walls and a roof making the development more akin to a rebuild rather than a conversion. The development therefore goes beyond what could reasonably be described as a conversion. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with the above criterion."

Needless to say this was the barn subsequently converted under the 2018 application.

We believe that the applicant has been less than transparent not only as to barns being suitable for conversion but also by marketing the converted barn as having Barn B included as well as marketing that dwelling as having a 2.5 acre garden which does not comply with Class Q definitions of curtilage.

We have severe doubts as to the current plans and fear that this too will be more akin to a rebuild and will be commenting on this further in our formal response as a consultee.

Nick Rowe
Pirton Parish Council