

BRINTON - PF/18/1553 - Proposed erection of two-storey agricultural dwelling; Land at Valley Farm, Bale Road, Sharrington (adj garage) for Mr Rivett

Minor Development

- Target Date: 17 October 2018

Case Officer: Mr D Watson

Full Planning Permission

RELEVANT CONSTRAINTS

- SFRA - Areas Susceptible to Groundwater Flooding
- LDF Tourism Asset Zone
- LDF - Countryside
- Conservation Area
- Unclassified Road

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PLA/19872198 PO

LAND AT PART OS 3161 BALE ROAD, SHARRINGTON

ONE PRIVATE DWELLING

Refused 11/02/1988

PLA/19882637 PO

LAND AT PART OS 3161, BALE ROAD, SHARRINGTON

ERECTION OF DETACHED DWELLING

Refused 26/01/1989

THE APPLICATION

A two storey detached dwelling with 3 bedrooms is proposed. The dwelling is to provide accommodation for the manager of Valley Farm.

The site is on the south side of Bale Road and at the eastern end of Sharrington village. It currently forms part of a parcel of agricultural land bounded in part by Bale Road and Brinton Road. The application includes a number of supporting documents including an Agricultural Appraisal setting out the claimed essential functional need for the dwelling in relation to the farming operation; Landscape and Visual Appraisal; Landscaping Schedule, Landscape Management and Arboricultural Assessment; and Design & Access Statement.

Confidential financial information comprising summaries of the farm accounts for the years ended 31 March 2014 to 31 March 2018; details of investment in equipment to facilitate the expansion of the business comprising a new 500 sow outdoor breeding unit, have also been provided

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

At the discretion of the Head of Planning because the application has been contentious and the issues involved.

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL

Brinton Parish Council: object for the following reasons

- application is contrary to policy SS 2, being in the Conservation Area in the Countryside. The various statements/ reports contain a number of inconsistencies, contradictory information and incomplete evidence and the evidence supplied does not prove that the applicant fulfils the exceptional circumstances.
- application goes against Policy HO5, as it does not demonstrate that it meets all of these criteria. For example, Policy HO5 requires that the worker is working full time on the farm, whereas the supporting statement says 'the proposal...provides sufficient residential amenity for the applicant and his family for the long term, inclusive of when the operation of the business is handed over to the applicant for full-time management.'
- The report states differing numbers of pigs. At a Parish Council meeting the applicant gave a figure of 2000 pigs managed on the farm, which is at odds with the figure in the documentation.
- Concerns about the long term viability of the proposal, as the applicant would be the third succession to the rented holding. The supporting statement states that 'the proposed dwelling will ensure the family have a base from which to continue to run a financially viable business should the tenancy cease.' It is unclear how a viable business would continue to run should the tenancy cease as the applicant's family own approximately 50 acres of land itself.
- An existing property for sale in Sharrington was omitted from evidence submitted.
- Policy HO 5 states that 'the proposed dwelling is no larger than that required to meet the functional needs of the enterprise.' The proposal is for a large family home.
- The proposal is against Policies EN 2 and EN 4 and will have a detrimental impact on the landscape and character of the area, being within a Conservation Area, near listed buildings and in open countryside.
- Mature hedgerow would be lost to create a new access, although the landscape consultant has confirmed that the entire hedgerow along the frontage can be retained.
- The application shows three car spaces. The property functioning as ' a hub of the business' implies additional traffic connected to the business.

Comments following amendments to the design of the proposed dwelling:

Note the fairly minor amendments, but still feel that its design, scale and appropriateness for the site are unjustified, and not supported by evidence which would justify a breach of planning policy. The fundamental issue is whether there should be a dwelling at all on the site and the Parish Council's original objection, that it is against policy, still stands. It is considered that the proposal still does not satisfy all of the requirements of policy HO 5.

