

Appendix 1

B/2007/0691-DI

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Our Ref:KCC101/VMD
Your Ref:
31st July 2007

Dear Daniel

B/2007/0691/DI ; ERECTION OF AGRICULTURAL STORAGE BUILDING FOR MACHINERY AND FODDER – RETROSPECTIVE AT BELCOTE FARM, MEARSE LANE, BELBROUGHTON

Further to your consultation dated 13th July received in this office on 19th July and my subsequent site visit on 27th July I have the following comments to make on the above planning application.

The Proposal

This retrospective planning application relates to the erection of a general purpose agricultural building measuring 37m by 25.4 m. The building provides some 940 m² of storage space. The building has been subdivided to provide an area for the secure storage of grain and machinery, this element of the building measures 25.4 m by 18.5, giving some 470 m² of storage space. This part of the building is similar to that applied for in 2006 (B/2006/0332). However it is some 5 m longer and wider than the original building, has two roller shutter doors instead of one and is in a slightly different location. The applicant informs me that he intends to use this part of the building for the storage of grain and will erect some form of temporary grain walling so that the remainder of this part of the building can be used for machinery storage.

The other half of the building is open fronted and is to be used for the storage of hay and straw.

The Enterprise and its proposed development

Belcote Farm was purchased by the applicant Mr Turan 3 years ago. The farm extends to 27 hectares (67 acres). Please note that the boundary is incorrectly shown on the application plans. Mr Turan also farms an adjacent 8 hectares (20 acres) on a joint farming agreement. There are no other agricultural buildings on the holding.

Since purchasing the property Mr Turan has invested significantly in a new access track, fencing and general maintenance work. When the ground was purchased it was in poor condition. At the current time the farm is all down to grass, with the majority having been re-seeded with a clover mix last year.

The farm is currently stocked with a small number of livestock, sheep (15 ewes and lambs) and cattle, all of which are out wintered.

The applicant informs us that he is planning to develop the unit as an arable unit, as prior to his purchase the land had been cropped for arable purposes.

At our site meeting he informed me that he was going to put the majority (3/4) of the unit, including the adjoining land, down to arable. This would equate to approximately 26 hectares being cropped for arable purposes. The remaining land would be grassland used for the production of hay / grazing the small number of livestock owned by the applicant.

The applicant intends to bale all of the hay and straw as small bales which he will store and then sell to the local equestrian market.

At the current time the applicant owns only limited machinery, including tractors, grass toppers, livestock trailer, small trailer and various miscellaneous equipment. However he informs me that he intends to purchase various equipment so that he can employ a worker to carry out the majority of the arable work on the holding. However combining will be carried out by a contractor.

The applicant also informs me that he intends to buy additional land in the area when it becomes available.

Assessment

In assessing whether the building is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture on the holding we must consider whether;

- the proposed use of the building is reasonable;
- the size of the building is acceptable;
- the design and layout of the building are appropriate; and
- the siting is acceptable.

Is the proposed use reasonable?

Grain Storage

Grain is often stored after harvest so that it can be marketed, or used later in the year. Prices are generally at their lowest at harvest time, and can be expected to rise with the length of storage, until the next harvest approaches.

It is therefore in our opinion reasonable for the applicant to store grain on the holding. A storage facility will enable him to obtain optimum prices for his grain. Without storage facilities he would be forced to sell grain straight off the field at harvest and would have to accept what ever the going rate was at that time.

Hay and Straw Storage

Hay, if left outside, will become damp or wet however well covered by tarpaulins or sheeting. This will spoil not only the outside bales but also soak through and spoil bales in the middle of the stack. Therefore for financial and animal welfare reasons it is essential and perfectly reasonable to expect a farmer to wish to store his / her hay under cover.

Like hay, straw stored outside can also be spoiled when wetted, so it is reasonable and common practice for a farmer to wish to store his straw inside a building.

We are therefore of the opinion that it is reasonable for the applicants to have adequate building space to store the hay and straw that is produced on the holding.

Machinery Storage

In our opinion it is reasonable for the applicant to wish to store his farm machinery under cover. Protecting machinery from the elements will prolong its working life. In addition it is important to protect machinery from vandals, not only for security purposes, but also from a Health and Safety point of view. Farm machinery is becoming increasingly scientific and in the wrong hands can be very dangerous.

In summary therefore I am of the opinion that it is reasonable for the applicant to have a secure building to store grain, hay / straw and machinery.

Is the size of the building acceptable?

The proposed building provides some 940 m² (gross) of storage space. This has been subdivided to comprise of a secure area suitable for grain / machinery storage, subject to the provision of some internal grain walling and an open fronted section suitable for hay / straw storage and possibly some machinery storage.

At the current time the building is clearly excessive for the needs of the holding.

As set out at the current time the holding only owns a limited amount of farm machinery and no grain is being produced. At the current time the proposed grain store / machinery store is only partly used and is also being used for ancillary residential storage.

The open fronted section is also mainly empty (however at this time of the year this would be expected with no hay or straw having being cropped).

