

**UTT/21/0320/FUL**

**Call-in request if recommended for approval:**

**Reason: Design / impact on setting of listed building / adverse visual impact on street scene and landscape (Councillor Driscoll)**

<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	<b>Erection of a grain and machinery store.</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Land to the West of Station Road, Takeley.</b>
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	<b>Mr R McGowan.</b>
<b>AGENT:</b>	<b>Foxes Rural Consultants Ltd.</b>
<b>EXPIRY DATE:</b>	<b>05.04.2021 (extension of time agreed to 16.07.2021).</b>
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b>	<b>Mr C Theobald.</b>

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**1. NOTATION**

1.1 Outside Development Limits / General Aerodrome Direction.

**2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE**

2.1 The site comprises part of an arable farm holding under the control of the applicant consisting of 178.4 ha that lies on the west side of Station Road (B183) to the south of the Flitch Way. Bonningtons Farmhouse lies to the immediate north. The farmland has a gradual fall from north to south extending down to a valley below, and is screened by boundary hedging onto Station Road on the south side of an existing wide bellmouth vehicular access which leads into the site from Station Road just to the south of the entrance into Takeley Park lying diagonally opposite. The site boundary on this side of Station Road to the north of the vehicular access leading back towards the Flitch Way is more broken and exposed in nature affording views into the site and across the farmland to the west.

**3. PROPOSAL**

3.1 This proposal relates to the erection of a grain and machinery store required in connection with the farming use of arable land adjacent to Hatfield Park Farm.

3.2 The new storage building would have a portal frame with a partially open design for dual use and would have external dimensions of 38m x 24.38m (total floor area = 926.44m<sup>2</sup>). The building would have a height to the eaves of 7m and height to the ridge of 10.54m with a 15 degrees roof pitch. The building would have two roller shutter doors on the western elevation of the building. The side and gable elevations of the building would be clad in juniper green box profile sheeting up to the eaves with 0.8m high concrete panelling from the ground, whilst the roof would consist of fibre cement with 14 no. rooflights (7 no. lights on either side).

3.3 The agricultural storage building as originally proposed and as submitted for the current application was shown to be sited in a position along the south-western outside edge of Bonningtons Farmhouse with a new long concrete access road to

serve it from the existing bellmouth entrance point onto the farmland from Station Road. However, since receipt of the application, revised drawings have been submitted following concerns expressed by the planning case officer of the impacts that the building in this indicated position and because of its size would have on the local landscape and on the setting of Bonningtons Farmhouse whereby the building is now shown in a revised siting position parallel with Station Road to the south of the existing access point with a shorter length of service road. This committee report considers the new building in this revised siting position.

#### **4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 The development does not constitute 'EIA development' for the purposes of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

#### **5. APPLICANT'S CASE**

- 5.1 The application is accompanied by a planning, design and access statement (Fox Rural Consultants Ltd) which sets out the development proposal, including the agricultural need justification for the proposed agricultural storage building, and the planning policy context relevant to the proposal. In this respect, the following information is submitted in support of the proposal:

- The farm business occupies approximately 441 acres or 178.4 hectares at Hatfield Park Farm. The core operation of the farming business is arable comprising of a wide variety of crops including winter wheat, peas, borage, pumpkins, maize and hay cropping;
- Currently there is no storage capacity for grain on the land at Hatfield Park Farm and all grain is currently stored in contract grain storage off site at present. The applicants are seeking a purpose built agricultural building at the farm to store grain which would economically be more beneficial to the business;
- The building will also create a permanent covered store for high value equipment and machinery. The building is commensurate with the size of the holding and to the variety of crops grown on site. It will offer flexibility to store separate varieties of crops in different sections using mobile grain walling;
- In addition, at points during the year, there will be a requirement to have on site: crops harvested from summer, seed to be planted and associated fertilisers for the harvest following;
- This storage provision will facilitate harvested crops, seeds and fertilisers to be kept separately and prevent cross contamination. This proposal will enable seeds and fertilisers to be stored undercover and indoors where it can be more protected from vermin or being ruined by weather events. The proposal will enable the sustained growth and expansion of the farming enterprise and therefore ultimately supporting the rural economy in the area;
- The farm wishes to create capability for grain storage on the farm and enable a wider range of crops to be segregated after harvest. The roller shutter doors enables grain and other arable crops to be efficiently tipped by modern tractors and trailers onto the floor of the building; there will be provision for the segregation of the different crops grown by the farming business and there is greater flexibility for storage regarding crop types, crop varieties and crop specifications / grades. Some crops grown on site, such as the peas and pumpkins are bulkier than grain thus requiring greater volume of storage space;

