

# **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

**IN RELATION TO A**

**PRIOR APPROVAL**

**FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF AN  
AGRICULTURAL BARN TO COMMERCIAL USE**

**HARRIS CROFT FARM  
BINKNOLL  
ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT  
SWINDON  
SN4 8QS**

**APPLICANT: MRS CAROLINE NUTLAND**

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 In April 2015 the government permitted the change of use of agricultural buildings and land within its curtilage to B8 commercial use as a permitted development right. The applicant wishes to change the use of an existing agricultural barn into B8 commercial use under the General Permitted Development order (GPDO) 2015. The building proposed for conversion is shown outlined in red below:



*(Figure 1)*

1.2 The agricultural building at Harris Croft Farm lies approximately 1.5 miles to the east of Royal Wootton Bassett and 5.7 miles to the west of Swindon. Additionally, the building is ideally situated for commercial use as the farm is only 1.6 miles from J16 on the M4 giving the unit good transport links. The building is located to the north of the farmyard in close proximity to the road, meaning any vehicles associated with the proposed commercial use will not have to drive through the farmyard.

1.3 This application is made under Class R of the GPDO, this gives permitted development rights for the change of use of the agricultural building to a B8 commercial use.

1.4 This report will assess the proposals against the legislation published in the General Permitted Development Order (2015) under Class R. The report will:

- Outline the permitted development rights in section 2;
- Describe the proposal for the building in section 3;
- Assess these proposals against the permitted development rights in section 4.

1.5 The building is currently in agricultural use and is part of an established agricultural unit. The building has been used for agricultural storage, this includes the storage of agricultural machinery and bale storage.

## **2. Permitted Development Rights**

2.1 Permitted development rights under Class R form part of the General Permitted Development Order (2015) and defined under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of the GPDO, as follows; *Development consisting of a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from use as an agricultural building to a flexible use within Class A1 (shops), Class A2 (financial and professional services), Class A3 (restaurants and cafes), Class B1 (business), Class B8 (storage or distribution) Class C1 (hotels) or Class D2 (assembly and leisure) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order.*

2.2 There is a clear specification set out in R.1 under the General Permitted Development Order. This section states that a development is permitted where:

- The total cumulative floor area of the existing building(s) (within the planning unit) which has changed under Class R rights must not exceed 1,000 square meters
- The building was in agricultural use on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012
- If the building was constructed after the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012, the building must have been in agricultural use for 10 years or more
- The building is not listed or a scheduled monument

- The building is not part of (or be located within) a safety hazard area or part of an explosives storage area

2.3 These permitted development rights are subject to the condition that the developer shall apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the local planning authority is required for one or more of the following four considerations:

- Transport and highway impacts;
- Noise impacts;
- Contamination risks on the site;
- Flooding risks on the site;

2.4 Provisions of Paragraph W (prior approval) also applies. This requires that the application is accompanied by a written description, plans, contact address and a fee.

### **3. Proposal**

3.1 The applicant seeks to convert the agricultural building outlined in red on figure 1 above into a commercial unit.

3.2 The building is a steel portal frame building with a concrete floor, corrugated metal sheeting on the gable end walls with 2 large sliding doors on both the north and south gable end elevations. The walls on the east and west elevations are constructed of a mixture of wooden sleepers, timber boarding and breeze block. The building is under a pitch roof constructed of corrugated metal sheeting with skylights in the roof and an open ridge, given the building's original use was livestock housing. There is an electricity connection to the building. The building is approximately 429.89 sq m and is 2.84 m to the pitch and 2.4 m to the eaves. The building is considered in a good state of repair.

3.3 The applicant would wish to replace the sliding doors with roller shutter doors (this would ensure the building was secure for the future tenant). Additionally,

the building is currently not weatherproof due to the open ridge, as a result the application wishes to cover the open ridge.

3.4 The building is currently used for agricultural storage including farm machinery and bales. As seen on the accompanying location and site plans, the building is within a farmyard and adjacent to other buildings (these buildings are not included in this application).

3.5 It should be noted that any traffic related to the this building will not need to access the building through the farmyard, there will be a separate access to the proposed building. This results in farm traffic and commercial traffic being kept separate.

3.6 The curtilage will extend to approximately 210 square meters to the north of the building. This space will be used in conjunction with the commercial unit to provide parking and loading areas as identified on the site location plan.

3.7 The proposal seeks to create a commercial unit, with the intention of letting the building to a commercial tenant within the use class B8. This will provide a diversified income stream from the current agricultural income which is vital to support my client's business. In today's volatile economic climate, it is vital the agricultural business has a second, diversified income stream. There are a number of factors which have resulted in a volatile market within the agricultural sector:

- **Lack of farming subsidies:** The main agricultural subsidy (Basic Payment Scheme) which has supported farming since 1993 has now been all but completely phased out by the current Government. Furthermore, there are currently no environmental subsidy schemes for farmers to enter at this moment in time. This leaves many farms, particularly those which are small with no diversification on farm already (such as Harris Croft Farm), with serious cash flow and profitability issues. While the DEFRA secretary announced in early January that SFI will open this year, the scheme has been reformed and it has not yet been released as to what this reformed SFI will look like.

