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DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANCY ARCHITECTURE CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS
WILDLIFE PRODUCTS

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

(including extended evaluation in respect of Policy RES12 and PPS 7)

for

Proposed Agricultural Dwelling

at

Breach Farm,
Off Breach Lane,
Earl Shilton,
Leicestershire

for

Mr. T. Abbott

Chartered Institute of
Architectural Technologists

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This statement has been prepared in accordance with CABE Document 'Design Statements – How to Write and Read them'

ASSESSMENT

Physical Context

The subject site is that at grid reference SP468967 to the south of the new Earl Shilton Bypass where it severs Breach Lane, Earl Shilton. The site is agricultural land with two recently constructed steel framed, steel clad barns to the immediate south of the proposed bungalow location. The field is currently laid to pasture and the site location is surrounded on three sides by other agricultural land to the west, south and east with the Earl Shilton Bypass running loosely south-west to north-east to the north of the site approximately 180m distant. The land falls gently from north to south.

The Earl Shilton Bypass has severed the land formerly forming the full extent of Breach Farm and the land to the north of the bypass within the previous curtilage of the farm is now being developed for residential purposes through a H&B Local Plan allocation, with the former farm buildings in that location having also been demolished to facilitate this development. The former farmhouse on Breach Lane is now detached from the site by the bypass and no direct access from Breach Lane for vehicle access will be possible once the bypass is complete thus leaving only pedestrian access across the bypass on what will be a particularly busy road between the original farmhouse and the now detached farmland. Furthermore the former farmhouse is to remain occupied by the mother of the applicant, the retired Mrs Abbott, and the applicant will be running the farm in his own right as he has been for some time.

Social Context

Local people and the wider community are likely to have no particular aspirations for the site other than for it to stay in agricultural use with it being in open countryside beyond what might be construed as the physical limits to development (being the line of the bypass). The site has been the subject of previous planning applications for agricultural buildings and stables; the agricultural buildings now being complete and the stables in the course of erection but other than this the only known reference made to the possibility of an agricultural dwelling at this location was during a planning committee site visit at the time when the new barns were approved adjacent to the proposed dwelling at which time Councillors commented that they expected that the applicant would be seeking a new dwelling on the opposite side of the bypass as the original farmhouse would be cut-off from the land by the bypass. It is also the case that Mr. & Mrs. Abbott, during the time when they operated the farm prior to the now applicant taking control, were not thoroughly aware of the procedure when the bypass was built otherwise they may perhaps of insisted that their dwelling be, in effect, relocated at the time; however no provision was made for this nor was any provision made for access across the bypass for them to operate the holding from the original house and, as such, this opportunity has been missed and in any case the applicant now controls the farm.

Economic Context

The site previously comprised an agricultural operation stretching to 101 acres but the bypass and residential land take-up have reduced this to 89 acres and the applicant therefore rented an additional 10 acres during 2008, with this being set to continue in 2009 or may be increased with the land largely laid to pasture to provide grazing for beef stock. The recently approved stables will provide D.I.Y. stabling for up to 10 horses and this of course will contribute to the income of the farm.

The funding available from the land now under residential development to the north of the bypass would clearly more than adequately cover the cost of the construction of the dwelling at this location and despite this substantial income it is the applicant's laudable intention to continue to farm this area rather than and move on as it is his way of life with the farm having been in the family for over 35 years.

Planning Policy

The policies in Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan adopted 1st February 2001 relating to this application are:

RES12– New Agricultural Dwellings
NE5 – Development in the Countryside
NE8 – Species Protection
NE12 – Landscaping Schemes
T5 – Highway Design and Vehicle Parking Standards
REC1 – New Residential Development - Outdoor open space provision for formal recreation
REC3 – New Residential Development - Outdoor play-space for children

Clearly the most significant of the above is RES12, New Agricultural Dwellings which states:

In assessing planning applications for dwellings required to accommodate the person employed in agriculture, the following matters will be considered:

a. The agricultural holding must be of the nature that requires a person to live on the site, having regard to the security and efficient operation of the holding;

b. The holding must be sufficiently viable to sustain any additional worker in full time employment;

c. The availability of suitable alternative accommodation in the local housing market.

