

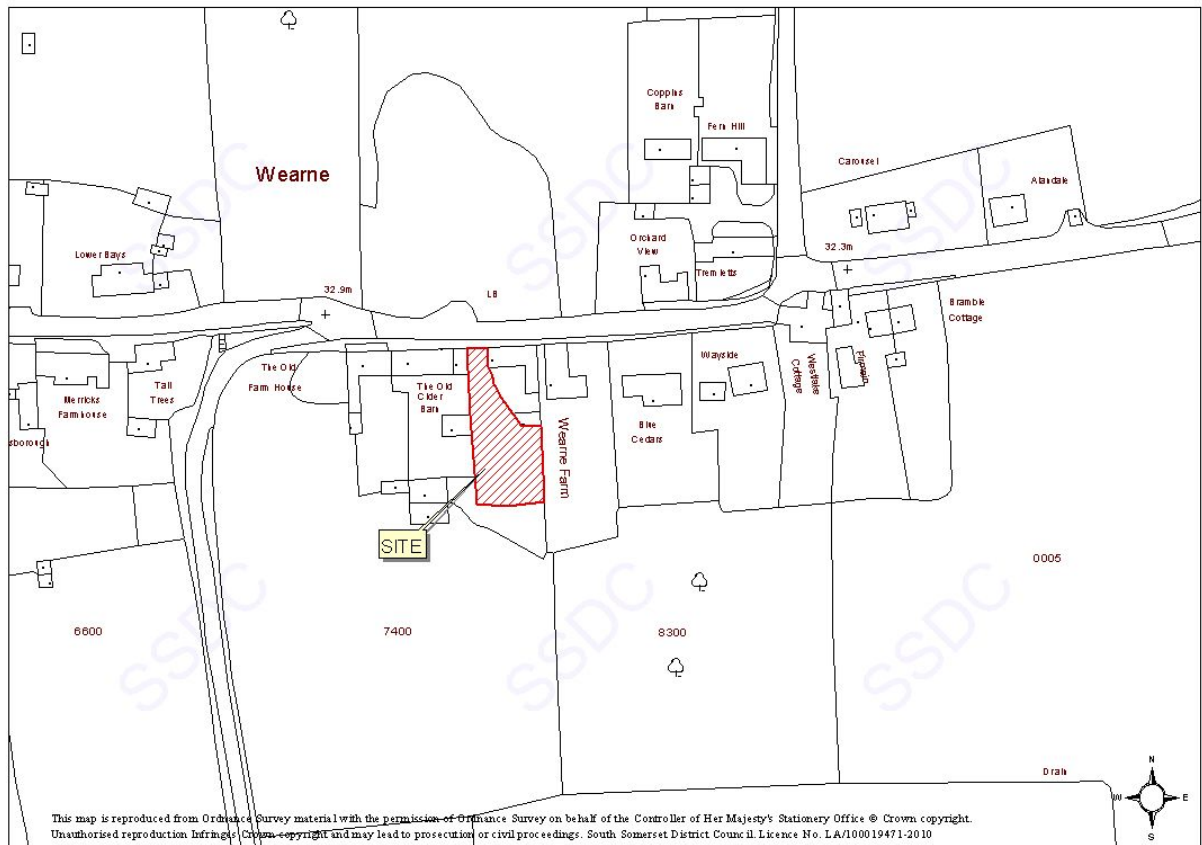
**Officer Report on Planning Application: 09/03986/COU**

<b>Proposal :</b>	The change of use of existing agricultural buildings to caravan storage (GR 342810/128055)
<b>Site Address:</b>	Land At Wearne Farm, Wearne, Main Road Wearne
<b>Parish:</b>	Huish Episcopi
<b>TURN HILL Ward (SSDC Member)</b>	Mr Rupert Cox (Cllr)
<b>Recommending Case Officer:</b>	Lee Walton Tel: (01935) 462324 Email: lee.walton@southsomerset.gov.uk
<b>Target date :</b>	9th December 2009
<b>Applicant :</b>	Mrs Freda M Cook
<b>Agent:(no agent if blank)</b>	
<b>Application Type :</b>	Other Change Of Use

**REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE**

This application is referred to Committee as the officer's recommendation is contrary to the views of the County Highways Authority who are a statutory consultee.

**SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL**



The application site is part of the loose grained roadside settlement of Wearne, which is located in the countryside and does not have the benefit of a development area boundary.

The site was formerly an agricultural unit but is currently largely un-used by the present occupant who is retired from farming. Roadside outbuildings that include the farmhouse; the former are listed (grade II), front the site with the barn structures, the subject of this application, located to the rear.

Access is from the main road and was formerly the agricultural yard's entrance. The barn structures are open sided with covered rear and part enclosed flank elevations. They are aligned parallel to one another with a track between accessing the field(s) to the rear of the site.

The proposal seeks a change of use to enable the use of the covered area to store up to 10 caravans.

## **HISTORY**

92/02114/REM - The erection of a dwelling house with garage/ store. Approved.

## **POLICY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 repeats the duty imposed under S54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and requires that decision must be made in accordance with relevant Development Plan Documents unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of determining current applications the local planning authority accords significant weight to the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (RSS10) due to it highly advanced state. The view is therefore taken that the relevant development plan comprises the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (Proposed Changes June 2008), the saved policies of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, and the saved policies of the South Somerset Local Plan.