Comments in response to the agricultural appraisal carried out for the local planning authority by Landscape Land and Property (November 2019)

The report does not support the case for a permanent dwelling or that the application meets all the criteria of HO5. Given the content of the report, the uncertainties contained within and the 'beyond reasonable doubt criteria set by the planning department the application should be refused. The report's statement that it 'considers that this application generally meets these requirement' is not sound. The appraisal report should be absolutely certain that the application meets all requirements. The Parish Council considers the Landscape report does not give the certainty required to support the application for a permanent agricultural workers dwelling. Along with the other concerns regarding landscaping and design the proposal does not warrant a breach

in planning policy and would have a detrimental impact on the unique landscape and character of the area and particularly the conservation area.

REPRESENTATIONS

19 objections on the following grounds:

- Policy SS 2 only allows for dwellings to be built in the Countryside in exceptional circumstances. This application is not exceptional under the terms of Policy HO 5 as there is a wide range of properties available outside Sharrington.
- The site is in a Conservation Area near a Grade I listed church and a listed ancient cross. The proposal could threaten the very existence of the cross, if more traffic mounts the grass reserve around the cross.
- There appears to be room to live and space to build at the existing farm.
- More traffic and significant highway risks, if the dwelling is to be the hub of the business, on this narrow road.
- There is vagueness on the number of pigs reared ranging from 1800 to 4000.
- There is a 3 bed dwelling for sale in Sharrington for £290k, which is an affordable property in this area and cheaper than a new build.
- Previous dwellings have been refused in the 1980s - 87/2198 and 88/2637 (same site being applied for), which set precedents.
- Future proofing is non-sensical as if the tenancy is lost the family own only 50 acres and so the business would be unviable. As it is, Valley Farm has had to diversify into running a nursery and a plumbing business.
- The case for 24/7 on site presence is bolstered by suspected theft, but pigs are near Valley Farmhouse. How is security enhanced by moving the hub 800 metres north?
- Eligibility for succeeding to a tenancy requires proof of deriving most or all of one's income for five years (or for a period of five years spread over seven years). That is a long way in the future. It would be unsafe to grant consent for a permanent dwelling on mainly hypothetical grounds.
- Other pig rearing operations are known of, with high standards of welfare, that do not have 24/7 presence on the site let alone residential accommodation.
- The village is experiencing surface water drainage problems.
- The applicant is not a full time agricultural worker, nor does he have any experience with pig rearing. He is a Director of a major estate agency in Norwich and he stated at a Parish Council meeting that he did not intend to give up this full-time job in the near future. He has no clear plan as to when he will give up his current full time work to work full time on the farm.
- Whether the viability of the enterprise is such that it could provide sufficient income for two families to live on
- Proposal is for a large house in a conservation area that is going to drastically alter the village by filling in space and establishing a wood.
- Would set a precedent for other 'infills'.
- Effect on the conservation area and local landscape
- There are other dwellings in the vicinity on Bale Road and Brinton Road that are part of Valley Farm

11 in support

- The traditional form and character of the house is in keeping with the locality, would serve a valid need to support the family business and the plot is between two other buildings and not in isolation.
- Bale Road is a quiet road and the access for the proposed dwelling is in a safe stretch of highway. It would not have an adverse effect on the surrounding buildings. Landscaping and screening will ensure that a new house will be able to settle in to the landscape.
- Valley Farm is truly a family-run farm where all members take an active role. It is clear how labour intensive the pig rearing operation has become, especially concerning water supplies.
- All rural communities need more homes to be built if they are to survive and flourish. A village like Sharrington could easily accommodate a handful of new houses without losing its identity and charm. This application supports the evolution of a traditional agricultural business and retains the younger generation and family on the land and in the community, which should be encouraged.
- Although the site is agricultural and in a conservation area, the south side of Bale Road from the eastern junction to Valley Farm junction is one continuous ribbon development. With landscaping, it would not be visually intrusive and would be acceptable infilling

Other correspondence has also been received. This includes correspondence between a local resident and the Parish Council, some that has been sent as confidential and some direct to the case officer. These are on the file as background papers, but have not been treated as representations.

