CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/11165
Application Type:	Full planning permission
Site Inspection:	25 January 2024
Consultation ends:	20 February 2024
Case officer:	Meredith Baker

Site Address:	Wilds Farm, Hilcott, Pewsey, SN9 6LE
Proposal:	Erection of a new cattle building to house calved cows and store animals.
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)

Section 2 (Achieving sustainable development)
Section 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy)
Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places)
Section 15 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)
Section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
National Design Guidance

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS):

Core Policy 51 Landscape
Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life
Core Policy 57 Ensuring High-Quality Design and Place-Shaping
Core Policy 58 Ensuring Conservation of the Historic Environment

Other documents

The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024
The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Relevant Planning History:

21/01470/FUL – Construction of two Agricultural Buildings (retrospective) widening of main farm access (retrospective), reinstatement and widening of secondary access (retrospective) and laying of associated hardstanding (proposed) – Granted 30.04.2021

17/00433/FUL – Erection of two agricultural buildings – a livestock building for housing cattle and a general purpose agricultural storage shed – Granted 10.03.2017

Consultation Responses

North Newnton Parish Council: Support

Highway Officer: No objection.

Archaeology Officer: "As the site has been heavily impacted by past modern development within the farm complex, it is my opinion that any groundworks associated with the construction of the proposed barn would be unlikely to expose any hitherto unrecorded sub-surface archaeological features and/or deposits. I would therefore not wish to raise any archaeological issues in this particular instance."

Representations

Two letters of objection have been received raising concerns as follows (in summary):

- Proposal is edge of village location in an AONB.
- The increased number of cattle on site from potentially 300 to 500 is unsustainable on a holding of this size.
- Only way to farm intensively on the site is a 'feedlot' system, whereby cattle feed has to be brought in and manure stockpile before being exported causing excessive traffic and potential nuisance to neighbouring properties.
- The required cattle head is not in accordance with DEFRA guidance and would likely lead to poor conditions for the cattle and an increased animal welfare concern.

Proposal and Application Site

The application site comprises an agricultural complex of 'Wilds Farm', a holding of approximately 345 acres. The farm buildings are located within the setting of Hilcott Conservation Area and is washed over by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

The proposal seeks planning permission for the erection of an agricultural building to accommodate livestock (cattle) to the front of the site. The livestock building would be 12.19m by 30.48m with a 1.37m overhang. The ridge height would be 6.2m and would have an eaves height of 4.57m. The construction would comprise a steel portal frame with concrete panels and tin cladding elevations under a fibre cement roof to match the existing agricultural buildings on site.

ASSESSMENT

Design and Visual Impacts and Impacts on Heritage assets

Local Authorities are required by Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas when considering development proposals that affect the setting or views into it. This is locally reflected within Core Policy 58.

The application site is located in a rural location at the edge of the cluster of linear buildings forming the settlement of Hilcott. The site is washed over by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and is located within the setting of (but not within) the Hilcott Conservation Area.

The positioning of the livestock building is considered undesirable due to its forward location against the existing agricultural buildings on site and the public highway. The building would be prominent within the street scene due to its siting, noting that the existing buildings are set back within the site and provides visual relief to the street scene. Although the forward siting is undesirable, it is acknowledged that there are buildings within Hilcott (to the west) that are in a similar siting against the highway. Furthermore, the building would still be viewed in context with the agricultural unit and would not adversely expanding the built form into the open countryside.

The building would be situated within the setting of the Hilcott Conservation Area. In this respect it is considered that the forward siting is not a welcome addition to the street scene before entering the Conservation Area (or exiting) however there is an acceptable degree of separation between the proposed building and the dwelling of Wilds Farm within the Conservation Area. The use of the site is already agricultural and as noted by public imagery of the site has been used regularly for outside storage of agricultural items of height which already provides an agricultural character to this front part of the site. The existing hedgerow is to be retained which contributes to the character of the street scene.

In terms of design, the agricultural building is typical in its appearance (including materials) and would be in-keeping with the existing buildings on site. The proposed ridge height is not again desired, given its forward siting however would be similar to the buildings on site and therefore is not objected to in principle. It is therefore considered that whilst the forward siting of the building is not desirable it is not harmful to the rural character of the area and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The proposal would also preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the significance of the Listed Buildings within the area.

It is therefore considered, having regard to the points made above, that due regard has been given to the statutory duties set out within Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and Policies 57 and 58 of the Core Strategy.

Neighbour Amenity

By virtue of the intervening distance to any neighbouring residential properties (whereby the farmhouse of Wilds Farm is in excess of 40m from the development), the proposed development would not give rise to any adverse impacts in terms of overbearing effect, loss of outlook, overshadowing or loss of light. It is noted that the building is proposed to be for a livestock use. Although this use is acknowledged, the building would be in context to the existing agricultural farm with livestock and therefore given its siting is not considered to give rise to any unacceptable noise pollution beyond the existing situation as to warrant refusal of planning permission. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of its impacts upon neighbouring amenities.

Highways

The proposed development is to be sited to the front of the site however would not impact the highway access points, including their visibility sight lines. It is acknowledged that the proposal may bring additional livestock to the site and also would remove an area currently used for outside storage however, it is considered that the provision of the building would not give rise to unacceptable additional highway movements that would give rise to highway safety concerns. The Local Highway Officer also made this assessment whereby it was noting that the site already has an established farming use and the road network in the vicinity appears acceptable for the uses associated with the application. The proposal is therefore deemed acceptable in this regard.

Other matters

It has been noted under public observations that concern has been raised regarding the increase of cattle on the yard which is unsustainable for a holding of this size (noting guidance such as the DEFRA code of recommendations for the welfare of livestock:cattle). The amount of cattle on site in relation to being an ‘intensive beef production’, or being an increased animal welfare concern does not fall within the remit of assessing planning applications (whereby it should be noted that in planning terms the Local Planning Authority cannot enforce the number of cattle on site and could already be up to 500 and would not be a planning matter). There is separate legalisation (not related to planning and cannot be assessed under a planning application) which could capture concerns such as the Animal Welfare Act or the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations. As addressed above the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impacts upon the relevant planning considerations such as noise, traffic generation and landscape and visual impacts.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve with conditions

Conditions: (2)

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 and documents:

Application Form
Design and Access Statement by Symonds & Sampson - dated January 2024
Location Plan
Site Plan
Agricultural - Drawing No. 23-23653 dated 19/01/2024

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