- The main part of the building would be fitted with pre-stressed concrete panels to 0.8 metres from ground level that are visible externally. There will be 4m high internal grain walling. By providing for greater eaves height of 7 metres and a ridge height of 10.54 metres, the pre-stressed concrete panel walling to 4.0 metres limits the amount of floor area required for the building by providing the applicant with the ability to store the grain at maximum height;
- There will be several types of crop as well as varieties within crops. As a result, the floor area needs to be large enough to allow machinery enough movement space tipping and loading grain as well as maintain walled areas between sections to prevent cross contamination;
- Modern stores need to meet the food standards required by grain buyers and ultimately the supermarkets and the public. As traceability has become paramount in food safety buyers need to know where and how each load has been stored. The Assured Combinable Crops Scheme (ACCS) is an industry wide standard that maintains a minimum standard for the growing and storing of crops;
- Currently, high value equipment such as the combine harvester and sprayer are either kept outside or in a barn depending on storage capacity of barns and how much grain is currently in store. The creation of a designated space within the store will give a permanent place in which to keep this machinery which is both covered from the weather and gives protection from theft;
- The undercover storage of farm machinery is essential for security, maintenance and longevity of the equipment. Outside storage of high value farm machinery leads to the increased deterioration and wear and tear effects, especially during the colder months. This causes higher maintenance costs of the farm equipment and a shorter life expectancy. Leaving farm machinery out in all weathers results in the ceasing of machinery bearings, rusting of chains, weathering of frame and paintwork etc which will require more frequent repairs or even replacements. These are additional costs which could be limited if machinery could be kept undercover.

5.2 The planning statement concludes as follows:

- The proposal is commensurate in size and scale to the farming operations at Hatfield Park Farm and will ensure continued growth and profitability of the agricultural business. The design and materials are commonly found in modern agricultural buildings across the district;
- Currently there are no storage facilities at Hatfield Park Farm in which to store harvest from this holding, which is an essential need for any farming operation. The new building will allow for the safe and secure storage of high value machinery and the storage of grain to release onto market at an economically advantageous time. It will also enable crops and seed/fertilisers for the following harvest to be stored undercover in the dry.
- The proposal complies with both Local and National Planning Policy and should be supported as it supports a prosperous rural economy.

## 6. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

6.1 A number of more historic farm related planning applications have been determined (approved) for Hatfield Park Farm, albeit that this farmstead itself falls outside the scope of the red line agricultural unit owned and controlled by the applicant as identified for the current application (Mr R McGowan, Hatfield Regis Grange Farm).

- 6.2 The following applications are relevant to the current application whereby they have been registered for the red line agricultural unit adjacent to Hatfield Park Farm (applicant: Mr R McGowan, Hatfield Regis Grange Farm):

UTT/16/0743/FUL – Erection of agricultural building to be used for the storage of straw – Approved 18.05.2016. The building was shown to measure 18m x 12m (216sqm) with a ridge height of 8.8m externally clad in olive green steel profiling to be sited near to the centre of the farmland.

UTT/19/1236/AG – Erection of steel portal framed building for the storage of hay and grassland machinery – deemed not permitted development (within 3km of an aerodrome and exceeding 3m in height).

- 6.3 It should be noted that the agricultural building for the storage of straw approved under UTT/16/0743/FUL was submitted on the basis that it was stated that there were no suitable buildings adjacent to Hatfield Park Farm for the storage of the applicant's straw, albeit that there were straw storage facilities at Hatfield Regis Grange Farm (applicant) on a limited storage basis. It was stated that any straw presently baled adjacent to Hatfield Park Farm would therefore have to be hauled 2 miles to Hatfield Regis Grange Farm (Taverners Green). As such, it was argued that providing a straw storage building at adjacent to Hatfield Park Farm would reduce tractor and trailer movements on the B1383 between the two sites. Vehicular access to the building would be via an existing track leading from the B183. Permission was granted for UTT/16/0743/FUL on the basis that the agricultural need was justified, the development would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the countryside or cause harm to residential amenity or protected species and that the design and appearance of the works were considered appropriate in that they would reflect the wider rural setting in which it was set. No objections were received from Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council.