CONSULTATIONS

County Council (Highway): have some concerns regarding the position of the proposed dwelling on Bale Road as it is very rural in nature, being narrow and sinuous. At its intersection with the C330 Brinton Road, which is subject to the national speed limit, visibility is severely restricted to the south to only 8m due to the road alignment and roadside vegetation, which would be sufficient to warrant a highway objection.

Whilst there remains a query in respect of the long term tenancy agreement, which appears to have no guaranteed succession into the future, if the local planning authority are satisfied that dwelling is required to support a clear agricultural need within the area and complies with Policy HO5, then, subject to the occupation of the dwelling being limited (i.e. an agricultural tie) as described in the application details, the Highway Authority would not wish to raise any highway objection to the proposal. If permission is granted conditions relating to the submission of detailed scheme for the new access and no obstructions across access are requested.

Landscape Officer: the Supplementary Landscape Plan (dated 28/05/2019) adds two new elements to the planting proposals in order to further mitigate the impacts of a new dwelling. These comprise:

- 6 oak trees along the north boundary to the rear of the existing hedge
- 1 large additional copse of 62 trees and shrubs to the south west boundary and 1 enlarged copse adding 7 trees to the south east boundary.

The 6 additional oaks along the north boundary with Bale Road are considered to be compatible with roadside field oaks that contribute to the prevailing character of rural lanes in this part of the District. However, the creation of the vehicle access and visibility splays to the required Highway

specification will result in hard surfacing (tarmac or concrete) and pruned back hedgerow either side of the entrance which will impact significantly on this enclosed and verdant section of Bale Road. It is considered that the 6 oaks proposed would not mitigate this impact.

The additional tree and shrub planting as proposed would result in the loss of 'long views to the south and south west' which are a stated feature of the existing site in the Landscape Schedule, Landscape Management and Arboricultural Assessment dated May 2019, submitted as part of the application. The introduction of the blocks of trees and woodland as now proposed to further screen the dwelling would be directly contrary to one of the principle issues laid out in 1.2.4. of the Assessment which is 'to maintain the existing character of the site'. The revised landscape scheme would fundamentally alter the site features and will be contrary to the relatively open rear gardens of existing dwellings on the south side of Bale Road.

The change of use of the site from arable field to residential is not compatible with the settlement structure of Sharrington, where the fields between groups of dwellings function as an important setting to the built form. This is reinforced in the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (SPD 2009). The site lies within the defined Tributary Farmland Landscape Type (TF1 Morston and Hindringham) which is assessed as having a Moderate to Strong strength of character. One of the issues highlighted in this area is set out in 5.1.1.

"Settlement structure is often fragmented and leaves considerable 'gaps' between properties or behind them. The temptation to 'consolidate' these gaps should be considered very carefully as they often provide a very strong defining characteristic to the settlement and mean that the landscape is not dominated by large long tracts of what could amount to ribbon development".

With regard to the amended plans received in October 2019, it is felt that the marginal decrease in the footprint of the southern section of proposed dwelling has no diminishing effect in relation to the landscape and visual impact of the development as a whole.

In conclusion the Landscape Officer does not consider that the landscape and other amendments make the proposals acceptable and that the development remains contrary to Local Plan policies EN 2 and EN 8.

Conservation & Design Officer: in terms of the proposed dwelling itself, it is considered to be of a straightforward design which, whilst it is not particularly innovative or blessed with visual interest, would be broadly compatible with the adjacent building stock within the wider village. With regard to the character and appearance of the Sharrington Conservation Area, the village comprises a number of development pockets with open fields and rural landscape between, giving it an expansive character in which the built form is spread along several routes. The application site, with its verdant roadside hedge and open field behind, very much contributes to this interspersed feel. As such, it is considered that the introduction of a new dwelling, with all of its associated domestic paraphernalia (including the new access point), would result in harm being caused to the overall significance of a designated heritage asset.

