

## OFFICER'S REPORT

**Case Officer:** Bryony Hanlon

**Parish:** Lifton

**Ward:** Tamarside

**Application No:** 0302/24/ARM

**Applicant:** Mr & Mrs A Mounce  
Wooladon Farm  
Liftondown  
Lifton  
Devon  
PL16 0DD

**Agent:** Mr Peter Wonnacott  
Rodds Bridge Farm  
Lower Upton  
Bude  
EX23 0LS

**Site Address:** Wooladon Farm  
Liftondown  
PL16 0DD

**Development:** Application for approval for reserved matters following outline approval reference 2531/21/OPA relating to access, appearance, landscaping, layout, scale for erection of a dwelling for a farm manager together with access drive, plus the discharge of Conditions 6 (BNG), 7 (CEMP) and 8 (LEMP) (resubmission of 2531/21/OPA).



## **Recommendation: Refusal**

### **Reasons for refusal:**

1. The quantum of both farm related and residential floor space proposed has not been supported by an essential agricultural need in this specific location and is unlikely to remain affordable for an agricultural farm manager in perpetuity, contrary to the provisions of SPT1, SPT2, TTV1, TTV2 and TTV26 (1i), in the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan.
2. The dwelling would read as an incongruous addition to the local landscape by virtue of its size and massing, accented by large areas of glazing, to the detriment of local landscape character and tranquillity, contrary to the provisions of DEV20 (2, 4) and DEV23 (1, 2, 3, 4, 7), in the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan
3. Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the development will be served by a suitable surface water drainage scheme contrary to the provisions of DEV35 (4) in the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan
4. Insufficient information has been provided to discharge Conditions 6, 9, 10 and 11 and the proposal is considered contrary to the provisions of DEV26 in the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan.

### **Key issues for consideration:**

Scale, massing and design, landscape, biodiversity, drainage, appropriateness of the dwelling for an agricultural farm manager in perpetuity.

**Reason for call-in:** Cllr Edmonds has called the application to Committee on the basis that the JLP does not contain a specific policy for the scale and size of agricultural dwellings.

---

### **1.0 Site Description:**

1.1 The site is located within the open countryside, c. 1km south west of the village of Lifton and c. 0.4km south of the Strawberry Fields Farm Shop and Restaurant. The site is accessed from the north via the Class C road from the A30 in the west to Lifton in the east; the application itself includes connection to the highway via a new track through the adjacent field to the north. The application site comprises a relatively level, rectangular field, partly enclosed by trees to the north and west, with a hedge bank to the southern boundary and an unmetalled farm track to the eastern boundary. The site occupies an elevation position relative to the land to the south, offering panoramic views of the open countryside beyond. The site is not covered by any protective designations and lies within Flood Zone 1.

### **2.0 The Proposal:**

2.1 The site benefits from an extant outline consent for a farm manager's dwelling with access drive under 2531/21/OPA. This application provides the details required (under a reserved matters application) for access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for erection of a dwelling for a farm manager together with access drive, plus the discharge of Conditions 6 (BNG), 7 (CEMP) and 8 (LEMP).

2.2 The application includes full details of the dwelling; it is designed in a contemporary style, with a rectangular plan form and a paired gable design on both the north and south elevations. The dwelling is finished with both standard height casement windows and full height glazing (finished in treated glass to reduce light transmission); fenestration comprises

a mix of aluminium and timber framed units. The walls comprise natural stone, set under a natural slate roof, with cast iron effect aluminium rainwater goods. The dwelling includes a two storey element for the farm manager; with a utility/boot room and shower room at ground level and an office at first floor with space for two desks. The floors are connected by an internal staircase; this element is separated from the residential accommodation at first floor level but is connected by an internal door at ground floor level. At ground floor, the dwelling provides for a “farm and estate managers’ conference room”, a further office for the “holiday accommodation and wedding venue estate manager’s office”, WC, a double height entrance hall and stairwell, an open plan kitchen/dining/living area and separate domestic utility room. At first floor level, the western end of the building provides for a main bedroom, with en-suite, dressing room and first floor balcony, and three further bedrooms, one with en-suite, plus a further bathroom. The dwelling is also provided with a single storey garage for two cars, a large parking and turning area, plus a garden to the east and a patio area at ground floor level on the south elevation.

**3.0 Consultations:**

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Lifton Parish Council | Support                  |
| • DCC Ecology           | Objection                |
| • Environmental Health  | No objection             |
| • Drainage (Internal)   | Objection                |
| • DCC Highways          | No highways implications |

**4.0 Representations:**

None received.