## 7. POLICIES

### National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (revised 2019)

### Uttlesford Local Plan (2005)

ULP Policy S7 – The Countryside  
ULP Policy ENV2 – Development affecting Listed Buildings  
ULP Policy ENV11 – Noise generators  
ULP Policy GEN1 – Access  
ULP Policy GEN2 – Design  
ULP Policy GEN4 – Good Neighbourliness  
ULP Policy GEN7 – Nature Conservation

### Other Material Considerations:

Uttlesford District Council 'Interim Climate Change Planning Policy'.

## 8. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 8.1 Takeley Parish Council:

OBJECT for the following reasons:

- The site is situated adjacent to the Flitch Way and in close proximity to Bonningtons Farmhouse, a grade II Listed Building.
- The Flitch Way is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and is directly connected to Hatfield Forest. This is designated as a SSSI, Local Wildlife Site, and Ancient Woodland.
- The site is also located directly opposite Takeley Park on the eastern side of Station Road. This site is on agricultural land and would be very visible from the park. Takeley Park is a mobile home park of some 171 homes. Takeley Park has restrictions on the height of buildings that can be on the site. They all have to be single storey under the current regulations.
- Although the proposed building on the land opposite Takeley Park is an agricultural building, it will be of substantial proportions as detailed in the planning statement by Foxes Rural Consultants Ltd.
- The plan to provide 'secure storage of high value machinery' will pose a security risk. How is it intended to protect the contents of the facility? Introduction of security lighting, for example, will produce significant light pollution.
- The ridge height will be 10.54 metres which is considerably higher than any other building on Takeley Park or to the south of Bonningtons Farm. This poses a visual impact to the Broxted Farmland Plateau and the 250 residents of Takeley Park.
- Other impacts will be from noise, dust and fumes from the increase in farm traffic along the B183. This could well be the case if there is a drying facility within the proposed storage facility.
- The planning statement also indicates that there *"Are no storage facilities at Hatfield Park Farm in which to store harvest from this holding, which is an essential for any farming operation. It will allow for the safe and secure storage of high value machinery and the storage of grain to release on to the market at an economically advantageous time. It will also enable crops and seed/fertilisers for the following harvest to be stored undercover in the dry."*
- Given this statement and looking at the farm plan, would it not be more appropriate to place the new storage barn much closer to the existing hub at Hatfield Park Farm.
- This proposal will result in the loss of some agricultural land and place high value machinery in an arbitrary location some distance from the farm.

## 8.2 Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council:

OBJECT for the following reasons:

### *Location*

- The proposed site of the grain store is on the northern edge of a transitional corridor of countryside and agricultural land following the Flitch Way - within the area of the Broxted Farmland Plateau category of the Landscape Character Assessment and described as "a large open landscape with ... scattered trees along field boundaries with intermittent hedgerows. It is a landscape of wide-open views."
- The proposed site is in the north of Hatfield Broad Oak parish in the Bush End ward to the west of Station Road (B183) Bonnington's Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building is in close proximity to the north.

- To the north runs the Flitch Way - ECC Linear Country Park, and recently classified as a Local Nature Reserve. The Flitch Way has long been recognised in Uttlesford D C planning policy as a clear and defensible boundary to the settlement of Takeley and the Parish of Hatfield Broad; a linear Country Park, Local Wildlife site and has been recently awarded Local Nature Reserve status.
- Inspector's report dismissing Appeal APP/C1570/W/18/3213251 Gladmans has a description of Station Road and the area around the proposed site: *"Whereas Station Road has a strong urban character up to Flitch Way," [para 26] "after crossing the bridge, the character is much more transitional with long views towards open countryside, but with the sports ground and then the Park home site to one side" [para 28].*
- Directly opposite the proposed site on the eastern side of Station Road is Takeley Park, a mobile home park. Takeley Park has a special status in the Local Plan and as a consequence is restricted to single storey buildings on the site.
- At this point there are open views to the north and west towards the Flitch Way and Hatfield Forest and south over the rural Bush End ward of the parish. The proposed storage barn would be very prominent in the views from Station Road, Takeley Park and the open Sports Field to the south. The views are of a locally valued landscape protected by S7 and NPPF para170.
- This corridor area of land to the south of the Flitch Way in Hatfield Broad Oak, Takeley and Great Canfield Parishes has become a very sensitive area in terms of planning applications for residential developments.
- Applications for development on at least 5 sites south of the Flitch Way in HBO, Takeley and Great Canfield have been refused and dismissed at appeal (an appeal against refusal of an application for the development of 27 dwellings at Bonnington's Farm (UTT/19/2168/OP) is currently being heard.) The present application site is on land for which an application has been refused by Uttlesford Planning for a development of 275 dwellings plus site for a school, a "community hub" and other facilities (UTT/).