Environmental Health: no objection subject to a condition regarding any external lighting and an informative relating to potential contaminated land

Agricultural Consultant: the Council has also engaged a specialist agricultural consultant (Landscape Land & Property) to review the application. Their appraisal (dated November 2019) concludes amongst other things that:

- Expansion of the farming operation has been implemented and now includes farrowing sows
- There is an opportunity for the applicant to enter the business with a view to taking over the management and day-to-day responsibility from his father who currently runs the farm, but needs to reduce his workload for medical reasons.
- Because the applicant lives an hour away from the farm, the response time is difficult, so he needs to move to a location closer to the farm. The proposed site whilst not ideally sited in relation to the farmstead is on land that is owned and would provide a reasonably rapid response time.
- Incidents of crime do not in themselves justify the need for an on-site presence.
- With expansion there is full-time work for an additional employee and the financial viability, size and structure of the holding can support this.
- The unit is established and has run for well over 3 years.
- The application site is not in the best location for farm management, security and animal welfare. Whilst it is relatively close to the farm, a better location would be adjacent to the existing farmstead as part of the collection of buildings.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the proposed development may raise issues relevant to Article 8: The Right to respect for private and family life.

Article 1 of the First Protocol: The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions.

Having considered the likely impact on an individual's Human Rights, and the general interest of the public, refusal of this application as recommended is considered to be justified, proportionate and in accordance with planning law.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 - SECTION 17

The application raises no significant crime and disorder issues.

POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019):

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development

Section 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

North Norfolk Core Strategy (Adopted September 2008):

SS 1: Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk

SS 2: Development in the Countryside

HO 5 - Agricultural, forestry and essential worker dwellings in the Countryside

EN 2: Protection and enhancement of landscape and settlement character

EN 4: Design

EN 8: Protecting and enhancing the historic environment

EN 9: Biodiversity and geology

EN 13: Pollution and hazard prevention and minimisation

CT 5: The transport impact on new development
CT 6: Parking provision

Supplementary Planning Documents

North Norfolk Design Guide SPD (2008)
North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment SPD (2009)

Statutory duties

When considering any planning application that affects a conservation area a local planning authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area (S72 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act, 1990).

MAIN ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Whether there is an essential need for an additional full time worker to live permanently at or near to Valley Farm so they are available at most times and, if so, whether there is any alternative accommodation on the applicant's landholding or other existing accommodation in the area
- Effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Sharrington Conservation Area
- Effect of the proposed development on the landscape and settlement character
- Effect on highway safety

Background

Valley Farm is a mixed agricultural business over approximately 450 acres (182 hectares). The majority of the land is occupied under the terms of an Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 tenancy. Also forming part of the farm is a parcel of land to the south of Bale Road and west of Brinton Road which has an area of about 50 acres (20 hectares). This is owned by the applicant and the application site is within it.

The business includes an arable operation with crop rotation but has diversified to include a substantial outdoor pig rearing operation on a bed and breakfast basis. Batches of pigs arrive at the farm as weaners around 4 weeks old. They are then reared on to finishing weights after 20 weeks before being dispatched.

There are around 1800-2000 within each batch and is proposed to increase number to around 2,400 pigs per batch. At present 2 – 2.5 batches are finished per annum a throughput of around 4,600 pigs but with the proposed increase in batch size this would increase to around 6,000 per annum.

Based on current numbers the current pig rearing element requires around 50 acres at any one time. The pigs are housed in arks which are moved around the farm on a rotational cycle as the pigs require regular fresh ground.