**5.0 Relevant Planning History**

- 0753/23/ARM Application for approval of reserved matters following outline approval 2531/21/OPA (for erection of a dwelling for a farm manager with access drive). Withdrawn
- 1547/20/FUL Formation of new vehicular access to land south of Lifton Farm Shop entrance together with formation of new private access road to link existing farm access tracks. Approved
- 2479/20/ARC Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3 of planning consent 1547/20/FUL. Approved
- 2531/21/OPA Outline application with some matters reserved for erection of a dwelling for a farm manager together with access drive. Approved

**ANALYSIS**

6.0 Principle of Development/Sustainability

6.1 The site benefits from an extant outline consent for a farm manager’s dwelling under 2531/21/OPA (expiry 03 May 2025); the principle of development is therefore established. It is noted that the Parish Council have supported the scheme.

6.2 The Council’s Agricultural Agent has reviewed the previous reserved matters application and objected based on the grounds below; as the proposed dwelling remains broadly the same under the current application, the comments are still applicable;  
*“I have not been to site, although I have attended site and met the applicants on the previous application (reference 2531/21/OPA).*

6.3 You are no doubt aware of the background to the present application which is a reserved matters application following the conditional approval of application reference 2531/21/OPA.

6.4 It is my understanding that I am being asked to comment on the scale and size of the proposed dwelling. The size of an agricultural/rural workers dwelling, in this case a farm manager, is a very subjective assessment which is sometimes aided by specific local plan policies or supplementary planning documents but in the case of your Joint Local Plan there are no specific guidelines. Whenever consulted specifically on the size of a proposed workers dwelling, I try to refer to previous policy guidance, comparables of other LPAs where they do have set guidelines on size and also any relevant planning appeal decisions.

6.5 Turning to previous policy guidance, if we look at the now defunct PPS7 Annex A, and in particular paragraph 9, the sentiments of which I believe still carry some weight today. It states;

"Agricultural dwellings should be of a size commensurate with the established functional requirements. Dwellings which are unusually large in relation to the agricultural needs of the unit or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long term should not be permitted. It is the requirement of the enterprise, rather than those of the owner or occupier, that are relevant in determining the size of the dwelling that is appropriate to the particular holding. "

6.6 In terms of comparisons with other LPAs, then several fall back on the old PPS7 Annex A paragraph 9. But in the case of the adopted South Somerset District Council Local Plan 2006-2008, policy HG9, it states:

"it is considered that an indicative guideline to the floor area of proposed dwellings of approximately 175m<sup>2</sup> would adequately serve most holdings (based upon national statistics, which show the average floor area of a detached three bedroom property is 143m<sup>2</sup>).

6.7 The supplementary planning document of Torridge District Council adopted in January 2020 states:

"dwellings should be designed to meet the functional needs of the enterprise they serve and relate to the financial viability of the enterprise that supports it. Dwellings that are unusually large in relation to the rural enterprise, or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long term will not be permitted..... Normally a three-bed dwelling would extend to about 102m<sup>2</sup> and a four-bedroom dwelling to 124m<sup>2</sup> (gross internal area), which are considered to be adequately sized dwellings. It is however recognised that housing for an agricultural worker may include additional space requirements such as a boot room, utility and ground floor shower room; and only in respect of the principal dwelling on a holding further space may be required to accommodate an office. It is anticipated that such needs could be accommodated within a 15% uplift to either 117m<sup>2</sup> (3 bed dwelling) or 142m<sup>2</sup> (4 bed dwelling). Any uplift to property size beyond the standard must be justified, on a business basis, clearly in respect of supporting the operational needs of the related enterprise and importantly demonstrate that it must be able to be financially sustained by the enterprise and in the long term continue to be financially accessible as a rural worker dwelling. For the avoidance of doubt, any uplift from the floor space standards (102m<sup>2</sup> and 124m<sup>2</sup>) would not be supported, if proposed simply to provide additional living accommodation".

6.8 Further evidence can be seen in two appeal decisions reference APP/NI 215/A/14/2225549 and appeal reference APP/NI 215/A/13/2200385. I have already sent these decisions in a previous email, but in summary, the Inspectors' decisions were along

*the lines that 140m was adequate for a worker's dwelling and they made a point of the dwelling needing to be affordable for a farm/rural worker in the future.*

*6.9 So, taking into consideration these three methods of assessment which set a "tone of the list", I can then use them to assess the present application. From the architect's submitted drawings, you have advised the ground floor of the main house is 200m<sup>2</sup>, the first floor is 164m<sup>2</sup> (excluding the balcony) which totals 364m<sup>2</sup>, plus a garage of 48m<sup>2</sup>.*

