

Planning Statement and Agricultural Justification Report to Support
an Application for an Agricultural Storage Barn at Land to the West of
Stable Cottage, Alcombe, Box, SN13 8QH

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On behalf of Mr & Mrs C Freeman
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1. Introduction

Holly Greenman of Foscoote Rural Consultancy Ltd has been instructed by Mr Clive and Mrs Caroline Freeman to prepare an application for planning permission for an agricultural storage barn to be located on land owned by the applicants near to their property at Stable cottage, Alcombe. The proposal seeks to establish storage facilities at the site to enable the continued management of the land owned by the applicants.

The purpose of this Planning Statement is to review the site's planning history, design and access specific context and the proposal's conformance with both National and Local Planning Policy. It will also address the essential need for such a building in terms of agricultural activity and in the context of the farming activity and business.

2. Background

Caroline and Clive Freeman have owned and farmed land in and around Alcombe for many years. Between them they own circa 30 hectares (75 acres) in a block around their residence at Stable Cottage. A plan of the farmed area at Alcombe can be seen in Appendix 1.

Clive owns a further 34 hectares several miles to the west around Rudloe, which is farmed in partnership with his family. The family also have an agricultural contracting business, but Clive has recently stepped back from this. Owing to this, he has lost access to shared equipment that he would previously have used for managing his own land at Alcombe, as well as storage facilities for such equipment and for agricultural produce and inputs.

An application for a suitable building to house the necessary equipment on the land at Alcombe is therefore prudent.

3. The Proposal

The proposed 149 square metre building will be located near to the existing entrance point, on Shockerwick Lane, to the parcel on which it will sit, this being the closest point of access to the land block from Stable Cottage, and enabling the applicants both the most convenient route of access but also ensuring the site security by having it within close proximity to their home.

The modest building will be clad with timber on three sides from the floor to the roof, and to the front (north westerly) elevation, one of the three bays will also be timber clad, enclosing this end from the elements. The other two bays will be open, enabling ease of access by tractor. The roof will be cement fibre sheeting.

Internally the floor will be concreted, and concrete panels will line the walls to give structural stability and some weather- proofing so that the building can store hay over the winter.

A small (1.2 metre) over-hang will roof over a concrete apron to to the front of the building, to prevent compaction and damage to the ground by machinery.

The building will be accessed by a hardcore track, re-formalising an existing track that has become grown over with grass.

4. Agricultural Justification and Need

The proposed building will provide storage for essential equipment needed to farm and maintain the Freeman's 75 acres of land at Alcombe.

The land is entirely planted into long term grass leys, with a late hay cut taken once a year in compliance with the environmental scheme that the land is entered into.

Mowing, topping, baling and hedge- cutting need to be undertaken annually as a minimum, and requires specific and specialist implements, including a tractor. These implements occupy an approximate 30 metres square each, and need to be placed in the store in a manner that makes the attachment end easily accessible by the tractor that will be used to move them. The tractor itself, although not large, also needs to be stored under cover to prevent weather damage, further wear by the elements and for safety.

Hay cut from the land is often sold to a local farmer, but depending upon demand, this often needs to be stored somewhere covered and dry for several months before it can be collected or moved on.

The Freemans are used to undertaking their own farm work, and feel it is important for them to continue holding the management of their farm. Whilst contractors may be used in some instances, for example if re-seeding the grass were necessary, the costs associated with this on such a small scale are prohibitive. It is often found to be the case also that contractors generally need to prioritise larger land areas and customers at peak times such as haymaking, and the Freemans are, rightly, concerned that their requirements will not be answered quickly enough. This results in a poorer crop for them, making the value of their hay less, but also can cause significant damage to the soil and land that they proudly farm.

There are environmental benefits for the business also; the nearest contractors are based several miles away from the farmed land, and so regular visits to and from the land contributes to fuel consumption and carbon emission, something that the business is eager to reduce.

The narrow, steep roads in and around Alcombe also make engaging contractors an unattractive option: such outfits often use far larger tractors and machines and travelling to and from the site between visits, which during busy periods can be regular and several times a day over a course of a week, is likely to result in generally hazardous and antagonistic traffic conditions.

In short, the development enables the agricultural business to be self-sufficient and take steps towards farming in a more sustainable and environmentally conscientious way.

5. Planning Policy Context

Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that, in dealing with proposals for planning permission, regard must be had to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the Government's planning policies for England and explains how they should be implemented. It is a material planning consideration.

The following elements are believed to be particularly pertinent to the assessment of the proposal that is the subject of this application:

Paragraph 8- Dimensions of Sustainable Development

Paragraph 11- Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Section 4- Decision Making

Paragraphs 110 and 116- Highways Impacts

Paragraph 88- Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

Local Planning Policy

The relevant statutory development plans in respect of this application consist of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) adopted 2015. Though it is necessary to consider the development plan as a whole, the parts most pertinent to this application are as follows:

- Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy
- Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy
- Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Core Policy 51: Landscape
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

The main issues in the consideration of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Proposed design and the impacts on local character/ amenity, including the National Landscape
- Highways
- Ecology

6. Planning Appraisal

Principle of Development

The proposal would serve an established and agricultural enterprise.

Submitted information demonstrates the benefit that this building will bring to an existing agricultural business, and ensures the sustainability of this business and the essential role such a building plays in the management of the farmland around its site. The proposal is necessary and desirable for good farming practices, and so is consistent with policy and preceding developments for no objection in principle to be raised to development in the countryside where there is an agricultural need.

Proposed design and impacts on local character/ amenity including the National Landscape

The proposed structure is likely to be largely concealed from public view, the southern elevation being next to a well- established and tall road-side hedge. Existing planting and the natural camber of the land also conceals views from other aspects.

Nevertheless, the design of the building has been considered along with the practical needs of the function of the building. The building should not appear out of place compared to others of its type within the locality, with timber cladding softening the appearance of the utilitarian agricultural building.

The site is within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (or National Landscape).

The proposed agricultural barn has been carefully designed to accord with the requirements of Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies 51 (Landscape) and 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping). The scale, height, siting and simple timber-clad appearance of the building have been deliberately selected to ensure that it sits comfortably within the landscape and conserves the special qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The modest form of the structure reflects its agricultural function and minimises visual impact, while the use of natural timber cladding and a restrained palette of materials enables the building to integrate sensitively with its rural surroundings.

In accordance with Core Policy 51, the proposal respects local landscape character and avoids adverse effects on important views or the wider scenic quality of the AONB. Furthermore, the design responds positively to its setting, demonstrating the high standards of design sought by Core Policy 57 through a functional, locally appropriate and unobtrusive agricultural building.

As such, the proposal represents a well-considered and policy-compliant form of rural development, with the very need for the development being driven by the conservation requirements of the local space and farm land, and planning permission should therefore be granted.

Highways

The proposal will be accessed by an existing gateway off the Shockerwick Lane, to which minimal alterations are proposed. A formal access track of crushed stone/hardcore will ensure the building can be accessed all year round without mud being brought onto the road.

The movements to and from this building will be minimal, with only one tractor moving to and from the site at any time.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposed site is currently an area of grass field used for making hay. No hedges or trees are to be impacted by the proposal.

The proposal is however subject to Biodiversity Net Gain conditions and a full assessment metric and plan are to be found alongside this application. The proposed off-setting is to be in the form of three trees to be planted near to the site.

Latest government guidance has announced a planned change to Biodiversity Net Gain, increasing the threshold for exempt development to 2,000 square metres from 31st July 2026. Whilst this application is to be submitted prior to this date, and therefore subject to the present requirements and undertakings, it is worth noting

that by the time a decision is expected to be made for this application, such conditions would not be applicable to an identical application.

Other Designations

Aside from the previously addressed location within the National Landscape, the site is not considered to have any further relationship with specially designated sites or buildings.

The site is within the Bath and Bristol Green Belt, but proposals of this nature are not relevant to this designation, this being an agricultural building to be built upon agricultural land.

No Public footpaths pass nearby to the site.

No Sites of Special Scientific Interest are nearby, nor historic or scheduled monuments.

The nearest Listed Building is Alcombe Manor to the North. The proposal and this building are separated by other buildings and significant green cover, and so the relationship between the two is considered minimal and the threat to the Listed Building negligible.

7. Conclusion

The building is considered necessary for the purposes of agriculture, and will facilitate the continued management of the land within the Freemans' ownership.

The siting and design of the building are considered the most practical, making best use of existing infrastructure and offering the most practical solutions to the evolving needs of the business.

The building would be considered compliant with the requirements under the General Permitted Development Order 2015, it being under 1,500 square metres, however the site lies within 3 kilometres of Colerne Aerodrome, making this non-compliant with GPDO regulation.

The building will enable the continued operations of an established agricultural business and should therefore be considered favourably.

Mrs & Mrs C Freeman
Farmed Area Plan

