CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference	PL/2023/06220 Change of use of an agricultural yard to storage area (Class B8 use) for the siting of shipping containers (205 sqm area).
Site address	Park Corner Farm, West Knoyle, Warminster, Wilts, BA12 6AH
Date of Inspection	N/A
Date site notice posted	N/A neighbour letters only
Publicity Expiry	14/9/23

POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework 2023 and NPPG

Mere Neighbourhood Plan - designated

Wiltshire Core Strategy

Core Policy 34 Additional Employment Land and Buildings
Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life
Core Policy 50 Biodiversity
Core Policy 51 Landscaping
Core Policy 57 Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
Core Policy 69 River Avon SAC catchment

Other:

- AONB Management Plan
- Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

SITE CONSTRAINTS

- Mere Park East to Underhill is an adopted Class C highway
- Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB
- Flood Zone 1, no risk of groundwater or surface water flooding
- Agricultural Land Classification 3















PROPOSALS

The applicant is seeking to change the use of part of the existing agricultural yard to accommodate shipping containers for storage purposes. Nine containers would be sited in a single line up against the existing farmyard barn. From the supporting letter:

The proposal is for change the use of 205m2 of an agricultural farmyard (sui genius) to a Class B8 storage use. This would allow for the storage within the yard area of non-agricultural items,

housed within shipping containers. Please see the accompanying plans for the proposed area to be used for storage. The proposal would allow for an existing agricultural business to diversify part of their farmyard with a complimentary storage use. This is felt to be in accordance with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2015) and specifically Core Policy 34.

Whilst the existing property is situated within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the proposal would be positioned within the existing farmyard. Therefore, the proposed storage area would be viewed in conjunction with the existing farm building group.

In response to the case officer, the applicant has also subsequently confirmed that they would accept conditions to restrict the storage as follows:

- Storage restricted to the dark grey shaded area only
- Stacked single height only
- New boundary treatment to the east side of the containers in the form of native hedge planting





ISSUES

1. Principle of development
2. Scale, design and impact on heritage assets and amenity including the AONB
3. Neighbouring amenity
4. Highway safety
5. River Avon catchment

RELEVANT HISTORY:

S/1994/1237 CIRCULAR 18/84 PROCEDURE - CONSTRUCTION OF A 40 COW CUBICLE HOUSE, NEW SILAGE PAD & CONCRETE ACCESS WAY **Approved**

REPRESENTATIONS

Highways - no objection to public self storage

Mere PC – No response

West Knoyle PC - SUPPORT

NB – We realise that this planning application is actually within the parish boundary of Mere but it is within close proximity of the village of West Knoyle and the planning application would have more of a bearing and more relevance to the village of West Knoyle than it would to the town of Mere.

Third parties – none received

ASSESSMENT

Planning permission is required for the proposed change of use of land for the containers. However, shipping containers used for self storage have been deemed by the courts to involve a change of use and are not building operations themselves.

The application must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. (Section 70(2) of the Town and Country planning Act and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004).

The NPPF confirms in para 11 that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable. For decision making, that means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. The site lies within the AONB and so the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not automatically apply, under Footnote 7.

1. Principle of development

Core Policy 48 supports rural life. Core Policy 51 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance Wiltshire's distinctive landscape character and the NPPF attaches great weight to the importance of the AONB. Core Policy 57 aims to achieve a high standard of design 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 complimentary to the locality.

CP34 supports the principles for farm diversification and states:

Outside the Principal Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres, developments that:
ii. Support sustainable farming and food production through allowing development required to adapt to modern agricultural practices and diversification; or

The applicant has confirmed that the purpose of the storage units is for farm diversification, to allow for additional income into the farm business. The containers are considered to offer an opportunity to provide extra revenue for the farm without interfering with the overall running of the agricultural business.

The farm is often approached regarding providing storage facilities. The existing farm buildings are not easily adaptable to provide secure storage and the proposed shipping containers are considered to offer a suitable option. They will be sited within the existing farmyard, viewed in association with the existing farm buildings. They are also located to the front of the yard, away from the main group of buildings and the principial movement and flow of farm traffic, to ensure that this is not impeded.

iii. Are for new and existing rural based businesses within or adjacent to Large and Small Villages; or
iv. Are considered essential to the wider strategic interest of the economic development of Wiltshire, as determined by the council

will be supported where they:

v. Meet sustainable development objectives as set out in the polices of this Core Strategy; and

The application site is located within the existing farmyard curtilage and is stated to be required for farm diversification to provide extra revenue for the farm. This meets the policy aim of CP34 in principle**.**

vi. Are consistent in scale with their location, do not adversely affect nearby buildings and the surrounding area or detract from residential amenity; and

Potential impact on landscape and character is considered below

vii. Are supported by evidence that they are required to benefit the local economic and social needs; and

Whilst no specific numerical evidence of economic or social need has been provided, the applicant has confirmed that the farm is often approached regarding providing storage facilities. Therefore, a local need has been identified by the applicant and is attempting to address the local demand for storage.

viii. Would not undermine the delivery of strategic employment allocations; and
ix. Are supported by adequate infrastructure.