A breeding unit has now been introduced with 17 batches of 800 piglets per annum which equates to a throughput of around 13,600 weaners being produced by the farm per annum. It has very recently been confirmed by the applicant that the fattening operation has been temporarily

suspended as there is not enough labour to run both that and the breeding side. Currently the weaners are reared on site but have to be sent elsewhere for fattening at 7kg.

There is existing dwelling Valley Farmhouse associated with the farm located about 120m south of Bale Road and to the east of the unnamed road between Sharrington and Gunthorpe. This is the and is the centre of the operation, where there is an array of modern and traditional agricultural buildings which are used for the storage of equipment and machinery.

The applicant's father who runs the farm currently resides in Valley Farmhouse. He is currently the main source of labour. Due to health reasons, he needs to reduce the number of hours he works. A children's day nursery is also run 4 days a week from the farmhouse.

The applicant intends to succeed to the tenancy of the land under the relevant Act. Only a close relative can claim the right to succeed to a tenancy but there are a number of tests that must be passed – these include tests relating to suitability and the need for the applicant to prove that their principal source of livelihood has been earned as a result of their work on the holding for a period of no less than 5 years in the last 7 years.

Currently the applicant is an associate director of a national estate agency and works in Norwich. He lives about 1 hour away from the farm. The supporting information states that, since moving out of the farm in 2015, they return to the farm weekly and to help and potentially more during the busiest times with the pigs. The application has been made “in order to combine the necessary need of a further worker on the farm with the prudence of a succession plan”. The applicant confirms their intention to return to the farm in a full time capacity as is required by the farm and to move towards meeting the livelihood test.

The agricultural appraisal (dated 6 August 2018) submitted in support of the application includes amongst other things the labour and animal welfare/management requirements to establish the essential and functional need for the proposed dwelling. This has been supplemented by a letter dated 8 October 2018 which seeks to clarify and address matters raised in response to public consultation on the application.

APPRAISAL

Essential agricultural need

Policy SS 1 sets out the Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk and sets out a settlement hierarchy, with the remainder of the district is designated as Countryside. Policy SS 2 limits development within the Countryside to that requiring a rural location and provided it for one of the types of development listed the policy with new build market dwellings being restricted

Policy HO 5 however, allows for development in the Countryside to meet the housing needs of full-time workers in agriculture, forestry and other essential workers connected with the land but only where the proposals comply with all its criteria.

Paragraph 79 of the NPPF is also relevant and states that “planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless a) 'there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.'

Policy HO 5 criteria

- *Is there an essential need for one or more full time workers to be readily available at most times for the enterprise to function properly?*

Based on the applicant's submitted Agricultural Appraisal and subsequent supporting information there is a requirement of about 3.6 Standard Man Days to operate the farm as a whole, 2.7 of which relate to the livestock labour requirement. These rise to 4.56 and 3.66 with the pig breeding unit. The need for an additional full-time worker and that the business can support this is therefore not disputed.

In assessing the essential need in terms of policy HO 5, it is first necessary to consider whether there is a physical need for a worker to be present most times of the day and night for animal welfare reasons. The need for an on-site presence is accepted and currently this is met by the applicant's father who lives in Valley Farmhouse. He does however need to reduce his workload for medical reasons and at the same time the livestock numbers are proposed to increase and have already with the introduction of the breeding unit. Whilst it is stated the applicant does do some work on the farm outside of his main occupation, he wishes to increase this to working full-time, to eventually take over the running of the farm. Currently the applicant lives over an hour's drive from the farm. There would appear to be no reason why he could not relocate to be closer to the farm, to provide the additional labour and to reduce the workload of his father, even without living on the farm itself.