Where the principle of a new agricultural dwelling is supported every effort should be made to locate it within a settlement, or alternatively, within or adjacent to an existing farm complex or other group of buildings.

The HBBC Residential Design Guide 2000 seeks to ensure high design standards for new residential development:

Design of new buildings and layout are considered important:

"The main aims of this guidance are to ensure new developments are well integrated into their surroundings, offer a good standard of security and amenity to future residents, protect the amenity of existing occupiers and are locally distinctive in their appearance."

Design of new development should be shaped by the character of the surrounding built environment.

Materials should reflect the locality.

Layout should favourably integrate into its surroundings and should take account of levels, orientation, access to light, exposure to sunlight, etc.

Safe and convenient access should be provided and security maximised.

Car parking should be provided in accordance with PPG 3, i.e. to achieve a Borough-wide average of 1.5 car spaces per dwelling unit.

Layout should maximise amenity and interest.

Separation distances should be achieved. Minimum garden lengths of 12.5m may be reduced where a minimum garden area is provided. Minimum garden areas are 60m2 for two-bedroom properties and 80m2 for three bedrooms. The garden area should not be out of keeping with the general character of the area.

Gardens should be adequately screened in keeping with the locality.

Highway design should be as specified in LCC 'Highway Requirements for Development'.

Note: Standards are generally minima and are not intended to preclude the proposal of imaginative schemes.

<u>Planning Policy Statement 7 (ODPM, DCLG)</u>

<u>Annex A</u>

Paragraph 1 states that agricultural dwellings may be justified, "when accommodation is required to enable (full time) agricultural . . . workers to live at . . . their place of work"

". . . where the nature and demands of the work . . . make it essential for people engaged . . . to live at, or very close to, the site . . ."

". . .this . . . will depend on the needs of the enterprise concerned . . ."

Paragraph 2 is concerned with ensuring that those seeking to abuse the system are detected through scrutiny, going-on to state that, ". . . to establish whether . . . intentions to engage in farming . . . are genuine . . . and are capable of being sustained. . . "

"Permanent Agricultural Dwellings

New permanent agricultural dwellings should only be allowed to support existing agricultural activities on well established agricultural units, providing:

i. There is a clearly established *existing* functional need . . .

ii. The unit (and activities) have been established for . . . 3 years . . . are financially sound, etc.

iii. The need relates to a full-time worker . . . primarily employed in agriculture.

iv. The functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit . . .

v. . . . (potential) access, or impact . . . are satisfied"

The remainder of the annex goes on to discuss the need for workers to be on hand, animal welfare, security, economic viability, unusually large or expensive dwellings, permitted development rights, siting, temporary dwellings, etc.

Involvement

Pre-application discussions were held with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and it was clear from this stage that, in design terms, the proposal was considered perfectly acceptable the dwelling being of traditional design and of modest proportions which would be a possible prerequisite of the location in open countryside. The advice received from the LPA over and above design related to a need to demonstrate a requirement for the dwelling for agricultural purposes and also to demonstrate the lack of suitability of the existing dwelling together with the changing relationship therewith. A supporting statement for the proposal in general terms and a description of the now torturous route from the former farmhouse to the now detached land would be required.

Evaluation

The previous approval of barns and, more recently, stables at Breach Farm will provide the opportunity to group buildings in a fairly tight radius thus allowing the proposed dwelling to be read as part of that group. Furthermore the evaluation of this issue concluded that the dwelling could possibly be located directly between the substantial barns erected on site and the bypass which is nearing completion thus minimising the impact on open countryside and providing a view to the public of a dwelling set against agricultural buildings rather than providing a wider "street scene" with the dwelling causing a loose-knit group of buildings to spread out into a more significant area of open countryside.

The design of the dwelling, as previously stated, could be of a traditional form of modest proportions and in natural materials consistent with the location. Vehicle access from the south-west bound carriageway of the Earl Shilton Bypass has been provided for as part of the new road development via a junction off the now severed easternmost length of Breach Lane and the driveway linking this to the agricultural buildings and proposed dwelling has been located discreetly adjacent to the boundary of the bypass, then utilising an existing track running north-south directly to the buildings.

