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Your ref 3/2011/0865
Our ref PG/EVP/ER/3/35/8356/LK
Date 12 January 2012

Dear Ms Horton

APPLICATION NUMBER 3/2011/0865
SQUIRE HOUSE, CLITHEROE ROAD, KNOWLE GREEN, LANCASHIRE,
PR3 2YS
GRID REFERENCE 364846 438410

I refer to your consultation letter concerning the above application and have the following comments to make.

Introduction

A planning application has been submitted by Mr Richard Wooldridge of Harrison Pitt Architects on behalf of Mr Darrin Robinson for the erection of an agricultural building. A site visit was made on 4 January 2011 whilst the applicant was present. The information provided at this meeting, together with the written submissions, forms the basis of this appraisal.

Background Information

I was informed by the applicant that he purchased the site in late 2008/early 2009. Since this time, the applicant has demolished the original farmhouse and built a new dwelling on site along with a series of outbuildings and garages. Along with Squire House, the applicant purchased approximately 75 acres of land at the application site. The proposed agricultural building is to accommodate agricultural items associated with the management of the applicant's land at Squires House along with a small amount of land adjoining two other properties owned by the applicant. It is proposed that the new agricultural building would be situated on the footprint of the original Squire House plot.

E P G Robertson BSc (Hons) MRICS
Senior Assistant Land Agent
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Agricultural Land

I was informed by the applicant that the land at Squire House extends to approximately 75 acres (30.35 hectares), all of which is situated at Squire House and ring fenced. I was told that all of this land is down to grass other than some areas of woodland.

In addition to the land at Squire House, the applicant informed me that he owned a further 5 acres (2.02 hectares) of land split into two paddocks which adjoin two other properties owned by the applicant situated in Ribchester. I was told by the applicant that the land adjoining these two properties is managed in-hand by the applicant.

Agricultural Enterprise

I understand that the land owned by the applicant is currently let to two farmers on an annual basis. I was told by the applicant that between the two farmers approximately 300 ewes are kept on the 75 acres of land at Squire House.

I was informed by the applicant that his future intention to bring the management of the land at Squire House back in-hand with a reduced grazing period being granted to the two tenants and the applicant himself, taking a crop off the land for the purposes of hay and haylage. It is my understanding that the applicant intends to sell the hay and haylage produced on site to the local equine community for feed. The applicant informed me that he intends to undertake a large amount of improvement works to the land in order to create better grasslands from which he can take a greater crop of hay/haylage from.

Existing Buildings

The buildings currently situated at Squire House consist of a variety of timber constructed outbuildings and garages. The outbuildings are used for the accommodation of the applicant's woodchip boiler and woodchip feeder along with a workshop and storage area.

Proposed Development

The proposal is to erect a general purpose storage building as shown on the plan submitted for the storage of the applicant's machinery, hay, woodchip, fertiliser, seed and other agricultural implements used in the management of the applicant's land.

Please note that half height internal concrete panelled wall and a ventilated ridge will be incorporated within the design but are not shown on the plans submitted.

The applicant informed me that he is currently in the process of bringing the land back in-hand with the current tenants' use of the land to be reduced and eventually terminated. The applicant considers the need for the building is justified to store the implements needed to maintain the land in addition to the produce taken from it.

The applicant informed me that it was he was in the process of improving the land at Squire House Farm and it is his intention to take a cut of hay from as much of his land as possible.

Assessment

The proposed development is within an area shown on the Ribble Valley Local Plan as being land outside the main settlement/village boundaries and within an area of outstanding natural beauty. Policy G5 provides guidance for development in land outside the main settlement/village boundaries and states:

"outside the main settlement boundaries and the village boundaries planning consent will only be granted for small scale developments, which are:

ii) "needed for the purpose of agriculture or forestry"

With reference to this policy, I consider the following matters should be taken into account when assessing this application:

1. The development is needed for the purposes of agriculture.

It should be noted that the applicant is employed outside of agriculture and currently does not carry out an agricultural enterprise at Squire House as all the land is let out, albeit on a short term basis.

However, the area of land at the application site is relatively large, and should the land be taken back in hand and hay is grown, as is proposed by the applicant, then an undercover storage facility for the proposed hay crop would be required.

The applicant has also acquired a reasonable amount of machinery, the acquisition of which, in my opinion, demonstrates the applicant's intentions to develop the enterprise at Squire House. It is my opinion that this machinery, which will be needed for the production of hay in addition to the maintenance of the land, would benefit from being stored undercover.

In regards to the storage of woodchip within the proposed development, it is my opinion that the storage of woodchip for the purposes of a residential woodchip boiler is not classified as agriculture under the definition stipulated in Section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and therefore there is no agricultural justification for the storage of this item within the building.

Having taking into consideration the current circumstance and land at Squire House, in addition to discussing the future plan for the unit with the applicant, it is clear that whilst no agricultural business is currently undertaken by the applicant from the unit, there is a significant acreage of land at Squire House which could accommodate an agricultural enterprise, could potentially become far more productive and currently requires management, even if no commercial agricultural enterprise is undertaken. Taking the above into consideration, along with the absence of any suitable agricultural building at Squire House, it is my opinion that a purpose built facility is required for the purposes of agriculture in connection to the operation of the unit.

2. The design and size are appropriate for the intended use.

The materials proposed to be used for the building are suitable for the intended use and would allow for good ventilation through the building. However, in terms of the building's design, given that the building will have multiple uses, with one of the principle uses being for the storage of hay, it is my opinion that access is limited and a part open fronted building would be more suitable for the intended use, allowing for easy access to and from the building.

In terms of the size of the proposed development, taking into consideration the current circumstance, being that the land at Squire House is occupied by a third party and only a limited amount of hay can be cropped from the applicant's ownership, the building, in my opinion, is larger than necessary. However, notwithstanding my comments above, consideration needs to be given to the fact that the existing occupants are on short term agreement, it is the applicant's intention to take the land in hand in the near future and the applicant is in the process of improving the grassland at Squire House, in order to produce a greater amount of hay.

In my opinion, having given consideration to the requirements necessary for the storage of the applicant's machinery and agricultural implements, the remaining area available within the proposed development for the storage of hay would not be excessive when considering the acreage owned by the applicant and the potential hay crop that could be taken from this land.

12 January 2012

It is therefore my opinion that the building is of an appropriate size in association with the intended use and size of the unit

3. Siting

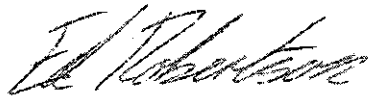
In regards to the proposed siting of the building, it is my opinion that the development is situated in an appropriate position from an operational point of view given its proximity to the applicant's residence, the other buildings on site and the land. In addition, the building would benefit from good access being adjacent to the access track serving Squire House.

Other Comments

If planning consent is granted, you may consider it appropriate to condition the building so that it can be used for agricultural purposes only and not for any domestic storage, including the storage of the woodchips.

I would be grateful to receive a copy of your Decision Notice in due course.

Yours sincerely



E P G Robertson BSc (Hons) MRICS
Senior Assistant Land Agent
on behalf of the Director of Property