

Introduction

Plan-A were initially approached to assist the owners with an enforcement case at the site. By putting forward a carefully compiled case, backed up with robust evidence, we secured permission (at appeal) for temporary accommodation initially, then subsequently for a permanent dwelling and workspace space for our clients, providing them with a secure a base from which their alpaca breeding business can thrive.



Background

The site lies just to the north of the village of Cowley in a rural location within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Having purchased the site and acquired the alpaca herd and associated buildings and equipment from an established local breeder, the owners positioned a static caravan at the site to live in whilst developing their own rural enterprise. However, the presence and use of the caravan did not have the benefit of planning permission. Prior to our involvement and following initial enquiries made by the Council's Enforcement Team, a retrospective application was submitted, seeking permission for the caravan to be retained. However, having failed to convince the Council that the business was economically sustainable or providing sufficient justification as to why there was a need to live on-site, permission was refused.

Our Approach

Plan-A was approached to assist with the subsequent enforcement action being taken by the Council. In pursuing the enforcement appeals, we put forward a comprehensive case, setting out compelling arguments which established the functional need for on-site accommodation in association with the agricultural/equestrian business. Furthermore, a detailed business case was presented which demonstrated that the alpaca breeding business and on-site horse livery would form a viable and sustainable rural business.

Having reviewed the evidence with the assistance of an external agricultural business advisor, the Council duly granted temporary permission. This allowed our clients to retain the caravan as temporary accommodation and to live at the site for a period of 3 years.

National and local planning policies are designed to resist the development of permanent new homes in isolated rural locations, except where justified as specified exemptions. One such exemption relates to proposals where there is an essential need for a rural-worker's dwelling. Such dwellings are notoriously difficult to justify, and if granted, occupation is restricted to use by a person(s) working on-site or at a nearby rural enterprise.

Before the temporary period for stationing the static caravan at the site expired, we needed to compile evidence to demonstrate that the 'functional need' for accommodation at the site remained and that the business was on a sound financial footing to justify granting permission for a permanent dwelling at the site. We also needed to demonstrate that there were no other buildings at the farm available and capable of conversion to living accommodation nor were there any suitable dwellings available within the vicinity that could fulfil this need.

On the back of the Appeal Inspector's ruling, we compiled a case which demonstrated that there remained a 'functional need' for our clients to be within sight and sound of the alpaca herd at all times for animal welfare reasons. Furthermore, we were able to satisfy the Council that they had achieved all that they had set out to do in the Business Case that formed part of the justification for the temporary permission. In addition, we had to demonstrate that the scale of the proposed dwelling was the minimum needed and proportional to the established need. Initial proposals for the house were revised in collaboration with officers. The scheme was in the end approved by the Planning Committee, in line with the Case Officer's



The approved 4-bed dwelling is simple and contemporary in design, with an 'L' shaped plan form. In addition to the living accommodation the scheme includes an office, storage and studio workspaces to support day-to-day business operations as well as research and development. Once constructed, the dwelling will operate 'off-grid'. Accordingly, the design is founded upon principles of environmental conservation and self-sufficiency, reflecting the clients' strong environmental ethos.