The outdoor pig rearing side of the farming business is more labour intensive and due to the high welfare needs of the animals as set out in the submitted agricultural appraisal. This includes monitoring the herd for signs of illness, inspecting them twice a day and maintaining a continuous supply of food and water, the latter being particularly important during hot weather. Although not stated in the application, given the pig operation is outdoor, it is likely that remote monitoring by electronic surveillance may be less feasible. What is not clear from the appraisal is the frequency of emergencies such that they require a worker to be present for most of the time

It is apparent there is high labour requirement to carry out all the other day-to-day tasks involved in running the enterprise, but not all of these require a worker/s to be present most times of the day and night. For example, the appraisal refers to the timings of deliveries/collections which can be very early morning and at short notice, but it is considered likely that these are not without notice and as such can be planned for accordingly.

Whilst it is likely that more intensive husbandry is required along with more frequent checks in general when a batch of weaners first arrives at the farm, it is not clear in the applicant's appraisal if this would apply over the whole period they are fattened. As referred to above, the applicant has recently confirmed that the breeding unit has temporarily superseded the fattening unit, but the farrowing sows and the care for piglets is likely to have a greater husbandry requirement.

The farm covers a wide area extending westwards to the A148 and south-westwards towards Gunthorpe. The proposed siting of the dwelling would not be well located in relation to the vast majority of the farm. Whilst it is considered that the future occupier could not be the 'eyes and ears' of the farm in this location for example to deter theft, and in any event incidents of crime are not often sufficient justification in terms of essential need. The dwelling would provide a reasonably rapid response time in the event of emergencies, and given the extent of the farm it is likely that this would mostly be made by vehicle. Nevertheless, the optimum location in this respect would be at Valley Farm itself which would allow for quicker access to any machinery, equipment or medication needed to deal with such events.

The fact that the dwelling would be on land owned by the applicant rather than on the land forming the majority of the farm, also raises concerns. If the succession to the tenancy was not successful or if the applicant or current holder chose to surrender the tenancy, it is considered the remaining land i.e. that owned by the applicant, is unlikely to be sufficient to allow for a farming enterprise that could justify the essential need for a worker's dwelling. If the application was approved, the standard agricultural occupancy condition would not tie the dwelling to Valley Farm and would enable it to be occupied by someone simply working or last working in agriculture in the locality. A S106 agreement could potentially tie to the dwelling to Valley Farm and this has been raised with the applicant. The applicant has not committed to a S106 and feel it is sensible and preferable to use the standard condition, without any linkage to the land holding.

For the reasons stated it is considered that the proposal does not comply with this criterion.

- *Could the functional need could not be met by another existing dwelling on the site of the enterprise or in the immediate vicinity?*

The applicant considers that there is no available accommodation to convert or sub-divide within the existing Valley Farm complex, partly because it is rented but also because it is all in use. The have recently confirmed that the owners of the farm have a policy of not selling land from their main estate. A land swap i.e. between them and the applicant to enable the dwelling to be sited at the farmhouse complex will also not be considered for practical reasons and to protect the core of their landholding at Valley Farm.

As the existing farmhouse is occupied by the applicant's father it is therefore accepted that is not available as accommodation for an additional worker. What is not apparent is whether the succession to the tenancy of the farm would include the existing farmhouse.,

The applicant also considers that the functional need for a dwelling cannot be met by an existing dwelling in the area as these are considered unaffordable. In September 2018 at time the application was received, a 3 bed bungalow in Sharrington was on the market for £290,000 as referred to in some representations. This was ruled out by the applicant as it would have to be extended, as one of the existing bedrooms would be needed as a farm office meaning that the remaining accommodation would not sustain a family. The dwelling was also more than the cost of the proposed a new building for which the applicant has had an estimate of £275,000 from a builder, although no costings have been submitted to support this figure.