*6.10 Mindful of the examples I have given above, I therefore consider the proposed size of the dwelling sits well outside of the guidelines I have referred to above and therefore I cannot support the application for this reason alone. I think the applicant needs to show why there are special circumstances and specific requirements of their enterprise that mean the dwelling should be over 2 1/2 times larger than is generally acceptable."*

*6.11 The dwelling as now proposed includes dedicated farm work space, with four bedrooms provided within the residential section of the dwelling. The dwelling provides 112 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space at ground floor level, 136m<sup>2</sup> of residential floor space at first floor (248 m<sup>2</sup> in total) and at total of 96m<sup>2</sup> of farm workspace. The farm workspace is laid out as follows; a utility and bathroom at ground floor level (25 m<sup>2</sup>), with office and file room above at first floor level (25m<sup>2</sup>), plus a further office and separate conference room at ground floor level (46m<sup>2</sup>).*

*6.12 As the dwelling is conditioned specifically for agricultural use only, the number of bedrooms provided (four) is not determinative in this instance but for context, Officers would note that the Nationally Described Space Standard for a six bedroomed dwelling is 123m<sup>2</sup> for a two storey dwelling. However, the provision of 248m<sup>2</sup> of residential floor space has not been agriculturally justified.*

6.13 The applicant has advised that the proposal is for a farm manager, not an agricultural worker, with the implication that additional space should be granted on this basis. However, there is no distinction between an agricultural worker and farm manager in the SPD guidance (paragraph 11.52) to support policy TTV26 1(i); the policy simply requires a locationally specific agricultural need and that the worker will be able to maintain that role for the development in perpetuity. As such, while the requirement for a boot room, shower and office for farm use can reasonably be justified, Officers do not consider that there is a functional agricultural need for the quantum of residential floor space provided.

6.14 Whilst Officers recognise the size of the commercial enterprise, the principle of a dwelling was accepted on the basis that the proposal was centrally located and would provide the farm manager the opportunity to live in close proximity to livestock and crops. The applicant has now proposed a substantial dwelling on the basis that the applicant owns a substantial business portfolio, including farming, holiday lets. While any agricultural dwelling must be of a scale that can be financially supported by the associated holding, a larger holding does not in its own right justify a larger dwelling. Officers would note that other elements of the business are currently managed from elsewhere; no detail has been provided to justify why these elements must be relocated or how this would translate into a need for a significant quantum of residential floor space. Planning policy allows for and the extant outline application approves the principal of an agricultural worker, but not the other businesses undertaken by the applicant.

6.15 Officers are also concerned that the design demonstrates an inefficient use of space solely for aesthetic reasons, most notably the double height glazed entrance and stairwell. As such, the quantum of both farm related and residential floor space proposed has not

been supported by an essential agricultural need in this specific location and is unlikely to remain affordable for an agricultural farm manager in perpetuity, contrary to the provisions of SPT1, SPT2, TTV1, TTV2 and TTV26 (1i).

## 7.0 Design/Landscape

7.1 Policy DEV20 requires developments to achieve high standards of design that contribute to townscape and landscape by protecting and improving the quality of the built environment. It also requires new development to be appropriate in its context. Policy DEV23 seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic and visual quality of development, avoiding significant and adverse landscape or visual impacts. Proposals should be located and designed to respect scenic quality and maintain an area's distinctive sense of place and reinforce local distinctiveness. DEV23 also requires a high architectural and landscape design quality appropriate to its landscape context. The site is located within the open countryside of landscape character type 3B, characterised by gently rolling landform, woodland, copses, shrubs and tree belts, small to medium scale fields and a sparse pattern of development. It is recognised that pressure for development is impacting on the settlement pattern and that development that is "uncharacteristic and visually intrusive over wide areas" should be resisted (p. 132, LCA, 2017). The site occupies a small plateau within the local landscape, offering elevated views over land to the south; any dwelling would need to be sensitively designed to minimise its visual prominence within the local landscape setting.

7.2 Officers do recognise that the applicant has incorporated natural stone, slate and timber within the design of the new dwelling and that the design draws on some traditional elements. However, the sheer scale and mass of the building (the building and garage total c. 32m wide and the ridge height of the dwelling is c. 8.5m above ground level) represent a significant quantum of urban form to be introduced into the rural landscape. The scheme of fenestration mixes both traditional and starkly contemporary patterns of glazing, with parts of both the northern and southern elevation of the building finished in full height glazing, most notably on the south western gable, which incorporates a first floor balcony set under a projecting canopy. The quantity of the glazing used, most notably on the south elevation, with strong horizontal and vertical elements would accent the size of the building, appearing as a reflective surface during the day and as a source of artificial light during the evenings and winter months. The applicant has confirmed that the glazing will be treated in order to reduce night light glare, however, the efficacy of any such treatment would be undermined by the expanse of glazing proposed.

