

UTT/12/5342/FUL (LITTLE DUNMOW)

PROPOSAL: Demolition of existing agricultural research offices and agricultural storage buildings. Replacement buildings and 2 No. replacement agricultural storage buildings, together with associated improvements to existing vehicle access and parking arrangements

LOCATION: Throws Farm, Throws Corner, Brookend Road, Little Dunmow

APPLICANT: Agrii

AGENT: Clive Petch Architects

GRID REFERENCE: GR/TL 658-224

EXPIRY DATE: 2 January 2013

CASE OFFICER: Miss K. Benjafield

1. NOTATION

1.1 Outside Development Limits

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

2.1 The site is located on the corner of junction of the B1256 and Brookend Road and comprises an agricultural research and development enterprise. There are a number of existing agricultural buildings on the site and these have the appearance of agricultural barns and storage buildings.

2.2 The original farmhouse on the site is a two-storey structure that has previously been converted to offices and has been extended in the past with a single storey range to the side and rear. This extension is used for meetings, training and offices.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 This application relates to the redevelopment of the site in order to provide modern purpose built buildings that would be appropriate for the activities carried out on the site. 7 existing buildings are indicated to be demolished, amounting to 1473m² of floor space. This floor area is arranged within the following buildings/structures:

Building	Use	Floor Area	Ridge Height
1.	Trials office, meeting/training rooms	267m ²	4m
2.	50% Chemical and samples store, laboratory and maintenance calibration / workshop for sprayers; 50% seed samples pool, seed counters and seed packeting area	292m ²	4.5m
3.	Fertilizer and machine store, seed	310m ²	6.1m

	bagging unit		
4.	Farm machinery storage / parking	102m ²	4.8m
5.	Storage area attached to farmhouse + separate area to side/rear	87m ² + 19m ²	5.5m
6.	Grain store	153m ²	7.8m + additional roof section 2.8m above the ridge.
7.	Grain analysis, storage of seed samples, preparation of seed samples for plots and equipment store	243m ²	8.7m.

- 3.2 It is proposed that 4 buildings would be constructed on the site to replace those that would be demolished and provide additional space for the current needs of the business. Details of these buildings are set out below:

Building	Proposed Use	Floor area	Ridge height
To side of farmhouse	Training / Offices	1087m ²	8m
To rear of new training / office building	Machine store	918m ²	8.2m
Rear of farmhouse	Technical building	1185m ²	7.5m
Adjacent to existing greenhouse to north of site	Grain store	750m ²	7.9m

- 3.3 The existing parking provision on the site is not formally laid out and is located on the concrete hardstanding within the farmyard. There are occasions when additional overflow parking is required on other areas of land close to the farmyard. It is proposed to provide a laid out parking area in the same area as the existing parking provision and on land which currently has buildings that would be demolished. An area of overflow parking would be located to the north of the formal parking provision. The submitted details indicate that 60 formal spaces would be provided with an additional 23 spaces within the overflow area.
- 3.4 In addition to the parking provision being reorganised, it is proposed to close two of the existing accesses to the site and remodel the remaining access. The access to remain would be located at the northern end of the proposed parking area and would provide easy access to the parking areas as well as the working farmyard areas.
- 3.5 To the north of the site an attenuation/irrigation pond is also proposed. This would provide a storage area for surface water run off and allow it to be used for irrigation purposes as necessary.

4. APPLICANT'S CASE

- 4.1 The application has been submitted with a number of supporting documents. These include a joint planning and design and access statement, an ecology assessment report, a landscape assessment, transport statement, drainage strategy and tree survey report. Full details of these documents can be viewed at the Council Offices, Saffron Walden or on the internet www.uttlesford.gov.uk
- 4.2. In summary, many of the buildings on the site are outdates and no longer fit-for-purpose. There are issues in relation to the security of existing machinery and

equipment, the safe storage of large quantities of fertiliser, safe and efficient working practices in relation to the farm and providing a high level of service to customers visiting the site. A substantial investment will now be required in order to adequately address these issues and to renew the buildings on the site. The overall intention of the proposals is not to significantly expand the existing centre but to consolidate and enhance the facilities.

- 4.3 The proposed development is considered to accord with the relevant provisions of the Council's development plan and with the new NPPF. The development would deliver significant benefits in terms of visual amenity, highway safety and contribution towards sustaining both the local and national rural economy and to sustainable food production.

5. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

- 5.1 The site has been the subject of a number of planning applications between 1954 and 1986 relating to agricultural development and change of use of the farmhouse to offices.

6. POLICIES

6.1 National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

6.2 East of England Plan 2006

N/A

6.3 Essex Replacement Structure Plan 2001

N/A

6.4 Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005

Policy S7 – The Countryside
Policy GEN1 – Access
Policy GEN2 – Design
Policy GEN7 – Nature Conservation
Policy GEN8 – Vehicle Parking Standards

7. TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 7.1 None received.

8. CONSULTATIONS

ECC Archaeology

- 8.1 Recommends trial trenching and full excavation based on information contained within the Historic Environment Record and finds that have been recovered from land to the east and west of the site.