### *Design*

- As detailed in the Planning Statement this is a standard type of agricultural storage barn but its dimensions of 38m x 24.38m and ridge height of 10.54m make it a very substantial building, out of scale with the neighbouring listed Bonnington's Farmhouse and single storeyed buildings of Takeley Park.
- The side and gable elevations of the building will be of juniper green cladding up to the eaves and the roof of grey fibre cement with 14 skylights. This not the normal construction methods of surrounding dwellings.
- It is intended to store various crops separately for later distribution and includes storage and work areas for the necessary farm machinery. The building would be accessed by a new farm track from the access/exit from the B183.

### *Impacts*

- The plan shows it sited directly opposite the entrance to Takeley Park and within 50m of the B183. It would have an adverse visual impact on the residents of Takeley Park especially as the height of buildings is restricted to single storey. There would be an overbearing visual impact on street scene of the edge of the settlement.

- The proposed site of the storage barn is within 30m of the boundary of Bonnington's Farm to the north. The longer side of the proposed barn would be facing the Farmhouse, at 10.54m high, even with screening, it would have an overbearing impact on the setting of the Grade II listed building.
- Two previous applications concerning the adjacent Bonnington's Farm are relevant:
  - i. One of the reasons for refusal of application UTT/19/2168/OP for 27 dwellings to the west was that the Heritage Services Officer found that a considerable level of less than substantial harm would be caused to the significance of this designated heritage asset.
  - ii. UTT/20/1677/FUL - an application for permission for a much smaller development of 2 detached dwellings - was withdrawn after the Heritage Services Officer stated that 'I am unable to support this application. The proposals would, in my opinion, fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building. The level of harm is considered to be 'less than substantial', therefore Paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019) is relevant'.
- The design of the storage barn is a standard type of agricultural building. However, due to its large size in the context of Station Road and existing buildings, it takes on the appearance of an industrial building, an urban and incompatible intrusion into the countryside outside Takeley development line. Hatfield Broad Oak PC are concerned lest this building is used for industrial purposes in the future. This would potentially introduce extra noise, pollution, traffic and vehicles on the site and access road. If the application is agreed Hatfield Broad Oak PC request that conditions be put in place to prevent any additional buildings or industrial use.
- Although on agricultural land it is sited 30m from Station Road and forms part of the street scene at the edge of the village. In this context it appears as an industrial unit rather than a farm building and visually intrusive into the street scene.
- The proposal does not conform to GEN1 Design a), h) and i) in that it is not 'compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings', and would have an adverse overbearing impact on neighbouring properties, and enjoyment of residential amenities'.
- The access joins the B183, a busy Secondary Distributor running from Takeley cross roads south through Hatfield Broad Oak to Harlow. It carries more traffic and especially HGVs than would be expected for a narrow and winding B road.
- A survey carried out for Highways at Takeley Four Ashes traffic lights at the B1256/B183 junction on Tue 13 June 2017 showed:
  - i. 12-hour total of 6,171 vehicles entering and exiting the B183 South
  - ii. 9.7% of these were LGV2-HGV2 categories, many of them construction lorries going to and from Elsenham and Highwood Quarries.
- This is a high volume of traffic for the size of road and the Four Ashes traffic lights on the B183/B1250 junction has been operating over capacity causing queues to build up at the junction.
- It has been reported by Hatfield Community Speed Watch and by other local CSW groups that when volume of traffic drops the speed of travel increases. There has been a large increase in the number of vehicles, including HGVs, travelling at excessive speeds. The combination of increased use of this access by slower moving heavier farm vehicles, speeding traffic and pedestrians crossing the road to the northbound bus stop on the corner mean that a scheme of traffic management measures would be vital - Policy GEN1: Access.

- There is no mention in the Planning Statement of installing a grain dryer and this would be strongly resisted by Hatfield Broad Oak PC and Takeley PC because of the adverse effect of noise on residential amenity in such close proximity to dwellings. Were it to be agreed, Hatfield Broad Oak PC ask that conditions be imposed to prevent grain drying etc on the site? Policy GEN4 appears to apply here.
- If agreed, the extra farm traffic using the B183, entering and leaving the site would result in increased noise, fumes, dust and mud on the road. Work inside the storage barn would add to this causing material disturbance or nuisance to occupiers of surrounding properties contrary to Policy GEN4.
- Whilst there are street lights within the 30mph limit, interior lighting and security lighting would introduce extra sources of light pollution in an area of countryside.
- If the application was to be agreed, Hatfield Broad Oak PC request that conditions are made ensure that the B183 is kept clean and free of mud. Last season there were complaints that the road was unsafe because of mud from the pumpkin farm to the south of the farm.
- Mitigation by means of screening with trees and shrubs will help, but it will take time to be effective and does not always provide a natural look in this landscape.
- Considering the adverse impacts of the proposed site, and the large extent of farmland shown in the Farm Plan there appears to be scope to relocate the building. A site nearer to Hatfield Park Farm and its industrial units would be more appropriate. Another possible location could be to the south of the entrance, beside the B183 and opposite the Sports Field.