The policies of most relevance to the proposal are:

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (Proposed Changes June 2008):  
Development Policy E - High Quality Design  
Development Policy H - Reusing Land

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan  
STR1 - Sustainable Development  
STR6 - Development Outside Rural Centres

South Somerset Local Plan  
EH6 - Conversion in the countryside  
ME5 - Farm Diversification  
ST4 - Change of Use/ Conversion of buildings.  
EH3 - Listed Buildings  
EH5 - Setting of Listed Building

ST5 General Principles of Development  
ST6 Quality of Development

PPS's and PPG's  
PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Sustainable Community Strategy  
Goal 7 - Distinctiveness

## **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

Parish Council - No objection.

County Highways - Having received their original response to refuse the planning officer questioned their reasons and in response the Highway Authority stated:

'As you are aware the Highway Authority in the original comments recommended that the application be refused due to the likely increase in the use made of the substandard junctions and approach roads. Since that response comment has been made that if this proposal were permitted it is unlikely to result in an increase in traffic movement over and above that of the previously operating farm. However, it should be noted that the reasoning behind the refusal is not solely a matter of intensity but more the change in the nature of the traffic patterns in connection with the proposed use. The traffic in connection with the farm was likely to have been more 'local', accessing the adjacent fields. The introduction of the caravan facility is likely to result in an increase use made of the surrounding substandard approach roads and their junctions as the caravans are taken to and from the site.

Given the concerns raised relating to the standard of the surrounding highway network the Highway Authority are still of the opinion that the application should be refused.'

Area Engineer - No comment

Economic Development -I appreciate the opportunity to create a low level income from the site.

Neighbours - 2 neighbour notifications were issued and a site notice (listed building) posted. No comments have been received.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The key issues are considered to be the impact of the use in terms of:-

- the introduction of a new use;
- highways safety;
- visual amenity;
- the setting of the listed buildings;
- residential amenity

The new use:

Policy ME5 supports schemes of farm diversification, with policy EH6 supporting the reuse of rural buildings for commercial purposes. It is considered that well screened caravan storage is an acceptable use of redundant agricultural buildings. Whilst the

applicant has not demonstrated the need for such a use it is considered that the low level of use proposed and the lack of physical alteration would enable reversion back to agricultural use in the future should the proposal not provide viable.

To ensure that the scheme remains part of the planning unit a personal condition could be imposed. This should also stipulate that the use is solely for the storage of caravans to prevent the establishment of other B8 uses that might be incompatible with this rural location.

#### Highway Safety:

The Highway Authority have recommended refusal based on the nature of the use which they believe would unacceptably increase the use of the rural network in contrast to the use of the site by the farm vehicles that would have accessed the surrounding fields rather than negotiate the local road network. Whilst this position is acknowledged, as noted above policies ME5 and EH6 support the reuse of rural buildings as part of farm diversification. Both policies are subject to consideration of the impact on, amongst other things, highways safety.

In this instance it is not considered that the traffic movements in relation to the storage of 10 caravans would be detrimental to highways safety and the comments of the highways officer cannot be supported in this instance. To regulate the impact of the proposal a condition could restrict the number of caravans to 10.

#### Visual Amenity:

The structure in question is part open sided, however it is roofed meaning that the caravans would be stored under cover. Given the limited number involved and the fact that they would be positioned beneath, and within the roof structures, it is not considered that there would be any undue visual impact resulting from the proposal. A condition could restrict the storage to the area undercover.

#### Character and Setting of Listed Building(s):

There is no physical alteration proposed and it is not considered that the undercover storage and location of the yard would have any detrimental impact on the character and setting of the listed building(s).

#### Residential Amenity:

It is considered that there would be a minimum of movements and noise arising from the proposed use, in contrast to the agricultural activities that might be otherwise present. The agricultural use is ceased and there is limited opportunity given the size of the site to operate both uses. In terms of impact on the neighbours it is considered that the proposed use would give rise to negligible levels of disturbance, if any. Furthermore it is noted that there is a large wall between this site at the nearest residential property that would limit any effects.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Grant permission subject to the following conditions.

01. The use for the storage for caravans is considered to be an appropriate form of diversification that would constitute the appropriate reuse of this redundant building with no adverse impact on highways safety, visual or residential amenity or the setting of nearby listed buildings. As such the proposal is considered to comply with policies ST4, ST5, ST6, EH3, EH5, ME5 and EH6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

**SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:**

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. No more than 10 caravans stored on site at any time and all caravans shall be stored beneath the roof coverings of the respective barns.

Reason: In the interests of highways safety and to safeguard the setting of the nearby listed buildings and the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with policies ST5, ST6, EH3, EH5, ME5 and EH6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

03. The change of use hereby approved shall be limited to the storage of caravans within the B8 Use Class and is personal to the applicant Mrs Freda M Cook or any other subsequent owner of the planning unit of Wearne Farm.

Reason: To ensure that the use hereby approved remains as part of a scheme of farm diversification and to safeguard the amenities of the locality in accordance with policies EH6, ME5, ST5 and ST6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.