

S/1987/12/VC - WILLINGHAM

APPENDIX 1

Removal of agricultural occupancy condition at

Cadwin Nursery, 37A Rampton Road, Willingham

RECEIVED SCDC

26 NOV 2012

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

A further planning application has been submitted to the council following the previous appeal decision, requesting removal of the "agricultural occupancy condition". As a local Chartered Surveyor and Estate Agent who has dealt with residential property sales in this immediate area for more than 50 years, I have been asked by the council to look at the marketing exercise carried out by the applicant's agents and to comment on whether or not I feel that there is sufficient evidence of the effective marketing of the property at a realistic price level to establish that no demand exists for the property with the present restrictive occupation.

In considering the matter, I have looked at all the information provided by the applicant's agents and would make the following comments:

1. Their letter accompanying the planning application states that the property has been marketed for 38 months but it has already been accepted at the earlier appeal that the process, up to that point, had been unsatisfactory and had not demonstrated adequate efforts to sell. It was placed back on the market in January of this year at a more realistic price and appears to have been withdrawn from the market in July – a total period of 6 months.
2. The revised basis of marketing offered the property in two lots – a bungalow with approximately 2 acres at a guide price of £285,000, the remaining 7.5 acres with the large barn at £160,000. The guide price for the bungalow with around 2 acres is some 14% above what I considered to be a realistic price in my evidence at the last appeal and it is my belief that there has been no material change in property values in that time. I have never sought to claim that I am a particular expert in agricultural values but the main part of the land appears generally to be in a poor state with a need to carry out a lot of clearance and, unless the barn is of very special use to a specific buyer it could be considered a liability. All in all I find it difficult to accept that the value of this second "lot" is anywhere near £160,000. Something around £50,000/£70,000 is, I think, more appropriate. A satisfactory "agricultural" purchaser is far more likely to

be interested in buying the entire holding and the inflated price of this second lot is likely to be a serious deterrent. The previous view I expressed is that a total of £300,000 for the whole property is probably fair with the restriction and it appears from the applicant's agents comments that an offer well above that figure (£320,000) has, in fact, been rejected. I quite understand that the applicant has no desire to sell at well below what he actually paid but that is not a matter on which I can comment.

3. Item 5 in the agents supporting evidence states that the lack of car parking is a problem if a commercial nursery use of the property was resurrected but clearly there is ample space on the site to create whatever car parking might be required for almost any use of the property.
4. The various appendices show evidence of advertising. This advertising appears mostly to be in the form of a small insertion in the standard advertising section taken up by Acorus in national agricultural publications rather than the more effective local media. It seems to me to be very unlikely that prospective local buyers with or without the appropriate agricultural "qualification" will be looking through magazines primarily aimed at those people actively running farming operations. I have found it difficult to establish whether any real effort has been made to promote the property through local advertising and the only evidence I have seen is two small advertisements in the local Homes Now publication where they are lost in pages primarily featuring new homes and luxury city apartments.
5. All the press advertising seems to feature only a very brief description and just one photograph which happens to be a very poor uninspiring view of the property, not from its best angle and with no internal photographs to help the promotion.
6. Most agents would expect to promote the properties they are selling on several of the major property portals as well as their own web site. I could find no evidence of this property being available on any of these sites (all of which have to be paid for) other than Right Move where it is

certainly no longer featured and is said to have been removed from the market in July.

7. The applicant's agent advises that the property is being adequately promoted on the Acorus web site. Searches under "bungalows" or "small farms" in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire (the smallest area available in the search criteria) reveal that there are no properties available in this region irrespective of price. I am unable to tell whether or not the property was at some stage listed on this site but, in any event, it seems unlikely that local buyers looking for this kind of property will make visits to a web site where a property in the general Cambridge area might only occasionally be available. Many of the local agents will have, on their web sites, available property in Willingham all the time and this is where prospective purchasers are much more likely to be looking. The copy of particulars produced by Acorus, shown in the appendix, certainly does not in any way flatter the property and lacks the internal photos that really should be available.
8. The last enquiry generated by Acorus, according to their records, appears to be on the 18<sup>th</sup> July indicating that the property has not been available on the market since then.
9. In the first round of marketing when the price was much too high, Acorus show that they approached 53 local agricultural businesses to advise them of the availability of this property. A letter with brief information about the property was sent to all of these people in 2009. Their present supporting evidence claims that a further letter dated the 8<sup>th</sup> May this year was sent to all "interested parties" from that initial circularisation in 2009, to advise them of the reduced price. At the previous very inflated figure it seems unlikely that any of the 53 people would have been "interested parties" and Acorus might like to clarify how many of the 53 were actually advised of the new price. In any event, it seems unlikely that those already running a local agricultural business would, in the current climate, be particularly interested in expansion unless the terms were attractive for the entire site.

10. Much information is provided about the need for agricultural properties of this kind in the Willingham area. I cannot comment on the facts and figures provided but, as far as I am concerned, the need and demand can only be established by effective local promotion on a realistic basis. In my view this does not yet appear to have happened.

11. By way of comparison, I am enclosing a copy of the particulars of one property in the next village of Rampton which, in many ways is comparable which has just been sold at £295,000. I am also enclosing details of a property currently being offered for sale by Messrs Tylers just a few yards away from Cadwin Nurseries which has not yet been sold but is a 3/4 bed roomed bungalow with a large garden at less than £300,000. Neither of these properties has an agricultural occupancy restriction.

21 November 2012

Signed ...

John Pocock FRICS