

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 Berry Farm is a somewhat unusual feature in that it forms a 'co-operative' farm with a number of local stakeholders who work the land and tend the animals. It also supports educational visits and has a number of students, both British and from abroad, who visit the farm and work on the land for a period of time.
- 2.2 The land is accessed off Clarkes Lane and is surrounded by native hedgerows and trees and a footpath has been reinstated around the perimeter of the land opening up previously inaccessible routes. The farm is mixed use and is self sufficient in that it has a reservoir for water and produces its own hay. There are also a number of poly-tunnels and outside vegetable beds and fruit bushes and trees producing edible goods and the co-op provides a 'veg box' scheme and is now emerging into providing hand-reared ethically produced organic meat.
- 2.3 There is a small temporary wooden structure on the site which is 'eco-friendly' and is intended to provide secure accommodation for the primary caretakers of Berry Farm.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Retention and extension of agricultural eco-dwelling on a permanent basis, including construction of a garage.

4 CONSULTATIONS/COMMENTS

- 4.1 **Neighbour consultation/representations** one letter of support received:
- 4.2 I have lived within half a mile of Berry Farm for about a year now, during which time I have been pleased to lend a hand with some voluntary work there and have met most members of the organic produce co-operative. I would like to wholeheartedly support the integrity of their unobtrusive work to produce good natural food, and the current planning application regarding affordable agricultural housing.
- 4.3 **Parish Council Comments** recommend the application be passed – a question of sustainability of the business without grants was brought up a member of public.
- 4.4 **Barsham Parish Council** – consulted as they adjoin the parish boundary: The Parish Council will leave planning to decide if this is a viable agricultural business.
- 4.5 **Suffolk County - Rights Of Way** Public footpath 14 is recorded along the access to the proposed development area. We have no objection to the proposed works.
- 4.6 **WDC - Arboricultural And Landscape Officer**

PUBLICITY

- 4.7 The application has been the subject of the following press advertisement:

Category	Published	Expiry	Publication
Public Right of Way Affected,	09.09.2016	29.09.2016	Beccles and Bungay Journal
Public Right of Way Affected,	09.09.2016	29.09.2016	Lowestoft Journal

SITE NOTICES

4.8 The following site notices have been displayed:

General Site Notice Reason for site notice: In the Vicinity of Public Right of Way,
Date posted 02.09.2016 Expiry date 22.09.2016

RELATED APPLICATIONS

Reference No	Proposal	Decision	Date
DC/07/1981/FUL	Construction of 7no. bungalows, 3no. houses, communal building and ancillary use of existing barn	Refused	21.02.2008
DC/11/1356/FUL	Construction of a temporary single storey agricultural dwelling	Approved	20.02.2012
DC/13/0321/AGO	Siting of 20,000 litre water tank	Prior Approval Not Required	16.04.2013
DC/15/3101/AGO	Prior Notification - Construction of large green barn and small black house opposite Orchard Farm Barn to increase livestock winter housing and fodder	Approved	27.08.2015

5 PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 Policies CS01 Spatial Strategy and CS02 High Quality and Sustainable Design have been considered.
- 5.2 The Development Management policies were adopted in January 2011 – relevant policies are DM01 Physical Limits, DM02 Design Principles and DM22 Housing Development in the Countryside

6 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are a number of issues that need to be addressed with the main considerations being those of policy, whether the holding is successful and can support a dwelling on a permanent basis and the benefit of the holding within the local community and beyond, and these will be discussed further below.
- 6.2 There are a number of policy considerations related to this application with the main being that of allowing a permanent dwelling in the open countryside for agricultural purposes.
- 6.3 Policy CS01 states that the objective is to safeguard the countryside for its own sake and to protect the existing service provision. Development open countryside, outside any physical limits is likely to be unsustainable, because of poor levels of public transport and few services and facilities. However there are exceptions to this approach and these are developments of an appropriate scale that assists the agricultural industry or diversifies the local economy.
- 6.4 In this instance it is suggested that the proposed development would comply with this policy. There has been a temporary agricultural dwelling on the site since 2011 and there have been no significant issues with this and it is well integrated into the site and its surroundings. It is clear, from a number of officer visits that this dwelling is indeed used for

agricultural workers and they are the primary caretakers of the animals and look after the safety and security of the site outside of working hours. Nevertheless, should permission be granted for the permanent extended dwelling, it is suggested that an agricultural occupancy condition be attached to ensure that the dwelling is not separated from the land and is retained for agricultural workers which is in line with general policy provisions.

