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Sent: 22 September 2017 17:18
To: Christopher Hall; Statutory
Cc: Rob Fairbanks EI; Pennie King EI
Subject: 2017/1807 Agricultural barn, Tillingdown Farm, Tillingdown Lane, Woldingham
Attachments: 2017.1807 agricultural building, Tillingdown Farm, Tillingdown Lane, Woldingham.doc

Dear Chris,

Please find the attached AONB planning advice on the above application.

Regards,

Clive Smith
Surrey Hills AONB Planning Adviser
01372 220655

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PLANNING APPLICATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE OF THE SURREY HILLS AONB PLANNING ADVISER.

Agricultural building, Tillingdown Farm, Tillingdown Lane, Woldingham. Application 2017/1807.

The proposal is to replace on an AONB hill ridge the large barn to be demolished as part of the residential redevelopment.

Normally, agricultural buildings are acceptable within an AONB. In this case, the principle of the proposed barn is open to serious question in view of the planning background. The existing building's floor area was taken into account in calculating the residential floor area of the permitted housing scheme where site preparation is currently underway.

The principle of redeveloping an agricultural building for housing and then replacing the building elsewhere on the farm holding is unacceptable within an AONB. Further, if that principle were to be accepted, a most undesirable precedent would be set. The economic incentive for other owners of agricultural buildings to do the same in the Surrey Hills AONB where residential redevelopment values are some of the highest in the UK, would be substantial. Therefore it would likely be repeated many times. Serious cumulative harm upon the character of the AONB would result.

The Surrey Hills AONB advice on application 2014/1107 for the 14 dwellings eventually permitted following an appeal and subsequent permission amending building designs, is relevant in this regard. The advice pointed out the danger of not ascertaining the necessary buildings to service the remaining farm holding. The following paragraph was included in the advice.

"The Council is asked that the consideration of any redevelopment include the future of the farm holding and any necessary buildings to service it. Any redevelopment scheme should include a farm plan that could be embodied within a Section 106 Agreement. It would include how the holding or former farm holding would be farmed and managed and what landscape, conservation and ecology enhancement would be implemented as part of any permission. If the application site has been fragmented from the surrounding farm land then the Council is asked to take a very restrictive approach to any redevelopment. This may not be the case here, but development proposals resulting from asset stripping of farm holdings in an AONB are inconsistent with the original and fundamental purpose of AONB designation being that their natural beauty should be both conserved and enhanced."

The officer report to Committee dismissed this advice as follows:

"Whilst it is acknowledged that the site was previously used as a farm holding this use ceased many years ago, according to the applicant in the 1970s. A S.106 agreement incorporating a farm plan would not therefore be considered necessary."

How the Council considered that the remaining land would be managed without any replacement buildings is not known. The result is this application for a large agricultural building to service 52 hectares of farmland. Had the AONB advice been followed and it been ascertained that 52 hectares of land cannot be serviced without any agricultural buildings, the amount of residential redevelopment would have been less with less consequent harm to the AONB.

The starting point from an AONB aspect is that the principle of the proposed agricultural building should be refused. Smaller agricultural buildings may meet permitted development rights. They too would be regrettable but seemingly unavoidable because the issue was not addressed at the appropriate time when the redevelopment was considered.

If notwithstanding the above, the Council following agricultural advice considers that the proposed size of building is necessary to service the land, an alternative site should be found avoiding a ridgeline, well screened and possibly related to other buildings rather in the open landscape. The proposed building on this hilltop would be conspicuous in the landscape mainly across the valley to the east. It would unlikely be visible from the west because of a line of trees and hedgerow and the short distance contours.

A fundamental principle of locating agricultural buildings is to avoid ridgelines. Moreover, Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan Policy LU2 specifically refers to the potential impacts on ridgelines needing particular attention. The policy reads as follow:

“Policy LU2 - Development will respect the special landscape character of the locality, giving particular attention to potential impacts on ridgelines, public views, tranquillity and light pollution. The proposed use and colour of external building materials will be strictly controlled to avoid building being conspicuous in the landscape”.

Alternative sites should therefore be investigated for this building or a smaller building as the current one is unacceptable on AONB grounds.

Other relevant considerations are the external materials, their colour and tree and hedgerow planting to help screen the building.

The proposal is for the building to be clad with steel sheeting. This sheeting is often used in agricultural buildings but even when appropriately coloured is not a natural building material and can result in a building being more conspicuous than with the use natural timber. It is suggested that timber boarding would be a more sensitive external material. The colour and texture of the roof will also need careful consideration especially as its angle would tend to reflect the light. Light colours should be avoided. If steel is considered to be acceptable by the Council a colour assessment should be carried out on the site and from viewpoints to ascertain the most appropriate colour.

Again, if the Council finds the proposed site acceptable a substantial tree and shrubbery belt of native species of at least 4 metres in depth should be planted and maintained. A single line of thinly spaced trees and shrubs would not provide a sufficiently effective visual screen.

Lastly, future proposals to use and/or convert the building to other uses that may normally meet national and local planning policies should be controlled through a S.106 Agreement. A planning condition would give insufficient control.

Clive Smith
Surrey Hills AONB Planning Adviser
22 September 2017.

Tandridge

District Council