Our ref: CP/Ball

11th September 2023

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Development Management,
Economic Development and Planning,
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BA14 8JN

Dear Sir,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Change of Use of Stables to a Dwelling; Land west of Merryfields, Whaddon Lane, Hilperton, Trowbridge (387624, 159857).

1. We are instructed by Mr C. & Ms P. Ball to prepare and submit this full planning application for the change of use of a block of stables to a separate residential dwelling at the above site.

2. Please find enclosed in support of the planning application;
- The completed planning application forms and certificates;
- The planning, design and access statement (this letter);
- The location plan (CB-JH-01);
- The site plan (CB-JH-02);
- Existing floor plan and elevations of stables (CB-JH-03);
- Proposed floor plan and elevations of the dwelling (CB-JH-04);
- An ecology report by Wessex Ecology dated July 2023;
- A structural survey report by BTA Consulting dated 11th August 2023;
- A viability report by Woolley & Wallis dated 6th September 2023; and,
- A bat survey by Ellendale Environmental (to follow).

3. This application is being made following pre-application advice (reference 21/0072/PREAPP dated 9 April 2021) for the conversion of either the barn or stables into the dwelling at the site.

Site Description

4. The application site is located to the north of New Barn Farm with access from Whaddon Lane. The site extends to some 1.34ha and comprised an metalled track that leads to an open sided hay barn, a single storey stable block (with further constructed areas that adjoin), a menage area, a field shelter and located adjacent to the access track and associated areas of paddock/grazing land. Knoll Farm and 51 and 52 Whaddon Lane are located to the north.

5. The site has been owned by Mr Ball since 2007 but has been let on an

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informal basis to a local builder. The land has been used for the storage of assorted vehicles and construction equipment, including diggers and other plant as well as building equipment such as scaffolding, metal container units and other building waste. It is also used, on occasion, for keeping of some cattle and sheep in association with the adjoining Knoll Farm. While it was the case that at the time that the site was acquired by Mr Ball, and for a short period following, the principal use related to horse keeping and associated activities, the storage activities have been taking place for some years which is understood to have been started in 2007, some 16 years ago. The site has not been used for horse keeping for many years.

6. The site now has a somewhat untidy and incongruous appearance and is characterised by the building and behind storage, particularly in the area around the menage. This is not visible from Whaddon Lane due to the set back from existing mature vegetation.

7. The site is located some 0.5 km from the edge of Hilperton which has a range of facilities including a primary school, public house, village hall, church and retail facilities with bus services to Trowbridge and beyond.

Site History

8. From a review of the planning records on the Council's portal, the following applications have been submitted and considered on the site.

- W/90/01125/FUL; Replacement stables. Approve with conditions, 25 September 1990.
- W/04/00233/FUL; Riding Arena. Approve with conditions, 5 April 2004.
- W/04/02305/FUL; Field shelter. Approve with conditions, 18 March 2005.

Description of Development

9. The proposal seeks the conversion of the stable block into a 3 bedroom dwelling with a footprint of 87m^2. The concrete block walls and apex timber roof clad with concrete tiles are to be retained.

10. The access to the dwelling will be via an existing access track onto Whaddon Lane. The dwelling will not increase the level of traffic entering/leaving the site and will not have a severe highways impact. The parking, which will accord with Wiltshire Council's parking standards, and curtilage of the dwelling will be suitable for the conversion.

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Relevant Planning Policy Guidance

11. The relevant planning policy is set out in the Development Plan comprises the Adopted Core Strategy and Neighbourhood Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a material consideration.

National Planning Policy Framework

12. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages local planning authorities to support sustainable development. The following paragraphs from the NPPF are considered to be particularly relevant to the determination of this planning application.

13. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states at '***Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development***'. It suggests that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would be so significant as to outweigh the benefits of the development, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. It is considered that the proposed development accords with this paragraph.

14. Paragraph 77 states "In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing development that reflect local needs".

15. Paragraph 79 advises that isolated homes should be avoided unless certain circumstances apply. These include:

a) There is an essential need to live at or near the place of work; and,
c) The development would reuse redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting.

16. Section 11 of the NPPF promotes the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. Paragraph 121 advises that LPAs should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land that are developed but not allocated.

17. Paragraph 84 sets out that planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings and the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

18. Paragraph 111 targets the highways impacts of a development and shows that highway impacts from a development should not be severe. As the development uses the existing access and there are no changes to the site, there will not be severe impacts whilst the stables are connected with DIY livery. Paragraph 111 of the NPPF is copied out below:

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Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

19. Section 12 of the NPPF '*Achieving well-designed places*' sets out national guidance in respect to design and how applications should be determined by Local Planning Authorities.

20. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF sets out that:

> ***The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.***

21. Paragraph 130 requires that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

> ***a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;***
> ***b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;***
> ***c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);***

Local Planning Policy Guidance

22. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2015 and reaffirms the broad objectives set out in the NPPF. The key objective of the Core Strategy is the provision of new housing to complement the economic growth of the County. There is a limited supply of Previously Developed Land. The Core Strategy aims to protect high quality natural environment and to optimise the opportunities to enhance such areas (para 2.18). A pro-active stance is promoted so as to protect the environment in a way that supports a strategy of economic growth. Trowbridge is one of the three principal settlements within the County with the aim of achieving a total of 42,000 new dwelling. Land within Green Belt is to be protected. Paragraph 3.8 states "***The reuse of the limited amount of previously developed land should be maximised*****....."**

23. It is considered that this proposal falls to be determined in light of policies CP2, CP48, CP51 and CP57, as set out below;

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Core Policy 2 - Delivery Strategy
Other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within this plan, identified in paragraph 4.25, development will not be permitted outside the limits of development, as defined on the policy map. The limits of development may only be altered through the identification of sites for development through subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Documents and neighbourhood plans.
[Redacted for clarity]

Core Policy 48 – Supporting Rural Life
Proposals to convert and re-use rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses will be supported where they satisfy the following criteria:
i. The building(s) is/are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building.
ii. The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas.
iii. The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure.
iv. The site has reasonable access to local services.
v. The conversion or re-use of a heritage asset would lead to its viable long term safeguarding.
Where there is clear evidence that the above uses are not practical propositions, residential development may be appropriate where it meets the above criteria. In isolated locations, the re-use of redundant or disused buildings for residential purposes may be permitted where justified by special circumstances, in line with national policy.
[Redacted for clarity]

Core Policy 51 – Landscape
Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies.
[Redacted for clarity]

Core Policy 57 - Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.
[Redacted for clarity]

24. The land within employment uses is to be prioritised for re use as is the reuse of PDL and the delivery of regeneration opportunities. Core Policy 48 states residential development may be justified in order to support equestrian facilities where such accommodation is need on site. Para 6.60 promotes the reuse/ conversion of buildings, including residential uses, subject to:

a) The buildings are structurally sound and would not require re-building, and;

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b) Would respect the character of the existing building and the use would not detract from the appearance of the landscape. In isolated homes, re use may be justified by special circumstances. Policy 51 seeks for development to enhance/ conserve the landscape.

25. The Wiltshire Consultation Paper on the new Local Plan was issued in November 2017 and reiterates this approach and makes reference to the NPPF - paragraph 28, 51 and 55.

Hilperton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2026

26. The site is located within the Neighbourhood boundary and is outside the development boundary. Policy 2 of the Plan states "**housing outside the development boundary is exceptionally allowed in the countryside where it satisfies national and strategic policies and delivers self-build homes, eco homes, and retirement homes**".

Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

27. The site is located outside of any settlement framework boundaries as defined in the WCS proposal maps. The site is therefore considered to be located within the open countryside. Core Policy 2 of the WCS sets out that other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within this plan, identified in paragraph 4.25, development will not be permitted outside the limits of development. Paragraph 4.25 states that the Core Strategy also includes 'exception policies' which seek to respond to local circumstance and national policy. These policies are as follows:

- Additional employment land (Core Policy 34);
- Military establishments (Core Policy 37);
- Development related to tourism (Core Policies 39 and 40);
- Rural exception sites (Core Policy 44);
- Specialist accommodation provision (Core Policies 46 and 47); and,
- Supporting rural life (Core Policy 48).

28. It is considered that Core Policy 48 is applicable to this application. Core Policy 48 states that proposals to convert and re-use rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses will be supported where they satisfy the following criteria:

i. The building(s) is/are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building.

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ii. The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas.
iii. The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure.
iv. The site has reasonable access to local services.
v. The conversion or re-use of a heritage asset would lead to its viable long-term safeguarding.

29. The land within employment uses is to be prioritised for re use as is the reuse of Previously Developed Land and the delivery of regeneration opportunities. Core Policy 48 states residential development may be justified in order to support equestrian facilities where such accommodation is needed on site. Paragraph 6.60 promotes the re use/ conversion of buildings, including residential uses, subject to:

- *The buildings are structurally sound and would not require re-building; and,*
- *Would respect the character of the existing building and the use would not detract from the appearance of the landscape. In isolated locations, re use may be justified by special circumstances. Policy 51 seeks for development to enhance/conserve the landscape.*

30. Core Policy 48 also sets out that where there is clear evidence that the uses, detailed at the beginning of the policy, are not practical propositions, residential development may be appropriate.

31. Considering potential alternative use for the building, for industrial and warehouse space in the region the key features that are most commonly stated as essential or preferable are:

- Good access to a main road;
- 24-hour, 7 day a week access;
- Good facilities on site;
- Good local workforce and ease of access to the property;
- Good broadband speed;
- Access to amenities;
- Modern image building; and,
- Good security.