- **Increased input costs:** Input costs for the farming sector continue to rise, making many farm businesses struggling to operate with a profit.
- **Climate change:** The impact of climate change continues to cause further extremes in the weather patterns experienced in this country. From flooding issues in the winter of 2024 through to drought conditions in summer 2025, the unpredictable weather patterns continue to make farming at a small scale (such as that at Harris Croft Farm) to become more and more difficult.
- **Upcoming inheritance tax changes:** Amendments to APR/BPR from April 2026 are encouraging restructuring or exit strategies across the sector. It is also forcing farmers to diversify, which this application seeks to do.

3.8 To confirm, the applicant is looking to secure Class R change of use before securing a tenant for the building. But this tenant will fall within the B8 use class.

#### 4. Policy

4.1 This section of the supporting statement sets out the policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the local plan supporting the proposal.

4.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that the plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favor of sustainable development. This sets out that approval should be given without delay for development proposals that accord with an up to date plan. This supports the application as the change of use is considered a sustainable decision. The application will allow an existing building a change of use. As a result an existing building is being efficiently utilized and generating an income in comparison to the farming operation becoming unviable due to the current political and economic climate and the building eventually becoming redundant. The building is sustainable from an economic perspective as the commercial unit will support local business, create jobs and supports long term economic growth.

- 4.3 Para 88(a) of the NPPF supports sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new builds. Additionally, para 88 (b) supports the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based businesses. The proposal is for the change of use of an existing agricultural building into B8 commercial use. This is supported by both these policies as this supports the expansion of a business through the conversion of an existing building as well as allowing a farm business to secure a diversified, and more reliable income.
- 4.4 Para 8 of the NPPF states the overarching objectives for the framework. One of which is an environmental objective outlining there must be efficient use of land. The building would be more efficient with a commercial tenant in occupation and generating a commercial rent instead of the income gained from agriculture.
- 4.5 The Wiltshire Core Strategy was adopted in 2015 and supports the proposed change of use of the agricultural building into commercial.
- 4.6 Core policy 34 promotes employment development both within settlements and within the countryside. The policy aims to support the rural way of life through appropriate diversification of the rural economy.
- 4.7 Core Policy 48 supports a rural way of life, included within this the policy states the policy supports the conversion and reuse of rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses. This application meets this requirement.

## **5. Consultation Considerations**

- 5.1 As previously noted, the proposal is permitted development so long as it meets the criteria outlined in Class R of the GPDO (2015). As outlined below, the application meets the criteria:
- The building is used for agricultural use as part of an established agricultural unit prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012
  - The cumulative floor space of the building does not exceed 1000 square meters

- The site is not or does not form part of, a military explosives storage area
- The site is not or does not form part of, a safety hazard area
- The building is not listed buildings nor is it a scheduled monument.

## 5.2 Access

The access for the site is well established and suitable for the proposed use, as seen in the photos below.







This access is currently used for large agricultural vehicles and is suitable for any traffic generated by this change of use. It is proposed this existing access will be used by those vehicles using this building for a commercial use, however, these vehicles will immediately turn right into the curtilage shown on the accompanying site plan. Whereas all other traffic associated with the holding will be kept separate. This will keep any vehicles associated with this building separate. This will allow vehicles to safely enter and exit the property in a forward gear providing ample turning space within the curtilage of the property. There is no access amendments required as it is considered that the proposal will have no negative impact on the highway or existing access. The existing access has good visibility onto the road as shown in the above photos to this application.

Separate parking for the proposed change of use will be created to the north of the farm buildings, within the curtilage shown on the accompanying site plan. There is already a concrete area to the front of the buildings, however, this will be extended to create parking and turning area, allowing vehicles to enter and exit

the site in a forward gear. The area will be a total of 208.76 sq m and will be concreted/ hard standing.

### 5.3 Noise Impacts

Given we are seeking B8 (storage and distribution) change of use, any noise created is expected to be minimal. We would ensure suitable and sociable working hours are complied with, as we would not want to impact on the existing residential properties which are located within close proximity on the same holding. The change of use will not generate any more noise than the farm vehicles already on site.

### 5.4 Flood Risk

The site is not within a flood risk zone. There is no known history of flooding within the locality.

### 5.5 Environmental Issues

The site is not within a conservation area, not within the Green Belt and it is not within the curtilage of a Listed Building. The buildings have been used for clean agricultural storage and as such there are no contamination issues. The building is not, or known to have been, used for agro-chemical storage. There are no other contamination risks on the site, therefore there is no known contamination risk affecting the proposals.

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 In April 2015 Class R was consolidated into the GPDO, this permitted the change of use of an agricultural building into flexible commercial use as a permitted development right, subject to limitations.

6.2 As outlined above, the site meets the criteria for Class R.

6.3 The building is of sound construction and therefore capable of commercial use. The access to the building has been carefully considered and this change of use is not considered to negatively impact the current access or traffic

generated from the site. We have ensured any vehicles associated with this change of use are located separately from the rest of the holding.

6.4 Finally, the Local Planning Authority must consider noise impacts, access considerations and flood risk. As outlined in the report, none of these considerations relating to the change in use of the building should give the LPA cause for concern. To conclude, the LPA should seek to support this diversification project of an existing agricultural business.