The dwelling referred to has subsequently been sold and it is accepted the availability of suitable dwellings in the vicinity which could meet the essential need will vary over time. From a search of the Rightmove website, it would appear that currently there is only one property for sale in Sharrington, about a 1km north of the site. This 3 bed property is on the market at £330,000 which given their previous response, would be beyond the means of the enterprise. Within a one-mile radius of Sharrington there is a currently a property for sale in Bale, but this is even more expensive. The only property available within a 3-mile radius for less than the cost of the new build is at Melton Constable and only has two bedrooms. Therefore, it is considered that currently there are no existing dwellings in the immediate vicinity which could meet the functional need of the enterprise, so the proposal complies with this criterion

- *Has the enterprise been established for at least three years and is it, and likely to remain, profitable?*

The farming enterprise has been established well in excess of 3 years. Confidential financial information has been provided but this does not give full detailed information about the financial turnover and profitability of the unit, but on the basis of information provided to the Council's Consultant on their site visit and subsequently, it is considered that the unit is run commercially, that it is currently financially viable and is reasonably likely to continue, if the present system is maintained and expanded. Whilst the expansion of the pig-rearing side of the business is recent the Consultant's advice is that it is considered the financial information is sufficient to meet this criterion.

- *Does the proposal represent a replacement of another dwelling on the site that has been sold on the open market in the last five years.*

There is no evidence to suggest that this has occurred. The proposals comply with this criterion.

- *Is the proposed dwelling no larger than that required to meet the functional needs of the enterprise and would it be unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income that the enterprise could sustain in the long term?*

An indicative cost of the proposed dwelling (£275,000) has been provided. Financial information has been circulated to members of the committee and it is concluded that the enterprise is currently financially viable and is reasonably likely to continue on the basis of the existing and expanded operation. The appraisal carried out for the Council does not raise any concerns that enterprise could not support the cost of the proposed dwelling.

With regard to the size of the proposed size of the dwelling which would have 3 bedrooms it is considered this would not be excessive for a farm manager and their family.

It is considered that the proposal complies with this criterion.

- *Temporary dwelling*

Policy HO 5 states that where accommodation is required in relation to a newly created enterprise and where there has been insufficient time to demonstrate financial soundness, permission may be granted for a temporary dwelling in the form of a caravan or wooden structure which can easily be dismantled or removed from the site.

The proposal is not considered to be a new enterprise per se, rather it is an expansion of the existing in that the batch sizes of the pig rearing element would be increased, along with the introduction of a new 500 sow outdoor breeding unit, further diversifying the business. On that basis and given it is considered the enterprise is sound financially, it is considered it would be unreasonable to require the applicant to go down this route.

Given the uncertainty of the tenancy succession however, this would have been a more appropriate way forward in order to for there to be more certainty regarding these matters. This would however need to be dealt with through a separate planning application

Conclusion re compliance with policy HO 5

To be acceptable in terms of policy HO 5, a proposal must meet all of its criteria. Whilst some are met, it is considered that relating to essential need has not. Whilst the expansion of the business clearly justifies the need for additional worker/s the essential need for them be

permanently based at or near the farm to be readily available most times of the day and night has not been justified. Added to this is the concern that the dwelling would not be located on land that makes up the vast majority of the farm and is not in the optimum location in terms of the functional need.

Character and appearance

Sharrington is a village which has developed around a network of rural lanes extending in all directions. The built form is concentrated along these roads, yet is interspersed by arable fields abutting the road which serve to place the village within its rural working landscape. Whilst the proposed dwelling would be located close to a rural lane and in the vicinity of other residential properties, it is extending into an arable field. In this regard the development will significantly alter the character of this part of Bale Road.

Since the site lies largely within Sharrington Conservation Area, the loss of the arable field to a new dwelling would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, which is contrary to policy EN 8. Whilst the harm to the conservation area would be less than substantial, this would not be outweighed by any public benefit arising from the proposal. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy EN 8 and paragraphs 193 and 196 of the NPPF.