- 6.5 Policy CS02 relates to Design Principles and it is considered that the existing and extended dwelling would comply with this policy. It is a very modest wooden structure and is self sufficient and uses such features as rain water harvesting, composting toilet and PV cells, passive solar water heating and existing reed bed drainage system and heating and hot water are powered by a wood burning stove. It does not rely on mains services and the external walls are constructed from sustainable materials.
- 6.6 The existing dwelling is very small and has an additional traditional gypsy vanner type caravan which currently accommodates an additional bedroom, however this is not heated and cannot be used in the winter months and this would be replaced by the more ecologically sound 1 ½ storey extension which would be included within the main envelope of the dwelling and create a more cohesive feature.
- 6.7 DM01 – Physical limits generally directs new housing towards the larger towns and villages however outside these locations, development will be treated as being in the open countryside where the objective is to preserve the countryside for its own sake. Exceptions to this overall approach include developments, such as infill development, relocation of coastal properties and barn conversions and where development is an appropriate scale and contributes to the continued viability of the agricultural industry, diversify the local rural economy and meets a local need for affordable housing.
- 6.8 As has already been stated this is a small but very productive agricultural holding and it is believed that granting permission for the dwelling to be retained on a permanent basis would comply with the need for agricultural dwellings in close proximity to places of work and in this respect it is believed that this application does comply with the above policy.
- 6.9 DM02 - Design Principles states that planning permission will normally be granted where the proposed development is sympathetic to the site and its surroundings and where proposals respect and enhance the identity and character of the site, contribute towards the distinctiveness of the local area, the quality of the built environment and the surrounding landscape.
- 6.10 It is not questioned that the proposed retention of the existing dwelling and its extension would comply with this policy. The existing dwelling is very sympatric to its surroundings and is well related to the surrounding area which is characterised by farm houses, cottages and converted barns. There is a large barn on the site which screens the dwelling from the main road and there is a significant tree and hedge line which reflects the overall characteristics of the area, and the proposed extension would not have an additional or significant impact on the visual amenities of the area.
- 6.11 DM22 - Housing Development in the Countryside states that housing development will not be permitted in the open countryside except where it can be demonstrated to be essential for an agricultural or forestry worker to live at or close to a workplace.
- 6.12 As is required with all agricultural dwellings a financial appraisal has been submitted. This was submitted pre-application and although it is considered borderline, it is your officer's contention that the holding can support a small single family dwelling. Temporary permission was granted in order to allow the business to grow and become self-sufficient and it is believed that this has been achieved.
- 6.13 In this respect the proposed development is clearly for agricultural purposes and has already been in situ since 2011 and it is considered to comply with this policy.

- 6.14 However, notwithstanding the above policy implications there is a further consideration which is that of community benefit.
- 6.15 As has already been stated the farm is co-operatively run by a number of households in the village who work the land and is also open to volunteers from further afield, although the residents of the property subject to this application are the overall caretakers.
- 6.16 The holding also supports educational visits from local schools and has worked with other clients such as the Great Yarmouth Community Trust which is a multi-service, neighbourhood based community organisation which helps people in need and to make a difference in the lives of residents, with the aims of the Trust being to empower people to fulfil their potential. The farm has also been recognised with a Suffolk Community Foundation 'Working Together' award. It is also open to both young and old alike and there are a diverse number of people who volunteer on the farm. The site is accessible by wheelchair and there are raised beds which allow people with reduced mobility levels to enjoy the farm and become involved in an activity that would otherwise prove difficult to access.
- 6.17 It was raised by a member of public at the Parish Meeting, whether the business would be sustainable without the benefit of grants; however the financial appraisal did not include information about grants that they may receive and was based on year-on-year accounts and it is these accounts that have been taken into consideration. Any grants that the co-operative may receive have not been submitted in evidence.
- 6.18 The final addition to this application is for the erection of a garage on an existing concrete pad. Again the proposed garage would be well screened within the site, is well related to the existing dwelling and barn and would be made of appropriate materials which would be of a similar form to the existing dwelling and would allow for additional storage space/car parking provision
- 6.19 This site is part of a very large Tree Preservation Order – TPO No. 177B – land between Hall Road and Clarkes Lane, Barsham. The closest protected trees to this proposal are G22 which is a group of 4 x Ash trees close to site of proposed garage and G21 – Ash & Oak around pond opposite side of access track and T50 Sycamore at bottom of track away from proposal site. However the proposed garage is shown to be constructed on a concrete raft and should therefore not adversely affect these trees, and no other part of proposal should adversely affect trees.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 As noted above, this site is very unusual; in that it is formed of a co-operative, however it is clear that it is a very beneficial feature of the community and there have been no objections received in relation to the proposal to allow the existing dwelling to be granted permanent agricultural status and be extended to form a more useful dwelling for a single family occupancy.
- 7.2 The retention of the existing dwelling and its extension and associated garage are considered acceptable and accord with the provisions of the adopted local plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within a period of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans received by the local planning authority on 19th August 2016 unless otherwise agreed in writing

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the development is carried out in the manner considered by the local planning authority.

3. The occupation of the dwelling shall be limited to a person solely or mainly employed, or last employed, in the locality in agriculture as defined in Section 336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or in forestry (including any dependants of such person residing with him/her) or a widow or widower of such a person.

Reason: The site is in an area where dwellings would not normally be permitted unless special circumstances have been demonstrated which would justify an exception to policy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

See application ref: DC/16/3475/FUL at

www.waveney.gov.uk/publicaccess

CONTACT

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