7.3 The dwelling would read as an incongruous addition to the local landscape by virtue of its size and massing, accented by large areas of glazing, to the detriment of local landscape character, contrary to the provisions of DEV20 (2, 4) and DEV23 (1, 2, 3, 4, 7).

## 8.0 Highways/Access

8.1 The access route was consented at outline stage; the Devon County Council Highways Engineer has confirmed that there are no concerns with regards to highway safety.

8.2 The proposal includes a garage and off-road parking and turning area. The garage provides for two cars and an electric vehicle charging point, with additional parking to the rear of the dwelling. Officers note the guidance contained within paragraphs 8.5 and 8.7 of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), setting out the recommended size and number of parking spaces to serve residential development and consider that the proposal complies with the guidance. Were the development as a whole otherwise acceptable, it would have been necessary to restrict the use of the garage to purposes incidental to the

dwelling only, as the development is considered acceptable for the use proposed in a countryside location and is permitted on the basis of an established agricultural need without which permission would not have been granted. On this basis, the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of DEV29 and the guidance contained within the SPD.

### 9.0 Foul Drainage

9.1 The applicant has proposed to dispose of foul drainage via a new package treatment plant. This approach is considered acceptable by the WDBC Environmental Health Officer; were the development as a whole considered acceptable, the details would be secured by condition, to ensure a satisfactory and sustainable foul water drainage system is provided, retained and maintained to serve the development. On this basis, the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of DEV35.

### 10.0 Surface Water Drainage

10.1 The applicant has proposed the use of a soakaway to dispose of surface water from the proposed scheme. The WDBC Drainage Engineer has reviewed the proposal and has objected on the grounds of insufficient information.

*10.2 While additional information cannot be considered during the life of this application, the applicant will be required to submit a response the following as part of any future resubmission:*

- J2634 Rev A Foul and Surface water drainage layout shows soakaways outside of the approved red line boundary, there appears to be miles of infiltration trench along the main road but no infiltration testing for it, also infiltration trench is within 5m of the highway and will need further justification for suitability.*
- There appears to be to be 2 x MFD22-12.10 Proposed Site, Block and Location Plans, the first one is submitted in the drainage assessment and shows a doctored proposed red line boundary around the proposed soakaways which are still outside of the originally approved red line and then the second copy which has been submitted as a document on its own which shows the soakaway for the building within the curtilage of the garden and inside the original red line.*
- The testing itself is incomplete and shows variable infiltration across the site which means additional testing at the proposed locations of the soakaway and will need to be in strict accordance with BRE DG 365, also no contours on the site layout plan to confirm the gradient of the site so not certain that soakaways will be suitable. The calculations show high infiltration rate which means factor of safety will need to be increased. We need one single consistent drainage plan, complete infiltration testing and calculations to support the use of soakaways which will all need to be located within the approved red line boundary.*

10.3 On this basis, insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the development will be served by a suitable surface water drainage scheme contrary to the provisions of DEV35 (4).

### 11.0 Low Carbon

11.1 Policy DEV32 requires that all developments respond to “the need to deliver a low carbon future for Plymouth and South West Devon should be considered in the design and implementation of all developments, in support of a Plan Area target to halve 2005 levels of carbon emissions by 2034 and to increase the use and production of decentralised energy”. This requirement is strengthened in the Climate Emergency Planning Statement (CEPS), which was adopted by the Council in November 2022, after the outline consent was issued. The CEPS sets out that; “for major and minor planning applications, adopted JLP policy

DEV32.5 will apply in order to secure an equivalent 20% carbon saving through onsite renewable energy generation". While some renewable energy technology has been considered for inclusion at a later stage in the process, it is noted that Permitted Development rights for the dwelling are intact and as such, further measures, such as solar panels could be easily installed without planning permission. As such, were the development otherwise acceptable it would have been necessary to secure full details of measures necessary to demonstrate compliance with Building Regulations to comply with policy DEV32 and the provisions of the Climate Emergency Planning Statement and this does not form a substantive reason for refusal.

## 12.0 Biodiversity

12.1 With regards to the ecological conditions, the Devon County Council Ecologist has confirmed that insufficient information has been submitted in order to discharge the conditions relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (6) , installation of bird nesting and bat roosting boxes (11) and badger surveys (9) but that save for some administrative updates, the conditions relating to the CEMP (7), LEMP (8) and timing of works (12) can be discharged.

