

The Development Plan

As indicated in the SoCG the Development Plan in relation to the proposal comprises the East Midlands Regional Plan (adopted in March 2009) and the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (adopted January 2004). The relevant policies of the Regional Plan and the relevant 'saved' policies of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan are listed in the SoCG and are a material consideration in the consideration of this case.

Government Advice

As indicated in the Statement of Common Ground during the appeal of the previous barn, national planning policy contained within PPS1, PPS7 and PPS18 are considered relevant to this proposal:

The main theme emerging from both development plan and national planning policy is that development in the countryside should be strictly controlled but that where essential development (for example, development related to agriculture) is to be permitted it should be of a high standard of design.

An example of this within national policy is contained within paragraph 36 of PPS1 where it states that the key objectives of design policies for new developments should include, inter alia, ensuring that developments respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness. A further example, this time from local plan policy, is Policy EV/1, which states that a high standard of design is sought in all developments. The criteria for acceptable development require, inter alia, that it is of a design, layout, scale and mass compatible with the locality and any neighbouring buildings and spaces. It is considered that the proposal complies with this policy because the design of the proposed building demonstrates an exemplary attention to detail. The building contains a number of design features characteristic of traditional farm buildings in the area such as timber barn doors and lintels, an oak frame and high pitched roofs. Furthermore, the materials chosen are also appropriate to the locality as stone and slate facings have been used. The layout of the site respects the local context in that it is set back from the road (rather being on the back edge of the carriageway). It is considered that the scale and mass of the building is appropriate to the locality as it does not exceed what could be constructed under permitted development using standard agricultural buildings materials, such as steel cladding or

cement fibre board. Such constructions would be incompatible with the locality and the designation of the area as a conservation area and part of the Charnwood Forest

Paragraph 16 of PPS7 states that when determining planning applications for development in the countryside, local planning authorities should, inter alia, support development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises. The building will support our agricultural business. PPS7 goes on to stress that the Government recognises the important and varied roles of agriculture, including in the maintenance and management of the countryside and most of our valued landscapes. Planning policies should support development proposals that will enable farming and farmers to, inter alia, become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly. We share these objectives and have proven how they would be met by developing our agricultural business.

Policy CT/1 of the Local Plan states that within the open countryside development will be strictly controlled. Planning permission will be granted, inter alia, for small scale new build development where there would not be a significant adverse environmental impact and the proposal would be essential for the efficient long term operation of agriculture, horticulture or forestry (criterion one). It is considered that the proposed new building is small scale when compared to other agricultural buildings, even those that are erected on relatively small agricultural holdings. The building has a footprint of approximately 252 square metres, which is significantly less than the limit for an agricultural building that could be erected under permitted development. It is considered that this supports the contention that the building is small scale. The building is considered to be essential for the long term operation of our agricultural business both at the site in Swithland and at Cropston as we have detailed. The storage space provided by this new building has been designed to cater for the different vehicles and items of equipment needed on the two sites for the different activities that are carried on both now and in the future. Policy CT/1 further states that it should be demonstrated that the development could not reasonably be located within or adjacent to an existing settlement. It is considered inappropriate for an agricultural building (even one as well designed as this one) to be accommodated within the main part of the village, however, it is considered that the building is clearly sited adjacent to it as required by the policy.

Using the criteria listed in policy CT/7 of the Local Plan, it is not considered that the proposed new building would detract from the essentially undeveloped rural character of the landscape, damage natural features/landform or diminish visual amenity afforded from important viewpoints. The building will not be considered to be prominent because although it will be visible from the road, it will be set back from it and screened by existing trees. The building will not be considered to be visually obtrusive for the same reason and it wont contain the same incongruous features as other agricultural (more modern looking) buildings such as grain silos, feed hoppers or water tanks. The materials and design of the proposed new building is considered to be compatible with its surroundings reflecting the traditional vernacular as demonstrated in the illustrations in Appendix 8. These examples also demonstrate that the scale and design of the proposed new building is appropriate for agriculture. The high quality design of the building and the materials used should be welcomed and supported rather than being a source of suspicion and concern.

The third criterion of policy CT/7 is not considered relevant as it relates to the protection from removal of traditional buildings or structures or other landscape features, which contribute to the special character and appearance of the locality. The proposed new development is justified for the purposes of agriculture and accordingly is considered to be acceptable in principle. Furthermore, it is considered that it would maintain the character of this attractive landscape, which is designated as an Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside in the Local Plan.

Assessing the building against the advice contained in national, regional and local plan policy, it is considered that the proposed building is of considerable merit in terms of its form, design, materials and that it's scale and massing is appropriate to its surroundings. The building will assist us in growing our agricultural business in a sustainable way without having any adverse impact on the character of this attractive area.