

Application No: 09/01299/F	Ward: Cropredy	Date Valid: 30 October 2009
Applicant:	Michael McTaggart	
Site Address:	Land Parcel 2783 Main Street Great Bourton	

Proposal: Erection of block of 6 no. stables (2 no. to be used as Tackroom and food/hay storage) and erection of barn and rest room with track from main gate and change of use of the land for the keeping of horses

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site lies approximately 400 metres east of the village of Great Bourton fronting the main road connecting the village to Cropredy. The main line railway that separates the villages is some 200 metres further east. The land is at a level several metres below Great Bourton and is clearly open and viewable from the main road as it leaves the village.
- 1.2 The application site is a grassed field, 1.6 hectares (4 acres) in size, not quite rectangular in shape, with a gentle undulation, measuring 120 metres by 80 metres across its central points. Its boundaries are well defined by hedging with odd trees. There are the remnants of a building in the far corner of the site. There is a gated entrance from the corner of the field to the road across a grass verge.
- 1.3 The proposed development consists of a number of distinct elements. In the far corner of the field is a barn/restroom. L shaped, it measures 15.4 metres by 20 metres at its widest and would be faced with timber panelling under a shallow pitched roof. A second building backs onto the road. It measures 22 by 4.3 metres and contains 4 stable enclosures and 2 tack rooms; it will also be constructed with timber cladding under felt roofing. The field will also be subdivided by 3 bar fencing to create smaller paddocks and there will be a gravelled drive to the barn/restroom although the first 6 metres will be concreted. In notes submitted with the application reference is made to a 1.83 metre gate at the entrance although there are no details of this. In fact the application is characterised by a number of anomalies and ambiguities arising, possibly, by two sets of drawings being submitted, one scaled plans, the other more illustrative. There is a design and access statement but this does not help explain why the field needs to be subdivided, the rationale for the buildings size, shape, use or appearance, or why so many buildings are required for a relatively small site.

2. Application Publicity

- 2.1 The application has been advertised by way of a site and press notice. In fact the

application was advertised for a second time after the address and application site location were clarified. The date for comments was extended to 24th December 2009. A number of comments have been made which are set out below,

2.2 Two objections have been received:

- Too small a field for 6 horses, proliferation of equestrian development, detract from rural landscape, problem with flooding if 1960's drain gets blocked, inaccuracies in the plan, effect on my hedge and water meter pit, concerned at need for restroom and possible future use, undesirable urban appearance.
- Spurious applications should not be permitted, resist suburban mish mash, gross overdevelopment, applicant lives 20 miles away, support Parish council objections

3. Consultations

3.1 Cropredy Parish Council object:

Overdevelopment, an area of flooding and run off will increase with risk of flooding school and adjacent properties.

3.2 Bourtons Parish Council object:

Area of high landscape value; open landscape important to the setting of the villages; stable block, barn all intrusive, visible from village and roads and paths; inadequate grazing for number of horses; no demonstrable need for the development as a whole, for the barn, rest room; land prone to flooding, the tracks should be permeable; gate too big; any planting should be native; lack of consultation; need for security; creeping urbanization. If approved the Parish council request a number of conditions be imposed such as no equestrian use, no security lighting, no windows or doors (visible from the road), native planting, no parking of horseboxes or caravans, retain hedge, stables for horses only, manure removed from site and redesign access.

Thank you for re-advertising the application.

3.3 County Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Council: The area is of some archaeological interest and a condition is recommended to secure a watching brief whilst development is undertaken.

4. Relevant Planning Policies

4.1 **Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering sustainable development**
Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

4.2 **Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (The South East Plan) 2009**
Policy C4: Landscape and Countryside Management
BE5: Village Management

4.3 **Adopted Cherwell Local Plan November 1996 (ACLP 1996)**

Policy C28: Layout, design and external appearance of new development
Policy AG5: Development Involving Horses
Policies C7,C8: Landscape Conservation
Policy C12: Area of High Landscape Value
Policy C14: Trees and Landscaping

4.4 Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (NSCLP 2011)

Policy EN1: Conserve/Enhance the Environment
Policy D1: Urban Design Objectives
Policy D3: Local Distinctiveness
Policy EMP11: Development Involving Horses
Policies EN30, EN31: Countryside Protection
Policies EN34,EN35: Landscape Character
Policy EN36: Landscape Enhancement
Policy EN47: Archaeology

5. Appraisal

5.1 The application raises two main issues:

- Whether the principle of development is acceptable; and
- Does it cause harm to the landscape and the wider visual amenity of the area

5.2 The Principle of Development

It is the policy of the Council (policy AG5 ACLP96) to permit development involving horses subject to three conditions, that it does not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside; it would not adversely affect neighbouring properties; and that it complies with other relevant policies. The first and last points will be further discussed below but as a planning unit it enjoys a high degree of separation from the nearest residential properties together with an element of screening by trees and hedging. PPS7 is also sympathetic to the recreational and economic effects of equestrian activities providing environmental quality and countryside character are maintained.

