

Employment Loss

The DPC paper for the Planning Committee (July 2023) stated the following:

- Dorney Parish Council strongly disagrees with the Applicant's and Planning Directorate's stance on the lack of commercial demand for the buildings' Class B8 usage.
- We are particularly concerned about the potential conflict of interest arising from both Agents involved in the Market Report being employed by the Applicant.
- Additionally, the lack of a prolonged period of unsuccessful marketing, using details approved by the District Council, raises questions about the validity of the assessment.
- Furthermore, we find it surprising that neither the Authors nor Planning Directorate made any attempt to contact the previous tenant to understand the reasons for their departure or to examine the successful transition of Pigeon House Farm at the top of Boveney Road, where several tenants have created a considerable number of new jobs in recent years.
- Elm Farm in Boveney Road also appears to be a thriving multi-faceted commercial site, providing employment opportunities.
- To gain more insight into the demand for commercial use of the buildings and support local employment, Dorney Parish Council contacted the most recent previous tenant, who ran a successful tree surgery business approximately six years ago. He expressed disappointment at being asked to leave the site, emphasising that it was a good location for his business.
- As a community, we are committed to promoting local employment and not merely serving as a commuter village for neighbouring areas.
- To achieve this goal and ensure the best use of available space, a professional and independent marketing process should have been undertaken before seeking permission to convert viable light industrial units into commuter housing.

Response to Appeal: Further supporting information

We refer to the non-independent armchair [Commercial Market Report](#) by Savills. It states:

*“The pre-application advice has emphasised that South Bucks Council expect the applications to be supported by marketing evidence that shows there is no market demand for the buildings in their current use. Under Local Plan Policy CP10, the main planning test is that **“there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the permitted purpose”**. This report addresses that planning test and makes the case that the properties are not suited to continued Class B8 use and provides the following:*

1. Market overview of demand and supply for Class B8 uses in this location
2. Market commentary on alternative commercial uses including specialist accommodation for the elderly and/or those with special needs, hotels and other serviced accommodation, retail, leisure & community uses.

3. Assessment of the opportunities and constraints presented by the current buildings and sites”

Fundamentally, this study finds that the subject site is not suited to the ongoing and future use as B8 or other commercial uses and indeed, such use would be commercially unfeasible.”

It remains the opinion of Dorney Parish Council that this Report is flawed and fails to address the previous history of the site. As an example, Eton College used it for the Dorney Lake equipment for only a few months before moving the operation to Eton. It should be noted that the Marketing Report was produced by the agent of the applicant in support of the application and therefore should either be discounted or treated with considerable caution.

Dorney Parish Council have conducted research into the previous history of the site and have established that:

- The previous successful forestry business (SIC Classification 02100), which occupied two of the buildings and virtually all of the land on the site for 27 years, from 1992 to 2019, was induced to leave the site – much against their will.
- The business employed eight full time staff, plus the owner.
- The business was able and willing to continue operating from the site but Clearbell Capital indicated that the plan was to build 14 residential units.
- An alternative employment use of the buildings was also raised – accommodation for rowing clubs using Dorney Lake – but that never materialised.

The Report states, correctly in Para 4.1.2., that *“The local market is characterised by plentiful supply of small, conventional industrial units and good demand from tenants for well located and appointed units.”*

This is confirmed by a number of small businesses that are operating successfully in and around Dorney Parish – and have done so for many years.

The Boveney site was not a problem for the forestry business which had relatively few vehicle movements a day – primarily teams going out to tree surgery jobs in the morning and returning at night.

However, addressing the “well appointed” comment, the state of the listed buildings was not good. The care the Appellant took over repairing and maintaining the listed buildings left much to be desired.

The [Report on Barn A](#) Para. 3. states the following by the consultant in July 2020:

“It is clear that this Grade II listed barn has suffered from neglect and is now in need of significant repair in order to maintain it in a stable and weather tight condition.”

We are advised by the owners of Boveney Court Farmhouse, into whose grounds Barn A juts, that little or no work has been conducted to repair this listed building for the past three and a half years. This lack of action would certainly deter future tenants.

Barn B has also suffered neglect although, fortunately, not as much as Barn A. [The Method Statement \(May 2022\) for Barn B](#) records in Para 2 the long list of repairs required prior to any future use.

We would like to emphasise the importance of the following statements in the South Bucks Local Development Framework - Core Strategy Development Plan Document Adopted February 2011:

Core Policy 10 – Employment

Para.3.4.1. The evidence base prepared for the South East Plan concluded that **the need for additional employment floorspace in the area** which extends to the west of London (including South Bucks District) **could largely be met through the more efficient use of employment land** in town centres and **on established employment sites. Such an approach is particularly important in South Bucks, given the Green Belt constraint.**

Para.3.4.6. It is important that existing and new businesses in South Bucks are supported by **generally protecting employment sites from redevelopment for other uses**, and allowing appropriate redevelopment or expansion on existing employment sites.

Para.3.4.14. Less than 1% of the resident workforce in South Bucks work in rural activities such as agriculture, forestry and fishing. **However, this sector remains important, both in terms of preserving the character of the countryside and sustaining rural communities.**

A footnote (67) to Core Policy 10 states 'In seeking to demonstrate that there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the permitted purpose, *the applicant will need to have undertaken a prolonged period of unsuccessful marketing, using details approved by the District Council.*'

Guidance Note -Marketing Requirements in Relation to Core Policy 10: According to the Bucks Council Planning Department, *“the Council have published a Guidance Note on the Marketing Requirements in Relation to Core Policy 10 (Employment). This advises that vacant premises or sites should be continuously marketed for at least one year, although a longer period of marketing may be appropriate for larger sites, or where the economic climate is more challenging.”*

Dorney Parish Council is convinced, knowing the businesses in the area well, that the Report was substantially incorrect in its conclusions and strongly advocates that the Appellant makes the necessary repairs to Barn A and Barn B, as specified by their consultants, refurbishes the other buildings and, in conjunction with Dorney Parish Council, conducts a professional, independent marketing exercise for a period of one year following the repairs

to Barns A & B together with refurbishment of the other buildings and thoroughly clearing up the site in general.