32. The site is located off Whaddon Lane, which does not deliver what would be considered "good access" in industrial and commercial terms. The site does not provide good access to key arterial routes in the vicinity.

Design and Amenity

33. Core Policy 57 sets out that a high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use

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of existing buildings. The development is of high-quality design and makes use similarly high-quality materials.

34. The development proposes the use of high-quality material and it is considered that the treatment of the building means that it will still retain its agricultural character. The building is considered to be acceptable given the location and nature of the development and that it is already located on the site.

35. The policy also requires that development should not result in loss of amenity to neighbouring properties. The building is sufficiently distanced from the nearest residential dwellings and no significant harm to residential amenity will occur from the proposal to change the stables into a dwelling.

Landscape Impact

36. Core Policy 51 of the WCS requires that development to protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.

37. The building subject to this application is already located on the site. The building can be glimpsed when travelling along Whaddon Lane; however, the proposed stables has been designed to retain the agricultural character of the building. Overall, it is considered that the development would have a neutral impact on the landscape character and that any elements of the proposal that would potentially be visible would appear to be agricultural in nature, which would not be out of character with the area.

Structural Survey

38. 'DSA Environment and Design' undertook a survey of the stables in June 2023. 'DSA Environment and Design' concluded that the building is suitable for a conversion to residential use.

Ecology

39. The application is accompanied by a preliminary ecology report by Iain Donald of Wessex Ecology (dated June 2023). The preliminary ecology report shows that it is appropriate for the stables to be converted. A bat survey was undertaken by Ellendale Environmental dated August 2023 to incorporate Wessex Ecology's details requesting further information about the bats. Bat protection measures such as bat boxes (as shown on the

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proposed plans) are integrated into the proposal per the ecologist's recommendations.

Viability

40. The accompanying viability report by Woolley and Wallis, dated 6 September 2023 shows that the residential use is the only viable option. The report showed that '*residential development produces the highest gross development value for the site. The buildings conversion would be entirely in keeping with the wider locality'.*

41. The accompanying viability report by Woolley and Wallis, dated September 2023, evaluates how other developable options for the site are not considered viable including offices, B1/B8 Light industrial workshop/warehousing, community use, holiday lets and other tourist uses, residential use, secure storage and cultural considerations.

42. Please not that the viability report states that the services provided to the buildings are mains electricity and water. Whilst making the decision, there is an additional cost in mind to provide the electricity, there is no significant change to the viability of the conversion of the building to residential use.

Transport and Sustainability

43. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights that planners shouldn't reject planning applications solely on locations that are not well served by public transport. Below, paragraph 85 states the following:

> *Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improvements the scape for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.*

44. Paragraph 111 of the NPPF highlights that transport should not be prevented or refused if there isn't an unacceptable risk on highway safety;

> *Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.*

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45. This proposal to convert stables into a separate dwelling will not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. There will be a minor amount of parking needed for the resident's cars, however this will not be greater than the farm vehicles which are currently being used as part of Land West of Merryfields, Whaddon Lane. A change in the type of vehicles (e.g. pedestrians and cars) will not reduce the safety of the area. The proposed access to the dwelling is currently in use for the farm. The proposal is capable of being served by safe access to the highway network meeting Core Policy 61(ii) as set out below;

> II. That the proposal is capable of being served by safe access to the highway network.

46. The location is not isolated or remote in the countryside. One of the principles of the development is to think about the lifetime of the development. As Land west of Merryfields, Whaddon Lane, which site isideally placed. The combination of these factors show that the proposal should not be refused on transport and highways grounds.

Public Footpath

47. There are no public footpaths across the site. The dwelling will not have a significant impact on the views of the landscape.

Concluding remarks

48. This is a full planning application for the conversion of stables into a dwelling. The evidence shows that the building is suitable for the conversion. The viability report also demonstrates that residential use is appropriate in the context of other possible uses.

49. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Overall, it is considered that the development complies with Core Policy 2 and 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. It is considered that the site is in a suitable location for a new dwelling and is in full compliance with national and local planning policy.

50. The development is of high-quality design and make use similarly high-quality materials. The building is considered to be acceptable given the location and nature of the development and that it is already located on the site. There are no site-specific reasons why the development should not be permitted, in respect of ecology, access, noise, contamination, amenity and flooding. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with Core Policy 57 of WCS.

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51. The building is not easily visible from outside of the site. Overall, it is considered that the development would have a neutral impact on the landscape character and that any elements of the proposal that would potentially by visible would appear to the agricultural in nature, which would not be out of character with the area.

52. I trust that you have all the necessary information required to register and favourably determine this application and I look forward to hearings from you in due course. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Popkin