## **9. CONSULTATIONS**

### **MAG / Stansted Airport**

- 9.1 The Safeguarding Authority for Stansted Airport has assessed this proposal and it's potential to conflict aerodrome Safeguarding criteria and has no aerodrome safeguarding objections. Cranes condition.

### **NATS**

- 9.2 The development has been examined from a technical safeguarding aspect and does not conflict with NATS safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS (En Route) Public Limited Company ("NERL") has no safeguarding objection to the proposal.

### **HSE**

- 9.3 HSE does not advise on safety grounds against the granting of planning permission in this case.

### **Essex County Council Highways**

- 9.4 The Highway Authority has no objections to make on this proposal from a highway and transportation perspective as it is not contrary to the relevant transportation policies contained within the Highway Authority's Development Management Policies adopted as County Council Supplementary Guidance in February 2011 and Uttlesford Local Plan Policy GEN1 and GEN8.

Informative:

- i. As far as can be determined, the proposed store will serve an existing farm / agricultural holding and its permitted use. The existing access is considered adequate to serve the proposal.
- ii. All work within or affecting the highway is to be laid out and constructed by prior arrangement with, and to the requirements and satisfaction of, the Highway Authority, details to be agreed before the commencement of works. The applicants should be advised to contact the Development Management Team by email at [development.management@essexhighways.org](mailto:development.management@essexhighways.org) or by post to Essex Highways, Springfield Highways Depot, Colchester Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 5PU.
- iii. Under Section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 it is an offence to deposit mud, detritus etc. on the highway. In addition, under Section 161 any person, depositing anything on a highway which results in a user of the highway being injured or endangered is guilty of an offence. Therefore, the applicant must ensure that no mud or detritus is taken onto the highway, such measures include provision of wheel cleaning facilities and sweeping/cleaning of the highway.

**UDC Landscaping Officer**

- 9.5 No landscaping objections in principle whereby the revised siting position for the agricultural building onto Station Road from its originally shown position onto the boundary with Bonnington's Farm represents a visual amenity improvement in landscape terms.

The hedging specification is a slightly odd and I suggest that a condition is imposed requiring the existing Station Road boundary hedge run to be gapped up to provide 3 subjects per metre run, inclusive of existing, planted with common hawthorn at a size of not less than 900-1200mm.

**10. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 10.1 0 representations received. Neighbour notification period expires 10.03.2021. Advertisement expires - N/a. Site notice expires – N/a.

**11. APPRAISAL**

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

- A Principle of development / countryside protection / Design (NPPF and ULP Policies S7 and GEN2);
- B Whether proposed access arrangements are acceptable (ULP Policy GEN1);
- C Listed building protection (NPPF and ULP Policy ENV2);
- D Impact upon residential amenity (Policies ENV4 and GEN4);
- E Impact upon protected/priority species (ULP Policy GEN7).

**A Principle of development / countryside protection / Design (NPPF and ULP Policies S7 and GEN2)**

- 11.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF - The Framework) has a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 of the Framework states that sustainable development is achieved through meeting economic, social and environmental objectives (the overarching objectives) which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives. LPA's are advised to work proactively with applicants to find solutions which means proposals can be

approved wherever possible and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions within an area.

