

MAR/3793/4 – Mr J Hoek

**Construction of roof on former barn to form domestic store and workshop.
Cothill Farm House, Blackhorse Lane, Cothill, OX13 6JJ.**

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 The application site is part of the garden of Cothill Farm House in Blackhorse Lane (Grid Ref C2 on Page 158 of the Oxfordshire Street Atlas). Currently the site consists of a dilapidated former agricultural barn which has four stone walls but no roof. It measures 16 metres by 7 metres in area and the existing walls are approximately 3 metres high. The applicant wishes to finish building the walls and put on a new roof covered with plain clay tiles, and to use the building as a domestic workshop and store. The building would be 6 metres high. Extracts from the plans are in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The application comes to Committee at the request of the local Member, Councillor Jane Hanna.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 In 2000, work to re-build the barn began but was halted following discussion with the Council's Enforcement Officer. Following a site visit by Officers, the Council's Solicitor agreed that the building lies within the domestic curtilage of Cothill Farm House. This means that, if the building when complete measured no more than 4 metres high and was used for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling, it would be permitted development.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 Policy GS3 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan seeks to protect the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt from development which might be harmful by reason of its siting, scale or design.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 Marcham Parish Council – no objections.
- 4.2 County Engineer – no objections.
- 4.3 The local Member, Jane Hanna, believes the proposal has merit in terms of restoring an old barn with traditional materials and should be considered by Committee.

5.0 Officer Comments

- 5.1 The main issue is considered to be the impact of the proposal on the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt. Members will be aware that Green Belt policy seeks to control the size of buildings to maintain the openness of the Green Belt. It is also part of national policy (and is expressed in Policy GS3) to protect the visual amenities of the Green Belt from development that, although acceptable in principle, would be harmful because of its size. Permitted development rights do apply in the Green Belt, but when planning permission is required for domestic outbuildings Officers have sought to strictly control the size and height of them to protect the amenities of the Green Belt.

- 5.2 The proposed building would have a floor space slightly larger than a quadruple garage, and, at 6 metres high, would be materially higher than one would reasonably expect for a domestic outbuilding. Officers consider the building would be similar in size to a bungalow rather than a domestic outbuilding. The applicant argues he is merely rebuilding what was there. However, the original building had an agricultural use and its size was commensurate with this function. There is an additional concern about the future use of a domestic outbuilding of this size and how difficult it may be for the Council to resist a future proposal from a different owner to turn it into additional living accommodation.
- 5.3 The applicant also argues that, if he built a very low pitched roof so that the overall height was no more than 4 metres, he could complete the building without the need for planning permission but the resulting building would appear far less attractive. Although this could be done without planning permission, Officers do not agree that the building would necessarily be unattractive - there are visually attractive low-pitch roof systems available. More critical, in terms of Green Belt policy, is that the building would be significantly lower, and so would have a significantly less impact on the openness and amenities of the Green Belt. Consequently, Officers do not agree that this is an argument that supports the proposal. There are considered to be no very special circumstances to weigh against the Green Belt objections to the proposal.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *Refusal for the following reason:*

1. *The proposed building, by reason of its height and bulk, would harm the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt, contrary to Policy GS3 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan and Policy G4 of the adopted Oxfordshire Structure Plan.*