Therefore I conclude that the existing building is excessive for the existing needs of the holding.

However, given that the applicant wishes to re-introduce arable cropping to the farm it would be reasonable for him to at the very least gained consent for a building which he can store grain, straw and machinery in before he started to crop the land.

I therefore set out below an assessment of what I see as the reasonable storage requirements for the farm if it were to put back to arable cropping as indicated by the applicant.

The figures are based on approximately 26 hectares being cropped for arable crops, approximately 2 hectares as set aside and the remaining 7 hectares for hay production / livestock grazing. The calculations are based on the farm being put down to winter wheat.

Table KCC 1 : Storage Requirements for Farm (Data taken from Farm Management Pocketbook (37th Edition))

Item	Quantity	Storage Requirement per unit	Total (m ³)	Total (m ²)
Grain	Cropping 26 hectare at average yield of 8.25 tonne / ha 215 tonne	1.3 m ³ / tonne	280 m ³	Assume Average Stack Height 2 m 140 m ²
Hay	Cropping 7 hectares, assuming yield of 5.5 tonne / ha in a good year two cuts could be taken 77 tonne produced per year	6 m ³ / tonne	462 m ³	Assume Average Stack Height 5.5 m 85 m ²
Straw	Cropping 26 hectares yielding average 3.5 tonne / ha 90 – 100 tonne produced	13 m ³ / tonne	1300	Assume Average Stack Height 5.5 m 240 m ²

The hay and straw crops require approximately 325 m² of storage, this is some 145 m² less than the size of the open fronted building. However it would in my opinion be reasonable to allow for above average yields in some years, and on occasions not all of the previous year's crop may have been sold so there will be a need for some double storing. Therefore in my opinion, if the applicant develops his business as proposed, the area allowed for straw and hay storage is reasonable.

The grain produced on the holding will require approximately 140 m² of storage. Taking into account an area for internal grain walls and access into the building there will be an area of approximately 300 m² of building space for storing machinery, sprays / fertilizers, and for use as a work shop.

If the applicant were to purchase his own equipment (with the exception of a combine and grain trailers), then it would be reasonable to expect him to have a tractor, tractor with loader, plough, power harrow, drill, rolls, fertilizer spreader, sprayer, small baler, bale sledge, large trailer for bringing bales off the field and a smaller trailer for delivering bales to customers, mower and hay rake. As well as general maintenance equipment including topper, hedge cutter and equipment for handling / moving his live stock i.e. stock trailer, crush etc.

In my opinion an area of approximately 300 m² (including access and workability) is reasonable for the storage of machinery / fertilizers and sprays and as use as a workshop.

Therefore if the unit were to be put back to arable cropping as suggested by the applicant then I am satisfied that the proposed building is of a size reasonably required by the unit.

Is the design the building appropriate?

The proposed building measures some 5.5 m to eaves, in my opinion this is a reasonable height for such a building. It allows sufficient height for the tipping of grain trailers and enables hay / straw to be stacked to the maximum reach height of most loader tractors.

The grain / machinery storage element of the building is fully clad with access via two roller shutter doors or pedestrian doors. The walls are clad with concrete panels to a height of 2.5 m with box profile cladding above. Such a design is suitable for the intended uses. The section of the building which is proposed for the storage of hay and straw is open fronted. Again typical of a building which is to be used for fodder storage.

In summary the design of the building is suitable for its intended use.

Is the siting acceptable?

In agricultural terms the siting is acceptable. The building is adjacent to the existing residential property and associated out buildings. Such a siting is in accordance with advice set out in Annex E of PPG 7 (which is still in operation) **“new buildings should normally form part of a group rather than stand in isolation”**.

I am not qualified to comment on the landscape issues associated with the siting of the building.

Summary

Clearly at the current time the building is not reasonably required for the purposes of agriculture on the holding, as there is only limited machinery that requires storage and the farm is not currently producing any grain.

At the current time the agricultural needs of the holding could be met by the provision of a much smaller building.

However, if the applicant wishes to put the majority of the unit back to arable cropping then I am of the opinion that:

- the proposed use of the building is reasonable;
- the size of the building is acceptable for the proposed agricultural activities;
- the design and layout of the building are appropriate; and
- the siting is acceptable.

Given that this is a retrospective application and the need relates to a proposed enterprise, it may be appropriate to grant consent for a temporary period so that the Council can be satisfied that the enterprise develops as indicated.

Alternatively the Council may wish to consider imposing a condition that would require the building to be removed if it ceased to be used for agricultural purposes, such as that set out in Part 6 Schedule 2 A.2 (4) of the General Permitted Development Order (Amendment 1997).

“where the use of the building or extension for the purposes of agriculture within the unit permanently ceases within ten years from the date on which the development was substantially completed. . . . the building. . shall be removed from the land”

I would also recommend that should consent be granted a condition is attached which requires any alterations to the building, in particular any changes to the open elevation, to be confirmed in writing by the Council.

I trust that this appraisal provides you with sufficient information to determine the application. However should you wish to discuss this in more detail please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

VERITY DREWETT