- 11.2 Para 11 c) of the Framework states that for decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless: i. the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 11.3 The proposal the subject of this application is for a new dual purpose agricultural storage building to be erected on an existing farmholding on land to the west of Station Road whereby it is stated that all of the grain from the existing holding is stored in contract grain storage whereby the applicant does not undertake contract farming himself. Under the chapter "Building a strong, competitive economy", paragraph 80 of the Framework states that;
- "Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development."* Paragraph 83 under the sub-heading "Supporting a prosperous rural economy" goes on to say that, *"Planning policies and decisions should enable...a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings"*.
- 11.4 The agricultural need for the building at this location has been set out in the applicant's supporting statement. It is further stated that the proposal would assist future growth and sustainability within the business, adding that a financially secure business is better able to support the local economy and other local enterprises. It should be emphasised for this report that the proposed agricultural storage building would in its originally shown position have qualified as Part 6 agricultural permitted development under the GPDO were it not for the fact that the site (and therefore the development) is within 3km of an aerodrome (Stansted Airport) and the building exceeds 3m in height (the siting of the building in its revised position now shown against Station Road would not be permitted development by now being within 25m of a metalled carriageway).
- 11.5 The site lies within the countryside. Policy S7 of the Uttlesford District Plan (adopted 2005) states that planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place or is appropriate to a rural area, adding that development will only be permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there.
- 11.6 The proposed development by its agricultural nature needs to take place within a countryside location and is therefore appropriate to a rural area. It should be noted in this respect that the preamble for Policy S7 states that, *"The countryside needs to be protected for its own sake, but not in such a way that the plan prevents evolution of economic activity that is part of life in rural areas and is in sympathy with its*

*character*". Policy S7 has been found to be partially consistent with the NPPF, which states at paragraph 170 that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural local environment by; b)... "recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside".

- 11.7 The applicant has stated that there are currently no grain storage facilities on the 178.4 ha of arable land as an agricultural unit which lies between Station Road and Bush End Road (to exclude Hatfield Park Farm) which it is understood the applicant has owned and managed for the last ten years. In effect, therefore, the applicant has a farmholding without any building infrastructure. It is further understood that all of the applicant's farm vehicles and machinery are currently stored at off-site locations. The use of the Station Road access would continue, although it is stated that less farm traffic would use Station Road were the proposed agricultural building to be granted planning permission as farm storage activities would be consolidated at the site.
- 11.8 The proposed dual-use storage building would be large at 926.44sqm with a height to the eaves of 7m and a height to the ridge of 10.54m. It is stated that the scale of the building is commensurate with the scale of farming operations at the site where it is necessary to have the building at this size to accommodate all of the crops required to be stored with the balance of the floor area sufficient to enable buffering of the floor areas in accordance with the space requirements set out in the Agro Business Consultants Budgeting and Costing Book – 88<sup>th</sup> edition.
- 11.9 The design of the building would be an almost exact replica of the agricultural storage building which was granted planning permission within the Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ) by the Council in 2019 for "Land East of Parkers Farm, Smiths Green, Takeley" following a previously dismissed appeal under ref; UTT/19/2525/FUL, albeit that that building would be a slightly smaller size specification to the one now proposed for the current application. That permission has since been implemented. The appeals inspector for a previously refused permission for an agricultural storage building at Parkers Farm under ref; (APP/C1570/W/18/3204743) stated that;

*"I accept that the building would be large. However, I do not consider that it would be excessive given the overall size of the farm and the operational requirements of the business. Agricultural buildings are a common characteristic of the countryside and an essential requirement of modern day farming".*

It should also be noted that the proposal site at Land West of Station Road the subject of the current application is not located within the Countryside Protection Zone, although it is acknowledged that it does lie south of the Flitch Way. That said, this is an application for agricultural development and not housing development, and this should be seen as a material consideration to the planning merits of the current application.

- 11.10 Consideration has been given by the applicant's agent to the re-siting of the proposed building to Hatfield Park Farm itself following concerns expressed by Takeley Parish Council in their objection to the proposed scheme. However, this would not be possible given that Hatfield Park Farm is in separate ownership to the applicant where it is stated in an email from the applicant's agent dated 16 March 2021 that;

*"Takeley Parish Council have suggested the building should be sited at Hatfield Park Farmhouse. However, Hatfield Park Farmhouse and all of the buildings, together*

*with the immediate adjacent land, are owned by a third party and not anything to do with the applicant, nor have ever been. Please refer to the farm plan submitted with the application for clarification over site boundaries. The Parish Council further suggest that a grain drier might cause problems. However, no grain drier has been applied for, nor is it envisaged or planned for this location; the application is simply for an on-floor grain store and farm machinery storage”.*

