

**3/09/0304/FP – Single storey extension to shop building at Brookfield Farm,
Aston End Road, Aston for Mr & Mrs Wolfe**

Date of Receipt: 02.03.09

Type: Full

Parish: ASTON

Ward: DATCHWORTH & ASTON

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The materials and finishes to be used in the construction of the building works hereby permitted shall match those used for the existing building.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the development, and in accordance with policy ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007.

3. The resultant shop hereby permitted shall be used solely for the sale of goods produced on the farm, together with ancillary sale of produce from other local farms, and ancillary use as village stores and Post Office and for no other retail use without the prior consent in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The site is within the Green Belt where the Planning Authority would not grant permission for retail development except where required to provide services to the local population, in accordance with policies GBC1, OSV8 and STC9 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007.

Summary of Reasons for Decision

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (Hertfordshire County Structure, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and East Herts Local Plan) and in particular policies OSV8, ENV1, GBC1 and STC9 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review Re-Deposit Version. The balance of the considerations having regard to these policies is that planning permission should be granted.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 Permission was granted for a farm shop on this site in 1994.
- 1.3 In 2000, permission was granted for an extension to the shop, approximately doubling the footprint of the building. The extension comprises the rear part of the shop, the area currently used for the preparation of the meat for sale.
- 1.4 The shop sells produce generated both on Brookfield Farm and nearby farms, and general groceries. Initially, trade in the shop was restricted solely to produce from the farm itself, and this was then expanded to include ancillary village store and Post Office facilities. It is considered that the inclusion of produce from nearby farms is ancillary to the approved use, as the majority of produce sold is from the farm's own herds.
- 1.5 There are three full-time and two part-time members of staff employed in the shop. An additional member of staff would be taken on if permission is granted for the proposed extension.
- 1.6 The proposed development involves the construction of an extension to the rear of the farm shop building. The extension would replace an existing Nissen hut of comparable footprint. The hut is presently in use as a storage and preparation space for the shop.
- 1.7 This application has been reported to committee as your officers consider that it is contrary to policy OSV8 – Village Shops, Community and Leisure Facilities.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 3/93/1163/FP – Erection of farm shop – Approved February 1994.
- 2.2 3/00/0392/FP – Extension to farm shop – Approved May 2000.
- 2.3 3/04/0573/FP – Change of use of part of pit to car park – Approved May 2004.

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 No comments received.

4.0 Parish Council Representations

4.1 No comments received.

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The application has been advertised by way of site and press notice.

5.2 There have been no representations received.

6.0 Policy

6.1 The Policies of the adopted East Herts Local Plan that are most relevant to the consideration of this application are as follows:

ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
OSV8	Village Shops, Community and Leisure Facilities
GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
STC9	Farm Shops

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The proposed development would be a significant enlargement of the existing permanent farm shop building. In the event that the farm shop use were to cease, the remaining building would not be readily suitable for another appropriate farm-related use.

7.2 Policy GBC1 specifies which developments will be considered acceptable in the Green Belt. The proposed extension does not fall into any of the approved categories, and as such constitutes inappropriate development that would normally be harmful to the Green Belt. The applicant has set forth a justification for the proposal that may qualify as very special circumstances that would make the proposed development acceptable.

7.3 The farm shop is a thriving local business that provides a service in the surrounding area. Policy STC9 encourages the provision of farm shops where appropriate to the rural character of the surrounding area. The development would have no material impact on the Green Belt as it would not be of a significantly different size and scale to the existing arrangement on site. In principle is considered to be acceptable.

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- 7.4 Policy OSV8 allows small-scale extensions to shops in rural areas. The proposed extension would have a floor area of approximately 74m². The existing building has a floor area of approximately 83m², an approximate 90% increase in floorspace.
- 7.5 The proposed extension could not be considered as a small-scale addition to the building, particularly as the original approval for the shop was for a building of approximately 40m². The development would involve a 300% increase in the floorspace of the building in less than ten years.
- 7.6 However, policy STC9 sets out a number of tests for farm shops. They are required to be sympathetic to the character of the area, appropriate to the size of the business, not result in an unacceptable increase in traffic or overburdening of available parking, and make use of existing buildings where available.
- 7.7 The farm shop is a thriving local business that serves the surrounding area and sells produce both from its own herd, and those of nearby farms, in addition to other products.
- 7.8 The extension would be constructed on an existing concrete base, and would be no taller than the existing building. Matching materials would be used to ensure continuity of appearance.
- 7.9 The development is unlikely to result in a significant increase in traffic. The business already serves the local area, and would not be likely to expand its catchment area as a result of the proposed development. Parking is available on the applicant's land, both on the forecourt in front of the shop, and in a separate parking area granted permission in 2004 on the east side of the road.
- 7.10 The business has been using the adjacent Nissen hut for some time to accommodate the growing needs of the business. However, the proposed development would allow improved facilities.
- 7.11 The building is located in the Green Belt. Significant extensions to buildings within the Green Belt are not typically considered to be acceptable as they can have a detrimental impact on the open and rural character of the area. However, in this instance the proposal is for an extension to the rear of an existing building, and would replace a sheet metal Nissen hut.
- 7.12 Although the Nissen hut is of a utilitarian character common on an agricultural site, the development would provide an improved facility for local residents.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposed extension to the shop would enable the expansion of a thriving local business.
- 8.2 The extension would replace an existing metal hut of comparable footprint. Although the extension would result in a significant increase in the floor area of the shop, it would not be any more prominent than the existing hut, and it is considered that it would be in accordance with policy STC9.
- 8.3 The extension would not result in a detrimental impact on the openness or rural character of the surrounding area. Although the development would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, your officers consider that in this instance there are very special circumstances sufficient to override the presumption against such development.
- 8.4 Officers therefore recommend that planning permission be granted for the proposed development.