Landscape and settlement character

In considering landscape impact, Policy EN 2 requires development proposals to be informed by, and sympathetic to, the distinctive landscape character type

A mature hedge with sporadic trees extends along the south side of the road and is a key contributor to the character of this rural lane. It is unclear whether the required visibility splay could be achieved without significant loss of the roadside hedge (particularly to the west of the site entrance) which, due to its age and association with a historic field system, does fall within the 'Important' category in accordance with the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

The 6 additional oak trees proposed along the north boundary with Bale Road are compatible with roadside field oaks that contribute to the prevailing character of rural lanes in this part of North Norfolk. However, the creation of the vehicle access and visibility splays to the required highway specification would result in hard surfacing (tarmac or concrete) and pruned back hedgerow either side of the entrance which will impact significantly on this enclosed and verdant section of Bale Road. It is considered the 6 oaks proposed would not mitigate this impact.

The additional tree and shrub planting as proposed will result in the loss of "*long views to the south and south west*" which are a stated feature of the existing site in the supporting Landscape Schedule, Landscape Management and Arboricultural Assessment. The introduction of the blocks of trees and woodland as now proposed to further screen the dwelling would be directly contrary to one of the principle issues set out in the Assessment which is "*to maintain the existing character of the site*". The revised landscape scheme would fundamentally alter the site features and will be contrary to the relatively open rear gardens of existing dwellings on the south side of Bale Road.

It is considered that the change of use of the site from arable field to residential is not compatible with the settlement structure of Sharrington, where the fields between groups of dwellings function as an important setting to the built form. This is reinforced in the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment SPD (2009). The site lies within the defined Tributary Farmland

Landscape Type (TF1 Morston and Hindringham) which is assessed as having a Moderate to Strong strength of character. One of the issues highlighted in this area is set out in paragraph 5.1.1. of the SPD which refers to the fact that settlement structure is often fragmented and leaves considerable 'gaps' between properties or behind them. Consolidation of these gaps should be considered very carefully as they often provide a very strong defining characteristic to the settlement and mean that the landscape is not dominated by large long tracts of what could amount to ribbon development.'

It is therefore considered that despite the amendments to the proposed landscape scheme, the proposed development would result an unacceptable impact on the character of Bale Road and that of the settlement, contrary to policies EN 2 and EN 4 of the Core Strategy.

Highway safety and parking

Whilst the Highway Authority have some concerns regarding the position of the proposed dwelling on Bale Road, with it being very rural in nature, narrow and sinuous, they do not object providing the local planning authority are satisfied that dwelling is required to support a clear agricultural need within the area, complies with Policy HO 5 and relevant conditions are attached to the planning permission in the event that the application. Whilst there would need to be a loss of existing hedgerow in order to provide the necessary visibility splays which would be contrary to policy EN 2, the proposal would comply with policy CT 5. There would be sufficient space within the site to provide parking in accordance with the adopted standards and to comply with policy CT 6.

Other considerations

Planning applications for dwellings on this site were refused in the late 1980s as set out in the planning history, but are not considered to set a precedent given the time that has passed since these decisions which were made and, the fact that this was in the context of a different development plan.

The other dwellings in the vicinity which have been referred to in representations are not considered to be part of Valley Farm and are not subject of any conditions linking them to it or restricting the occupancy of them. Furthermore, they are both occupied and therefore cannot be considered as being available to meet the essential need.

Conclusion

Whilst the expansion of the business clearly justifies the need for additional worker/s, it is not considered that an essential need for them to be permanently based at or near the farm to be readily available most times of the day and night has been justified. Added to this is the concern that the dwelling would not be located on land that makes up the vast majority of the farm and is not in the optimum location in terms of the functional need.

In addition, the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and would have harmful impacts on the landscape.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSAL for reasons relating to:

- Essential need to justify the dwelling has not been demonstrated and its location is poorly related to the majority of the holding in functional terms, contrary to policies SS 1, SS 2 and HO 5
- Less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Sharrington Conservation Area that is not outweighed by any public benefits, contrary to policy EN 8
- Landscape impacts and effect on the character of the settlement, contrary to policies EN 2 and EN 4

Full wording of reasons and any others considered to be necessary, to be delegated to the Head of Planning