The height and scale of the building proposed could be an issue if proposed at two-storeys but, limited to single-storey, it could be set against the existing group of buildings, rather than project above, and thereby create a lesser potential impact in the location.

Extended evaluation in respect of RES12 and PPS 7

In direct response to H & B Local Plan Policy RES12 requirements a to c:

a. The operation involves the rearing of 90 head of beef stock and the stabling of up to 10 horses. Accommodation for which is located immediately adjacent to the proposed siting of the associated dwelling. From an animal welfare and security perspective the dwelling is essential. The farm, prior to the construction of the bypass and allocation of the part of Breach Farm north of that for housing, the access from house to farm buildings and, in turn, the associated land was convenient and had remained so (in the Abbott family ownership) since their first occupation in the 1970's. Livestock could be attended to a moment's notice and there was no encumbrance in terms of time nor distance. There was little pressure on the location in respect of security although there is the concern of arson attack on ricks in any agricultural situation

   Greater pressure will be put on the land in respect of the need for immediate security and animal welfare than ever before with the advent of the bypass and the associated exposure the land and buildings will in future be subjected to. The somewhat sleepy nature of the original Breach Lane location has been lost and direct access to the land removed, with access to the detached land via the new road network from the original farmhouse now being 1.27 miles (Google Earth Pro) rather than *immediate* – far enough to be beyond necessary control
b. The Abbotts have made a living from the land for nearly 40 years and now, with the farm having passed to the Applicant, this will remain the case. Mr Abbott will be in full time employment, as he has been
c. There can be little doubt that there is suitable housing in the local market in terms of price, especially with the currently reduced levels of value in residential property, however the alternatives are not viable in terms of distance nor the associated inability to adequately service the farmland therefrom. A house in one form or another has been present since at least 1889 (www.old-maps.co.uk) so the need for the close proximity to the land is well-established but the Applicant, through the advent of the bypass, now finds himself faced with the potential of having to travel over a mile to land which he cannot physically see from the existing house in which he currently resides until such time as this situation is resolved and, with the bypass nearing completion, time is currently against him. Suitability in terms of price may be one thing but in terms of logistics 'suitable alternative accommodation' is not available

In direct response to PPS 7 Annex A (see above also)

Paragraph 1:

Accommodation is required to enable the Applicant to carry-out his full time employment at his place of work as described above. Not only will greater physical and visual exposure lead to greater risks, the operation is inevitably also under pressure from the increased density of housing now being erected to the north-east around the original farmhouse. Surveillance of the land from the now satellite farmhouse is impossible, the view having been eliminated by new development

The nature and demands in respect of the security and welfare of the work, as stated above, make it essential for the worker to live at the site

The needs of the enterprise are such that the above is beyond dispute

Paragraph 2:

Clearly the Applicant's intentions are genuine. The farm has been operated by the family since the 1970's and would continue to be with the provision of the now required dwelling

The partition of the land and house by the bypass and a housing allocation are beyond the control of the Applicant who has recently taken on the running of the family business since his father became more infirm and who unfortunately subsequently passed away in 2008. It could be said that had the family had the requisite advice available to them when the aforementioned developments were originally mooted they would undoubtedly have secured an associated dwelling together with the barns they sought at that time, however unfortunately that was not the case, and it was not until the by-pass and the housing allocations came to be set-out on site that the magnitude of the situation became apparent. Nevertheless Councillors and Members of the Planning Committee were aware that this may be necessary and commented as such during a site visit when considering the application for the now completed replacement barns

Mr Abbott has no intention of doing any other than continuing to operate the farm as the family has in the past and, with the benefit of the compensation from the bypass and housing allocation land take-up, the sustainability of the situation is beyond question notwithstanding the viability of the agricultural unit itself which of course has also sustained the family throughout the Abbott's tenure

Permanent Agricultural Dwellings:

The proposal is indeed a permanent agricultural dwelling '..to support an existing agricultural activity on a well established agricultural unit..'

i. There is a clearly established functional need (see above)
ii. The unit and activities have been established for in excess of 3 years and are financially sound (see above)
iii. The need relates to a full time worker primarily employed in agriculture
iv. The functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit. See above and note that the existing dwelling now occupied by the widowed Mrs Abbott in her retirement is not agriculturally-tied
v. Access exists and impacts can be minimised, see *Design* below

The proposal is equally compliant with the associated points raised in respect of the need for the worker to be on hand, animal welfare, security and economic viability (see above); the proposal is neither 'unusually large, nor expensive', permitted development rights can be controlled by condition if deemed justifiable by the LPA, siting can be sensitively considered (see below) and this is not proposed to be a temporary dwelling

Design

The above sections of this statement give clear guidance on the design solutions outlined below. It is fairly clear from the above the approach to be taken with the design and we outline below the various stages in drawing the conclusion submitted herewith for planning consent.

Use:

The site is currently in agricultural use in a wider area of open countryside where the dominant land use is also agricultural. The proposed dwelling is intended to be agriculturally-tied as its sole purpose is to provide accommodation for the applicant in operating the agricultural holding and in providing the necessary on-hand labour commensurate with the rearing of livestock in such a locality and to maintain security at all times.

Amount:

The proposal is a modest dwelling of approximately 165m² habitable floor area. The height is single-storey with a hipped roof to minimise impact and with the width of the building facing the road being the shortest dimension on plan, some 13.9m.

The dwelling will provide three bedroom accommodation for the applicant on one floor level.

Layout:

The layout has largely been explained above with the location of the building situated adjacent to the existing group of agricultural buildings and between those and the Earl Shilton Bypass. This ensures that the group of buildings does not spread into open countryside and is kept as a tight group with access being as efficient as possible from the bypass via the newly created junction off Breach Lane. The internal layout of the dwelling, whilst not necessarily of great importance in respect that it is not adjacent to other dwellings, is such that the bedrooms face east such that they do not become overheated during the summer and take advantage of morning sun; the lounge faces west for converse reasons and to the north, facing the road, is the kitchen which allows surveillance of the area in front of the site in respect of incoming visiting traffic and similarly the attached garage is located as close to the bypass as possible in order to minimise unnecessary vehicle movement.

Scale:

The scale of the building is such that it would be set within the outline of the existing agricultural buildings when viewed at 90º from the bypass and will blend in therewith and, to a degree, conceal and approve the appearance, of the agricultural buildings to the south.

The scale at single-storey height is such that it is suitable in the location being of modest proportions and, being a single dwelling in open countryside, is of the scale which would be anticipated in such a location.

Landscaping:

Landscaping on site has already been provided between the site of the proposed dwelling and the agricultural buildings such that a pleasant outlook is provided between the two however the space is not so great as to preclude the design thinking stated above. In so far as the dwelling is proposed, any garden area would be fenced off with post and rail fencing rather than a more urban close-boarded fence treatment and planting will be simple with the "residential curtilage" being designed in such a way as to blend in with its location in open countryside to the adjoining pastureland. A landscaping scheme would be submitted as a reserved matter.

Appearance

The intention in terms of appearance is to create a complete agricultural unit with the dwelling blending in and partly improving the appearance of the other agricultural buildings to the south such that the street-scene is one which one would expect to encounter in its open countryside location.

The detail of the design is traditional in every respect with exposed load-bearing brickwork and a plain tiled or slate roof. A discreet plinth has been provided to give the appearance of a solid base to the dwelling and a gentle arch is proposed over the structural openings.

The joinery is intended to be traditional in appearance and the hipped roof keeps the design as discreet as possible given the location.

Access

Access to the site from the highway by foot or vehicle would be level and, as described above, leads from the now severed eastern length of Breach Lane to the site via a vehicle access running along the boundary of the bypass and then north to south towards the buildings. The development is accessible to all and emergency/refuse vehicle access is provided in compliance with the Building Regulations.

Access to the building, and through the building, would be in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.