- 11.11 The applicant further states in a separate email dated 19 March 2021 in response to Takeley Parish Council’s general concerns that vehicular access is not possible from the western boundary of Hatfield Park Farm onto Bush End Road for the proposed building as there is a bridge height limitation beneath the Flitch Way at the beginning of The Street, which would prevent any grain lorries accessing and hauling harvested farm produce from the building were it to be sited in that alternative position closer to that farmstead, which is the required purpose for that building.
- 11.12 It is considered that the applicant has made out a strong case for agricultural need based upon the agricultural information submitted whereby the farming operations of the applicant, involving the growing of a range of crops on the existing farmholding, have been clearly explained within the supporting planning statement and additional requested details. It is also clear that the applicant wishes to utilise and consolidate his existing farming operations on the holding in the interests of both efficiency and sustainability and also security and equipment protection.
- 11.13 It was considered that the proposed siting position of the new agricultural building onto the outside edge of Bonningtons Farmhouse as originally shown for the current application would have been inappropriate and unacceptable in terms of countryside impact by reason of the degree of visual harm the large building would have caused to the local landscape in that siting position. Furthermore, the building would have been prominent within the public realm from Station Road/Takeley Park, given the more exposed field boundary which exists along Station Road from the vehicular access into the site going back up to the Flitch Way and the applicant has accepted this premise. It was further suggested that the building should be re-sited to a less exposed position along Station Road just south of the existing access point behind a more established boundary hedgerow line leading southwards whereby it would then have its ridge line running parallel with the road with a shorter service road. The applicant has also agreed to this suggested re-siting position whereby revised drawings for the scheme reflect this new position.
- 11.14 Guidance set out in section 12 of the NPPF is concerned with achieving well designed places. It stipulates that the proposed development should respond to the local character, reflect the identity of its surroundings, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and is visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. ULP Policy GEN2 of the adopted Local Plan also seeks good design in new development, stating amongst other things that GEN2 a); development is compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings, and GEN2 b); It safeguards important environmental features in its setting, enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impacts of new buildings or structures where appropriate.
- 11.15 The proposed building is of a design that is common for modern agricultural buildings across the district and is of a standard design for agricultural buildings. The colour and cladding for the building have been selected to reflect the environment in its location and to minimise the impact of the building in the landscape whereby the building would have a steel portal frame that is clad in juniper green steel box profile with cement concrete walling from the eaves down to 0.8m. to reduce the

prominence of the external concrete panels, with grey roof cladding. However, it is considered that a Goose Grey specification would be more appropriate for the side and gable elevations of the building rather than juniper green as specified in the application so as to reduce the presence of the building within the local landscape, which can be conditioned.

- 11.16 The existing Station Road boundary hedgerow would be gapped up and strengthened where necessary with new native hedgerow indigenous planting as specified in the application details and as follows;

*“Between Points A and B, any existing dead or failing hedge stock and bramble will be removed along the length of hedgerow identified and the hedge & hedgerow tree planting used to plant-up/gap-up/reinforce/replace the hedgerow will be complementary in makeup to existing local field hedges, planted out using root-ball transplants of blackthorn and hawthorn at a planted height of 3 metres. These transplants will be suitably protected, supported and mulched and maintained sufficient to allow it to establish and thrive. The hedge maintained in situ through to maturity. It will be planted out in accordance with the relevant British Standards and implemented during the first planting season following substantial completion of any development”.*

- 11.17 The revised siting position for the agricultural storage building has been assessed by the Council’s Landscape Officer who has not raised any landscape objections to the proposed development in principle on the basis that the applicant has demonstrated that the new building, large as it is, is required for purposes requisite to the existing agricultural unit and is therefore a building to be expected to be seen within the countryside and that its re-siting from its originally shown position onto the boundary with Bonnington’s Farm to along Station Road represents a visual amenity improvement in landscape terms.

- 11.18 It is considered from the above analysis and assessment that the proposed development would not result in significant material harm to the surrounding countryside given the relocated siting position of the agricultural building whereby the stated logistical requirements for the building to be located on the Station Road side of the farmholding rather than at Hatfield Park Farm itself for the reasons stated should be seen as a mitigating factor in the planning merits of the proposal and where agricultural need has been demonstrated. As such, the development would not be contrary to Policy S7 of the Adopted Local Plan, which permits agricultural development, nor Policy GEN2 where the relocated siting position should be seen as seeking to safeguard the development within its setting.

**B Whether proposed access arrangements are acceptable (ULP Policy GEN1)**

- 11.19 Vehicular access to the proposed building would be via the existing wide bellmouth access which leads into the site from Station Road (B183) and which currently provides the sole access point for farming vehicles to be able to access the applicant’s farmholding. The access was originally constructed in connection with a previously approved hotel and golf course application and is wide enough by its specification to accommodate lorries and farm traffic associated with the proposed agricultural building. It is stated by the applicant that the siting of the proposed building on the land would reduce vehicular farm traffic along Station Road through consolidation of farming activities at the site rather than increasing it as asserted by Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council.