ECC Highways

8.2 No objections subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the accesses.

Environment Agency

8.3 No objections subject to the imposition of a condition relating to surface water drainage.

9. REPRESENTATIONS

9.1 None received. Period expired 15 November 2012.

10. APPRAISAL

The issues to consider in the determination of the application are:

- A The Countryside and Design
- B Access
- C Amenity of neighbouring properties
- D Protected species
- E Vehicle Parking Standards

A The Countryside and Design

- 10.1 The site is located within the open countryside where Uttlesford Local Plan (ULP) Policy S7 – The Countryside applies. This specifies that planning permission will only be granted for development that needs to take place in the countryside or is appropriate to a rural area. In addition, development will only be permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there.
- 10.2 The existing agricultural research and development business on the site, by the nature of the work carried out (for example growing crops and testing seeds), needs to be located within the countryside. The site has the characteristics of a farm and the use is appropriate. The planning history of the site indicates that there has not been any development on the site for a number of years and the buildings are nearing the end of the useful life. The applicant has submitted supporting information which indicates that the buildings are no longer fit for the needs of the business and it is the intention that the planning permission is granted, the proposals would enable the rationalisation of the existing floor area on the site with additional floor area to meet the current needs of the business.
- 10.3 The proposed buildings would have the appearance of functional agricultural buildings that are commonly found on farms within the countryside. In addition, the training and office building has been designed in order to replicate the design features of a barn so as to minimise the impact of the building when viewed from across the countryside. The size and appearance of the proposed buildings would not be out of keeping with the site's farm character and as such would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the surrounding countryside.
- 10.4 There is existing ad hoc parking provision on the site, primarily centred on and around the concrete hardstanding of the farmyard. The business runs training courses for farmers and when these are ongoing there can be large numbers of people visiting the site travelling by car. The proposals indicate that the parking provision would be formalised on the site and positioned between the new buildings and the eastern site

boundary with Brook End Road. This would utilise the area of existing parking provision and extend it to the north on land that currently has two buildings located on it once these are demolished. There would also be an area of occasional overflow car park adjacent to this. The parking provision would be contained within the site between the road boundary and the proposed buildings. As such it would be acceptable and would not have a detrimental impact on the open and rural character of the countryside.

B Access

10.5 There are three existing vehicular accesses from Brook End Road onto the site and it proposed to close two of these and provide one improved access to the site. Essex County Council, as the local highway authority, has been consulted and has no objections to the proposed works subject to the imposition of conditions. As such the proposed access arrangements are acceptable.

C Amenity of neighbouring properties

10.6 The proposed buildings would be positioned sufficiently distant from any neighbouring properties to prevent any loss of amenity from occurring to the occupiers of those dwellings. As a result there would be no materially detrimental loss of privacy, loss of light, overbearing impact or overshadowing from the proposals.

D Protected species

10.7 A biodiversity assessment has been undertaken in relation to the site and this included assessments and surveys for bats, barn owls and great crested newts. The results of the assessment indicate that the development could be undertaken with minimal risk of impact on protected species and that precautionary measures should be undertaken during the demolition phase. The recommended precautionary measures are controlled under legislation other than planning and therefore it is not possible to require to be undertaken by condition. However the submitted survey information indicates that the proposal would not have a harmful act on protected species and is acceptable.

E Vehicle Parking Standards

10.8 The amount of parking spaces required in accordance with the adopted parking standards for research and development uses equates to a maximum of 76 parking spaces. The site has combined uses of research and development and agricultural and it is the research and development element that generates a requirement for parking provision. Taking into account the fluctuating number of vehicles on the site, depending on whether there is any training or events being undertaken, the proposed car parking provision is appropriate for the uses on this site.

11. CONCLUSION

The following is a summary of the main reasons for the recommendation:

- A The redevelopment of this site is acceptable, the design of the buildings would be in keeping with other agricultural buildings elsewhere in the countryside and the proposals would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the countryside.
- B The proposed access arrangements are acceptable.
- C The proposals would not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupiers of any neighbouring property.
- D The proposals would not have a detrimental impact on protected species.

E The proposed car parking provision is acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as set out in the Schedule.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt as to the nature of the development hereby permitted, to ensure development is carried out in accordance with the approved application details, to ensure that the development is carried out with the minimum harm to the local environment, in accordance with the Policies of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005) as shown in the Schedule of Policies.

3. Prior to the erection of the development hereby approved (not including footings and foundations) full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. These details shall include [for example]:-

- i. proposed finished levels or contours;
- ii. means of enclosure;
- iii. car parking layouts;
- iv. other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas;
- v. hard surfacing materials;
- vi. minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, etc.);
- vii. proposed and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g. drainage power,
- viii. communications cables, pipelines etc. indicating lines, manholes, supports.);
- ix. retained historic landscape features and proposals for restoration, where relevant.

Soft landscape works shall include [planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate; implementation programme].

REASON: The landscaping of this site is required in order to protect and enhance the existing visual character of the area and to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development hereby permitted, in accordance with Policies GEN2, GEN8, GEN7, ENV3 and ENV8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

4. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out before any part of the development is occupied or in accordance with the programme agreed with the local planning authority.

REASON: In the interests of the appearance of the site and area in accordance with Policies GEN2, GEN7, ENV3 and ENV8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

5. Prior to commencement of the development details showing the means to prevent the discharge of surface water from the development onto the highway shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved

scheme shall be carried out in its entirety prior to the access becoming operational and shall be retained at all times.

Reason: To prevent hazards caused by water flowing onto the highway and to avoid the formation of ice on the highway in the interest of highway safety in accordance with Policy GEN1 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

6. The vehicular access shall be constructed at right angles to the highway boundary and to the existing carriageway. The width of the access at its junction with the highway shall not be less than 7 metres and shall be retained at that width for 6 metres within the site.

Reason: To ensure that vehicles can enter and leave the highway in a controlled manner in the interest of highway safety in accordance with Policy GEN1 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

7. The existing 2 accesses to become redundant as shown on the site layout drawing no: 101 dated September 2012 shall be permanently closed to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, incorporating the reinstatement to full height of the highway verge/kerbing, in accordance with details (which shall include a timescale for the closure of the accesses) submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the commencement of development.

Reason: To ensure the removal of and to preclude the creation of unnecessary points of traffic conflict in the highway in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy GEN1 of Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

8. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of surface water drainage, incorporating sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory method of surface water drainage in accordance with Policy GEN3 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).