5.3 Impact on the appearance, quality and character of the Countryside and its Landscape.

The site is part of a large open swathe of countryside that because of its environmental quality has been designated as being of High Landscape Value (HLV). In these areas the scale and type of development has to be carefully controlled, especially siting and design of new buildings, policy C13 of the ACLP 96 is applicable. The site is prominent in that landscape, fronting the Great Bourton/Cropredy road and being highly visible from the village of Great Bourton, particularly from the road as it emerges from the village and at which point the field is seen against the slope of the Cherwell Valley with the tree lined railway embankment beyond.

5.4 Policy C8 of the ACLP 96, which applies to any proposal beyond the built up limits of settlements, states sporadic development in the open countryside will generally

be resisted, policy C7 also states that development will not be permitted if it causes harm to the topography and character of the landscape and policy C28 requires new development to be sympathetic to the rural context of the site, especially in Areas of HLV.

5.5 Two buildings are proposed. The first a 6 bay stable block. Local residents have challenged the balance between the size of the plot and whether it is capable of accommodating that number of horses (although two of the bays are indicated for storage.) Certainly the need for the second building is unclear and it is this building which is bigger and in the more prominent part of the site intruding into the skyline when viewed from the west. New structures in the rural landscape should be limited, and when proposed should be carefully sited and designed to minimise their impact which is not the case here.

5.6 It is considered the proposed buildings are going to stand out in the landscape, the stable block being at the front of the site behind the hedge that runs alongside the main road. It will therefore be partly screened but not hidden. The more bulky barn/restroom will be even more prominent because though it is to the rear of the site it is on a rise. To reduce the visual impact of these buildings, landscaping could be of assistance and although illustrative planting is shown on the submitted drawings, it is not felt it will be totally effective and therefore the proposal conflicts with the development plan, including policy AG5, and should be refused.

5.7 **Other Issues**

Design and Appearance

The visual appearance of the two buildings together with the other elements of the scheme has been subject of some strong criticism by local interests. However the buildings themselves are low slung and would be constructed in timber cladding (actual details of materials can be controlled by condition) so in themselves may be considered to be inoffensive. In the view of the Officers, it is the size of the buildings combined with their position in prominent locations that is objectionable and the effect they have on the landscape and the open countryside surrounding the site.

5.8 **Flooding**

It is a criticism of the scheme that the land where the development is proposed floods and the new building and hard surfacing will exacerbate this. In fact the site is not in an area considered to be one likely to cause flood risk problems, furthermore the building's footprints are not huge. There is of course an extended drive which seems unnecessary if the building it is proposed to access was located to a more appropriate position, assuming there is one on the application site. And the Council could ensure, if permission were to be granted, that conditions could be imposed to secure permeable surfacing and the site was sustainably drained.

5.9 **Archaeology**

The site is in an area where prehistoric archaeology has been found, certainly there is a prehistoric field system south of the site and there are cropmarks which indicate medieval farming in the area. However, the advice of the County Archaeologist is not to object to the development but that if permission was granted a condition be imposed to secure a watching brief when development was undertaken.

5.10 **Conditions**

Government advice is that planning permission should only be refused where there are clear and sound reasons to do so and if conditions can be imposed to overcome those reasons for refusal they should be used. In this case officers have concluded that permission should be refused and that conditions cannot overcome the reason for refusal. They have also carefully considered conditions suggested by the Parish Council if permission were granted and whilst some may be appropriate others fail to pass the tests laid down in government advice either because they are unreasonable, unenforceable or could be dealt with by other legislation.

6. Conclusion

Having fully considered all the details submitted with the application and taken into account comments made by third parties, this application has been determined in accordance with the development plan and is considered to be unacceptable on its planning merits as the proposed development will adversely impact on the character of the countryside. It is therefore recommended that Committee refuse planning permission for the reason set out below.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that planning permission is refused for the following reason:

- 1. The erection of the two proposed stables and barn/restroom buildings of the size and in the positions proposed would, if approved, be an intrusive development harming the topography and character of the landscape and erode the open character and appearance of the countryside contrary to policies C5 and BE5 of the South East Plan 2009, policies AG5, C7, C8, C13 and C28 of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 and policies EMP11, EN30, EN31 and EN34 of the Non Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011.**

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