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My Ref: 0130WB

Dear Sir/Madam

PRIOR APPROVAL APPLICATION: LILLEY BOTTOM FARM, LILLEY, LUTON, LU2 8NH

Please find enclosed a Prior Approval application submitted under Part 6 - Class A – (Agricultural development on units of 5 hectares or more) of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended).

The description of the proposed development is as follows:-

“Erection of general-purpose agricultural building”.

The Prior Approval is supported by the following drawings:-

Drawing: Site Location Plan - 1:1250
Drawing: Block Plan – 1:500
Drawing: Proposed Floor Plan - 1:250
Drawing: Proposed Elevations and Roof Plan – 1:250
Appendix 1 – Photographs 1-6 of site and surroundings
Appendix 2 – Street Map location plan

Introduction

With the continued uncertainty surrounding conflicts such as the crisis in Ukraine as well as other recent global trade pressures, there is a greater demand on improving domestic agricultural production to build resilience within the UK supply chain to protect against potential supply disruption to food imports. Furthermore, with the removal of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), the final few years of phased delinked payments ending in 2027 and the recent withdrawal of Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) without any clear plans for reopening grant schemes. This has created an increased need and focus for farmers to maximise their production capacity to account for the shortfall in income.

The construction of a new farm building is essential in allowing Lilley Bottom Farm to operate in a productive and effective manner, while assisting the future growth and sustainability of the business, in what remain uncertain times for agriculture. The new agricultural building is required to support the storage of large quantities of grain over the summer months and house cattle over the winter months.

Necessity

Lilley Bottom Farm is a working farm and has been for many years. The holding has been farmed by the Andrews family, under the business name 'R Andrews' on a tenancy since 1955. The current tenant Simon Andrews is a long-standing tenant of The Crown Estate, building upon the farming legacy his father created at Lilley Bottom. The agricultural holding comprises some 137.21 hectares (363.76 acres) of agricultural land. However, R Andrews farms approximately 809 hectares (2000 acres) under tenancies. The farmland is in a mix of arable cultivations to produce grain (wheat, barley etc.), straw bales as well as being used for the grazing of cattle. A small area is under pasture and used for equestrian grazing.

The farming business is looking to expand its production capacity particularly in relation to their cattle enterprise and require a new barn to cater for this. There are several existing agricultural barns/buildings in the yard. However, most of these were constructed many years ago (1970/80s) and are now not large enough to safely manoeuvre modern agricultural machinery into them, nor large enough to accommodate expanding the cattle herd. The modern buildings on site are already being used to their maximum grain and hay storage capacity. Therefore, a new dual purpose agricultural building is required, which will allow for increased onsite grain storage capacity during the summer and autumn months. In the winter and spring (November – May) the building can be utilised to house cattle.

Without sufficient future grain storage capacity, the farming business may be required to pay for grain storage off site which can be expensive and add haulage and hire costs to the business. Alternatively, they may be forced to sell their crop straight from the field which would result in the business achieving a much lower price per ton for the grain.

Additionally, the farming business currently houses most of the cattle away from the main farmyard, which during calving can make taking care of the animals harder during the evenings and overnight. Having the cattle located close to the farmhouse is essential to facilitate a much smoother calving process.

Siting, Design and External Appearance

The proposed agricultural building will be 330 sq m in floorspace, with an additional hard standing area and concrete apron surrounding it creating 756 sq m of development. The building form is simple and rectangular measuring 17.00 metres (length) by 20.00m (width). The roof will be pitched at 12.5 degrees with a ridge height of 9.46 metres and the eaves height 7.5 metres. The front elevation will include a two-metre roof overhang to create 40 sq m of covered area at the front to ensure the barn remains dry and to shelter cattle inside.

The proposed agricultural building will be steel framed with a conventional agricultural appearance. The elevations (apart from the front elevation which will be open-sided) will be clad in profiled plastisol wall cladding (colour Juniper Green) and concrete panel walling. The pitched roof will be clad in grey fibre cement corrugated sheeting interspersed with roof light panels.

The proposed siting is within the existing agricultural compound surrounded by established hedgerows. The site is located off Lilley Bottom Road and is within a parcel of land of 32.96 hectares (81.34 acres) forming part of the agricultural holding. This siting was chosen because it is within the longstanding compound with existing agricultural buildings. The proposed barn would be entirely in keeping with the existing buildings. The site is also partially screened from the road by established trees, greenery and an existing landscaped bund, thus reducing its visibility from the roadside. Please refer to the submitted photographs.

We trust you will find this Prior Approval application entirely satisfactory and that the proposed agricultural building can proceed as permitted development by virtue of Part 6, Class A of the GPDO.

Please contact me should you require any additional information or wish to meet on site to go through the proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Eleanor Willats MRICS
Rural Surveyor

Cc Emily Moore, Amy Tebbit