The proposed storage (shipping containers) would be located within the existing farmyard and positioned in a single storey row of 9 units, up against the existing farm building. It is noted that the containers themselves are not considered to be operational development and permission is sought for change of use of the agricultural courtyard to accommodate a storage use, for access by the public. The intended purpose is stated to *allow for an existing agricultural business to diversify part of their farmyard with a complimentary storage use.* Therefore, no objection is raised to the principle for storage use as part of the existing agricultural unit under CP34, where this would supplement the existing farm income whilst maintaining the existing agricultural activities on the unit.

2. Scale, design and impact on the AONB

The NPPF attaches great weight to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape within the AONB. Core Policy 51 states:

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. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures.

The storage use would comprise a single storey row of containers, sited against the existing farm building. The storage use would therefore be limited to the dark grey area on the proposed site plan, which indicates 9 bays for containers and a maximum height of about 2.6m above ground level. A new belt of native hedgerow planting is proposed on the east boundary, which would screen any future storage taking place within the site. It would also help to screen existing agricultural equipment and machinery currently present at the front of the site. Furthermore, the applicant has indicated willingness to accept conditions to limit any storage to being single storey in height and contained within the dark grey shaded area only. Appropriate conditions would ensure that the storage use does not spill over into the wider area and be unsightly.

Therefore, whilst shipping containers and other storage containers do not constitute oeprational development, it is possible for the LPA to control the height and extent of storage taking place on the site, and to secure a new native hedge, which would screen the storage area in due course as the planting establishes and matures. This would also secure biodiverisity enhancement for the site under CP50.

In conclusion, the change of use would be acceptable in scale and the appearance of any storage on the site can be controlled to limit any negative impacts on the character and setting of the AONB. Any new external artificial lighting can also be restricted to ensure that it does not harm the tranquility of the AONB and its IDSR, in accordance with the NPPF, CP34, CP50, CP51 and CP57.

3. Neighbouring amenity

CP75 seeks to ensure that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself. There are no immediate neighbours to the south that would be affected by the development. Neighbours to the north would not have any line of sight to the storage area and would not be harmed by the change of use. No third party comments have been received. Properties are not considered likely to be affected in terms of loss of light, dominance or overlooking or harm from noise and odours and the proposal would comply with CP57.

4. Highway safety and rights of way.

CP57, 60 and 61 are relevant to the proposals and the highways officer stated:

Thanks for confirming that the containers will be used for public self-storage. This does represent a commercial use, which will generate an additional amount of traffic to/from the site and on the surrounding highway network. However, I would anticipate that users of these containers are likely to live within/around the nearby villages and the number of containers, nine, is relatively small scale. Therefore, on this basis, I do not wish to raise a highway objection in this instance.

Therefore, no objection is raised on highway safety grounds.

5. River Avon SAC Catchment

This development falls within the catchment of the River Avon SAC. However, as the proposal is for a change of use to enable self storage, there would be no likely significant effects on the River Avon SAC, either alone or in combination with other projects. Therefore, it is considered that the application could be screened out of an Appropriate Assessment as there any unlikely to be any significant effects arising from it on water quality within the River Avon catchment.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development would help an existing farm to diversify. It conforms to the objectives of the adopted and saved policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the sustainability aims of the NPPF. Therefore the Local Planning Authority considers that planning permission should be granted subject to appropriate conditions to ensure that any adverse landscape impacts on the AONB would be appropriately limited and mitigated.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Location Plan at 1:2500 scale received 24/7/23
Proposed Site Plan ref 396_ 03 231010 received 17/10/23
Shipping Container Elevation and dimensions received 15/8/23

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 Notwithstanding the plans and details hereby approved, the B8 storage use hereby permitted shall take place only within the area shaded dark grey on the Proposed Site Plan ref 396_ 03 231010 received 17/10/23 and marked. Any storage including containers shall not exceed 2.6m in height when measured above ground level. There shall be no new artificial external lighting within the red line for the development hereby approved.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of the visual and amenity and landscape setting of the AONB.

4 The storage use hereby permitted shall not commence until a scheme of native tree/hedgerow planting for the east boundary of the site (as shown on Proposed Site Plan ref 396_ 03 231010 received 17/10/23) has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first use of the site for non-agricultural storage purposes. Any trees or hedgerow plants which within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species.

Reason: The application contained insufficient information regarding the type and species of hedgerow planting to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, to ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development within the AONB.