

MR G WEBBER

CHANGE OF USE AND CONVERSION OF FARM BUILDINGS TO B1 (LIGHT INDUSTRY), B2 (GENERAL INDUSTRY) AND B8 (DISTRIBUTION) AND BARN TO OFFICE SUITE, FORD FARM, BRADFORD ON TONE AS AMPLIFIED BY LETTER DATED 18 DECEMBER, 2002

16310/24170

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal provides for the change of use and conversion of a traditional stone and cob barn to form a single office suite together with the change of use of an existing agricultural building to form a light industrial use. The latter is in the form of a clear span steel framed covered yard. Its conversion will require additional cladding to the side walls, doors to be erected at either end and the removal of some lean-to structures. There will be no structural alterations to the building, which is of substantial construction. The agent indicates that both sets of building are structurally sound. There are already existing industrial units on the site which have proven to be successful and the applicants are therefore seeking to further diversify from their current farming activities into this area. The buildings are relatively well screened from the public highway. The roof drainage from the buildings is taken via existing yard drains to adjoining field ditches and a lake. An additional septic tank drainage system is to be installed to service the new proposal.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the proposed development is located outside the confines of any recognised development boundary limits, in a remote area some considerable distance from the nearest facilities. Staff, visitors and consumers to the development would be wholly reliant on private vehicles, as the site is remote from other employment opportunities, retail centres, residential areas and public transport. As a result, employees and customers are likely to travel considerable distances from neighbouring towns and villages by car. This is clearly fostering both a growth in the need to travel and dependency on the private vehicle. It is therefore unsustainable in terms of transport policy and is contrary to advice contained within PPG13, RPG10 and Policy STR1 of the County Structure Plan. Although there is an amount of industrial use on the farm at present, it is understood that the farm use is to continue alongside the additional proposed use and as such significantly increase the traffic movements on the existing sub standard access. From a transport viewpoint, this is not a suitable location for such use classes, given the unsuitable nature of the approach roads. They are substandard in terms of width and alignment and not of a suitable standard for catering with heavy vehicles likely to be used in association with the proposed development. The approach roads through Bradford on Tone restrict any larger vehicles from accessing the site, as the river bridge has both a width and weight restriction in place (2.5 m and 7.5 tonnes). Vehicles visiting the site would therefore need to gain access via the village of Oake to the north. The approach from this direction is also sub-standard in terms of

width and alignment. The junction of the B3227 with the Oake road is sub-standard in terms of visibility, however it does benefit from an existing right turning lane. In detail, the junction of the access lane with the Bradford/Oake road is substandard in terms of width and visibility. The access lane is less than 5 m in width and could not accommodate two large vehicles turning into/out of the junction simultaneously. The visibility of oncoming traffic is obstructed for vehicles waiting to turn out of the site, by a large tree planted either side of the access, and large stones and other vegetation. Currently from a distance 4.5 m back from the carriageway edge, there is no visibility to the south, and only 35 m to the north. This is clearly substandard and it does not appear that the applicant has control of sufficient land to be able to provide the visibility splay which would be necessary in the interests of highway safety. The required visibility splay in this location would be 4.5 m x 160 m in each direction. Given the proposed variety of use classes on this site, there is likely to be between 50 (B2/B8 use) and 210 (B1 use) additional traffic movements to/from the site daily (based on current 'Trics' data). Development of this type and magnitude would be better sited on a purpose built industrial estate, where the highway network is better designed to cope with this volume/type of traffic generation, and there are more public transport links available. Therefore recommend refusal of the application on highways grounds for reasons of sustainability; access lane by reason of its restricted width, poor alignment and sub-standard junction with the Oake to Bradford on Tone road is considered unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development; the site access does not incorporate the necessary visibility splays which are essential in the interests of highway safety; and any increased use made of the existing sub-standard access such as would be generated by the proposal would be prejudicial to road safety.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER due to the possibility of noise causing nuisance to neighbouring premises, recommends a condition that noise emissions not to exceed background levels by more than 3 decibels between 08.00 - 18.00 Monday to Friday and 08.00 - 13.00 Saturdays and not to exceed background levels at other times when measured at any boundary with residential property. Noise emissions having tonal characteristics not to exceed background levels at any time. DRAINAGE OFFICER should be standard condition with regard to septic tank and requirement of the Environment Agency's Consent to Discharge.

PARISH COUNCIL no objection but with three comments. Hope that the conversions will mean the existing buildings remain as they are. On exiting from the farm there needs to be a no right turn sign for lorries to comply with Bradford Bridge restriction. Ash tree restricts visibility.

POLICY CONTEXT

County Structure Plan Policy STR1 on sustainable development is relevant. Part of this policy requires the development of a pattern of land use and transport which minimises the length of journeys and the need to travel and maximises the potential for the use of public transport, cycling and walking. The County Highway Authority consider that the proposal would clearly foster a growth in the need to travel and is therefore unsustainable in terms of transport policy. I consider that the economic benefits of the development in terms of diversification in the rural economy and the retention of the buildings outweigh the sustainability concerns of the Highway Authority. Policy STR6 states that development outside towns, rural centres and villages should be strictly

controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel. Policy WD/SP/3 of the West Deane Local Plan is relevant. This policy indicates that change of use of buildings outside defined settlement limits to small scale industrial and warehousing will be allowed provided certain criteria are met. It is considered that these criteria are largely met with the current proposal. Policy S1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit includes general requirements for new developments. One of these requirements is that the accessibility of the development by public transport, cycling and pedestrian networks would be consistent with its likely trip generation and minimising the need to use the car. Policy EC3 of the same plan states that outside the defined limits of settlements, the conversion of buildings to small scale business, industrial, warehousing, tourism, recreation, community, commercial or other employment generating use will be permitted provided that certain criteria are met. It is considered that these criteria are largely met with the current proposal.

ASSESSMENT

The principle of conversion of buildings such as this to alternative employment uses to provide for farm diversification is well supported and encouraged in the Rural White Paper and Central Government PPG's, in addition to the Local Planning Authority's own Development Plan policies. The County Highway Authority expresses concerns and recommends that the application be refused on grounds of sustainability and poor access onto the Oake - Bradford on Tone road. However I consider that a clear precedent has already been set at Ford Farm, where other farm buildings have been approved and are in use for employment purposes. The proposals will consolidate those uses as a centre for employment and support the local economy. There is visibility at the access point of 2.4 m x 90 m, although this is impeded to some extent by a tree at the entrance to the farm. The width and weight restriction at Bradford Bridge is likely to restrict the number and size of vehicles serving the site. In view of these factors, I consider that the boost to the local rural economy should take precedence over the County Highway Authority's concerns. My recommendation is therefore one of permission.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of materials, parking, no outside storage, noise emissions not to exceed background levels by more than 3 decibels between 08.00 - 18.00 Monday to Friday and 08.00 - 13.00 Saturdays and not to exceed background levels at other times when measured at any boundary with residential property and noise emissions having tonal characteristics not to exceed background levels at any time, percolation tests, schedule of works for the barn and removal of certain existing buildings. Notes regarding disabled access, energy/water conservation, CDM Regulations, erection of sign advising lorries to turn left to avoid weight restriction at Bradford Bridge and Consent to Discharge from Environment Agency.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: 356461 MR J HAMER

NOTES: