

8 DCNW2003/3739/F - AGRICULTURAL WORKERS DWELLING AND INTEGRAL GARAGE AT ABBEY COURT FARM, WIGMORE, LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 9UF

For: Mr. & Mrs. C. Gurney, Garner Southall Partnership, 3 Broad Street, Knighton, Powys, LD7 1BL

Date Received:
12th December, 2003

Ward:
Mortimer

Grid Ref:
41001, 69865

Expiry Date:
6th February, 2004

Local Member: Councillor L.O. Barnett

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises a roughly rectangular 0.1 hectare plot on the eastern side of the A4110 approximately 1 km to the north west of Wigmore.
- 1.2 It lies immediately adjacent to the main farm access and is primarily characterised by a row of poplar trees defining the northern boundary and a modern disused dutch barn. Abbey Court Farmhouse is located on the opposite side of the main access and the main complex of farm buildings is located on land to the east of the application site.
- 1.3 Outline planning permission was granted for an additional dwelling on this site pursuant to application no. NW2002/3841/F and this application seeks approval for the detailed design of the dwelling.
- 1.4 A 3 bedroomed property incorporating integral farm office and garaging is proposed with the main accommodation running to a gross floor area of 175 metres. A part brick, part timber framed dwelling, with clay tiled roof is proposed to reflect the design of the existing farmhouse opposite.

2. Policies

PPG7 – The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development

Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

Policy CTC9 – Development Requirements
Policy A4 – Agricultural Dwellings

Leominster District Local Plan

Policy A1 – Managing the Districts Assets and Resources
Policy A2(D) – Settlement Hierarchy
Policy A9 – Safeguarding the Rural Landscape

Policy A24 – Scale and Character of Development
Policy A43 – agricultural or Forestry Dwellings

Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

Policy H6 – Housing in Smaller Settlements
Policy H7 – Housing in the Open Countryside outside Settlements
Policy H8 – Agricultural and Forestry Dwellings and Dwellings Associated with Rural Businesses

3. Planning History

NW2003/1377/S - Building for straw storage. Prior approval not required - 28 May 2003.

NW2002/3841/O - Site for key agricultural workers dwelling. Approved 28 February 2003.

NW2002/1351/O - Site for key agricultural workers dwelling. Refused 30 July 2002.

NW2000/2245/S - Straw storage building. Prior approval not required - 15 September 2000.

97/0818 - Resiting of agricultural workers dwelling. Approved pursuant to 91/747. Approved 25 February 1998.

97/0497 - Temporary siting of 2 caravans at farmbuilding. Approved 23 October 1997.

91/747 - Erection of replacement farmhouse and associated dairy farm. Approved 28 January 1992.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 The Environment Agency raise no objection to the proposal provided the existing foul drainage and soakaway arrangements are adequate.

5. Representations

- 5.1 The applicant has provided additional supporting information seeking to justify the size and detailed design of the dwelling which can be summarised as follows:

- the key worker status of the dwelling is emphasised
- intention is to attract a high quality dairy manager
- proposal is for a relatively modest 3 bedroom house with actual living space of 108 square metres
- site is within an area of existing farm buildings

- proposed office would replace existing portacabin which is vulnerable to intruders
 - farm enterprise is developing financially but needs to attract high quality employee
 - farm produces 2 million litres of milk per year a large proportion of which is from homegrown feed
 - build cost of approximately £125,000. £25,000 lump sum with the remaining £100,000 through a 15 year mortgage
 - long term commitment to the business also evidenced by 10 year countryside stewardship agreement. 725 metres of hedgerows planted, and creation of 9 hectare wetland area.
- 5.2 The statement also includes reference to the Mid Term Preview on agriculture and its impact upon Herefordshire. This indicates growing pressure in the farming economy. Further information relating to the required skill levels for a dairy herdsman is supplied.
- 5.3 Wigmore Parish Council raise no objection.
- 5.4 Adforton Parish Council supports the application as it appears to be in line with the Local Plan and tied to the Abbey Court Farm business.
- 5.5 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The proposed dwelling has been amended since the original submission, which has resulted in a reduction in the habitable floorspace through the removal of the master bedroom over the integral garage/farm office.
- 6.2 The concern with this proposal as it currently stands relates to the scale of the dwelling being commensurate with the established functional requirements of the Abbey Court Farm enterprise. Guidance is provided on this issue in paragraph 11, Annex I of PPG7 – The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development, which states that “agricultural dwellings should be of a size commensurate with the established functional requirements. Dwellings which are unusually large in relation to agricultural needs of the unit or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long term would not normally be permitted. It is the requirement of the enterprise rather than the owner or occupier which are relevant in determining the size of a dwelling that is appropriate is a particular holding.”
- 6.3 Other than this there is little guidance or advice as to what amounts to an appropriate scale. Further background is available in Policies H6, H7 and H8 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Deposit Draft), which set out a number of criteria that would ensure that the dwelling remains affordable for the occupiers it is intended to serve.
- 6.4 The current proposal for a dwelling of approximately 175 square metres (excluding the garage and farm office) does not compare favourably to the suggested Unitary

Development Plan limit of 90 square metres and whilst a degree of flexibility above this can be afforded, as revised the dwelling is not regarded to be of acceptable scale.

6.5 The applicant has set out a reasoned case that confirms that the dwelling needs to provide reasonably well appointed living space in order to attract the quality of employee required to manage the dairy herd and also the financing of the new dwelling would not be prohibitive to the viability of the enterprise. The future value of such a dwelling and its affordability for the purpose intended is however remains a matter for concern.

6.6 No other objections have been received in respect of this proposal and with the principle of a dwelling established the issue of scale is the only planning matter, which is at odds with the policies relevant to the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reason:

- 1. It is considered that the size of the dwelling is not commensurate with the established functional requirement of the enterprise and that the future occupation of the property in accordance with the occupancy condition would be compromised due to the high value of such a property. Consequently the proposal is contrary to the advice contained in Annexe I of Planning Policy Guidance 7. The Countryside, Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development.**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.