12.2 With regards to Condition 10 (lighting), the applicant has clarified that no lighting will be required during the construction period and has advised that they consider that the internal lighting detail is not required to be submitted to the LPA. The DCC Ecologist has advised that the requirement for a detailed Lighting Strategy is still outstanding. The condition requires that "the strategy will minimise indirect impacts from lighting associated with the preconstruction, during construction and operational activities, and demonstrate how the best practice (BCT/ILP, 2018) guidance has been implemented. This will include details such as the following: artificial lighting associated with public realm lighting, car headlights associated with traffic movements through the development and internal and external lighting associated with private residence".

12.3 As such, insufficient information has been provided to discharge Conditions 6, 9, 10 and 11 and the proposal is considered contrary to the provisions of DEV26.

## 13.0 Conclusion

13.1 Whilst the principle of an agricultural dwelling has been established on this site under the parent consent, the quantum of residential / and other floor space proposed has not been supported by an essential agricultural need and is unlikely to remain affordable for an agricultural farm manager in perpetuity, contrary to the provisions of SPT1, SPT2, TTV1, TTV2 and TTV26 (1i). As a consequence, the dwelling would read as an incongruous addition to the local landscape by virtue of its size and massing, accented by large areas of glazing, to the detriment of local landscape character and tranquillity, contrary to the provisions of DEV20 (2, 4) and DEV23 (1, 2, 3, 4, 7). Finally, insufficient information has been provided to discharge Conditions 6, 9, 10 and 11, contrary to the provisions of DEV26 and insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the development will be served by a suitable surface water drainage scheme contrary to the provisions of DEV35 (4). It is therefore recommended that the application be refused.

***This application has been considered in accordance with Section 38 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.***

## **Planning Policy**

### Relevant policy framework



Section 70 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act requires that regard be had to the development plan, any local finance and any other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compensation Act requires that applications are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of decision making, as of 26 March 2019, the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014 - 2034 is now part of the development plan for Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council (other than parts of South Hams and West Devon within Dartmoor National Park).

On 26 March 2019 of the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan was adopted by all three of the component authorities. Following adoption, the three authorities jointly notified the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)\* of their choice to monitor the Housing Requirement at the whole plan level. This is for the purposes of the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) and the 5 Year Housing Land Supply assessment. A letter from MHCLG to the Authorities was received on 13 May 2019 confirming the change.

On 19 December 2023 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published the HDT 2022 measurement. This confirmed the Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon's joint measurement as 121% and the policy consequences are "None".

Therefore no buffer is required to be applied for the purposes of calculating a 5 year housing land supply at the whole plan level. The combined authorities can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply of 5.84 years at end of March 2023 (the 2023 Monitoring Point). This is set out in the Plymouth, South Hams & West Devon Local Planning Authorities' Housing Position Statement 2023 (published 26 February 2024).

[\*now known as Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities]

The relevant development plan policies are set out below:

**The Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan was adopted by South Hams District Council on 21 March 2019 and West Devon Borough Council on 26 March 2019.**

SPT1 Delivering sustainable development

SPT2 Sustainable linked neighbourhoods and sustainable rural communities

SPT3 Provision for new homes

SPT9 Strategic principles for transport planning and strategy

SPT10 Balanced transport strategy for growth and healthy and sustainable communities

SPT12 Strategic approach to the natural environment

TTV1 Prioritising growth through a hierarchy of sustainable settlements

TTV2 Delivering sustainable development in the Thriving Towns and Villages Policy Area

TTV26 Development in the Countryside

DEV1 Protecting health and amenity

DEV2 Air, water, soil, noise, land and light

DEV8 Meeting local housing need in the Thriving Towns and Villages Policy Area

DEV10 Delivering high quality housing

DEV20 Place shaping and the quality of the built environment

DEV21 Development affecting the historic environment

DEV23 Landscape character

DEV26 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation

DEV28 Trees, woodlands and hedgerows

DEV29 Specific provisions relating to transport  
DEV31 Waste management  
DEV32 Delivering low carbon development  
DEV35 Managing flood risk and Water Quality Impacts

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

A Neighbourhood Plan is currently under preparation for the Parish of Lifton but it has not yet reached a stage where it can be considered material to the decision making process.

Other material considerations include the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and guidance within the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Additionally, the following planning documents are also material considerations in the determination of the application:

Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Supplementary Planning Document (2020)  
Plymouth and South West Devon Climate Emergency Planning Statement (2022)  
A Landscape Character Assessment for South Hams and West Devon (2017)

### **Considerations under Human Rights Act 1998 and Equalities Act 2010**

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equalities Act 2010 have been taken into account in reaching the recommendation contained in this report.