- 11.20 ECC have stated in their consultation response that they have no highway objections to the proposal where, as far as can be determined, the proposed storage building would serve an existing agricultural holding and its permitted use whereby the existing access is considered adequate to serve the proposed development. No highway objections are therefore raised under ULP Policy GEN1 on this basis.

**C Listed building protection (NPPF and ULP Policy ENV2)**

- 11.21 S66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that *“In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”*.
- 11.22 Bonningtons Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building and due regard must therefore be had on the impact that the proposed development would have on the setting and integrity of this heritage asset. The farmhouse already benefits from extensive mature trees, shrubs and hedging within its own grounds, some 55 metres deep. Moreover it is situated over 75 metres from the proposed storage building as originally sited for the proposed application, which already has a thick tall field hedge, whilst old derelict farm buildings exist between the farmhouse and the field boundary.
- 11.23 The proposed re-siting of the agricultural storage building further away from Bonningtons Farmhouse at a distance of some 280m as shown on the revised drawings would mean that the proposed development would have a negligible effect on the setting of this listed building meaning that the development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset when weighed against the public benefits of the proposal under paragraph 196 of the NPPF. Accordingly, the development would not be contrary to Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan.

**D Impact upon residential amenity (Policies ENV4 and GEN4)**

- 11.24 The proposed building in its revised position would be sited approximately 80m from the nearest mobile home on the Takeley Park Homes site which lies diagonally opposite the site on the east side of Station Road. Station Road is a busy Class B road which carries a considerable amount of local traffic thereby generating a fair degree of audible background road noise. The introduction of the proposed storage building at the site would not by reason of the amount of farm traffic movements involved have a discernible difference on the residential amenities of the nearest dwellings situated at the caravan park in terms of increased noise and disturbance.

**E Impact upon protected/priority species (ULP Policy GEN7)**

- 11.26 The site comprises arable farmland and therefore has a reduced potential for providing habitats for protected or priority species, albeit that it could prove attractive as a feeding ground to field birds such as skylarks and red kites. It was assessed by Place Services for approved application UTT/16/0743/FUL for the erection of a straw storage building on the land (applicant) that the proposal was occurring on agricultural land so that it was unlikely that any protected or priority species or sites would be affected by the proposal.

11.27 It is considered that the same comments would apply to the current application with the exception that breeding nesting birds would need to be protected for the hedgerow boundary reinforcement proposed along Station Road for the revised position of the storage building. No ecology objections are therefore raised on this basis under Policy GEN7, although a similar lighting condition to minimise any potential impacts of the development upon nocturnally mobile animals, such as bats, and also to minimise the level of external lighting at this rural location would be required to be imposed on any planning permission granted.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

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

- A The principle of development is considered acceptable whereby agricultural need has been demonstrated and the level of rural amenity harm which would be caused is mitigated by the revised siting of the proposed storage building to an alternative site position (NPPF and Policies S7 and GEN2).
- B Proposed access arrangements would be acceptable (Policy GEN1).
- C The development would have a negligible effect on the nearest heritage asset (NPPF and Policy ENV2).
- D The development would not cause detriment to residential amenity (ULP Policies ENV11 and GEN4).
- E The development would not have a harmful effect upon protected or priority species (ULP Policy GEN7).

## **RECOMMENDATION – APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS**

### **Conditions**

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

REASON: In order to comply with Section 91 (1) and (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. Boundary planting along the Station Road western boundary to serve as additional natural screening for the proposed development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted details, namely Planning Supporting Statement (Foxes Rural Consultants Ltd), revised site plan SR003 dated 25/03/2021 and revised block plan revised block plan SR002 dated 25/03/2021. The existing boundary hedge run between points A and B shown on drawings SR002 and SR003 shall be gapped up to provide 3 subjects per metre run, inclusive of existing, at a size of not less than 900-1200mm.

REASON: To reduce the visual impact of the development within its localised setting in accordance with Policy GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

3. The development hereby permitted shall be constructed of the materials details specified in the application, but with the substitution of Goose Grey for Olive Green colour for the side and gable elevation cladding of the building unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of the appearance of the development in accordance with Policy GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

4. No fixed lighting shall be erected or installed until details of the location, height, design, sensors and luminance have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall ensure the lighting throughout the site is designed in such a way as to minimise any potential impacts of the development hereby permitted upon nocturnally mobile animals and also to minimise the level of external lighting at this rural location. The lighting shall thereafter be erected, installed and operated in accordance with the approved details.

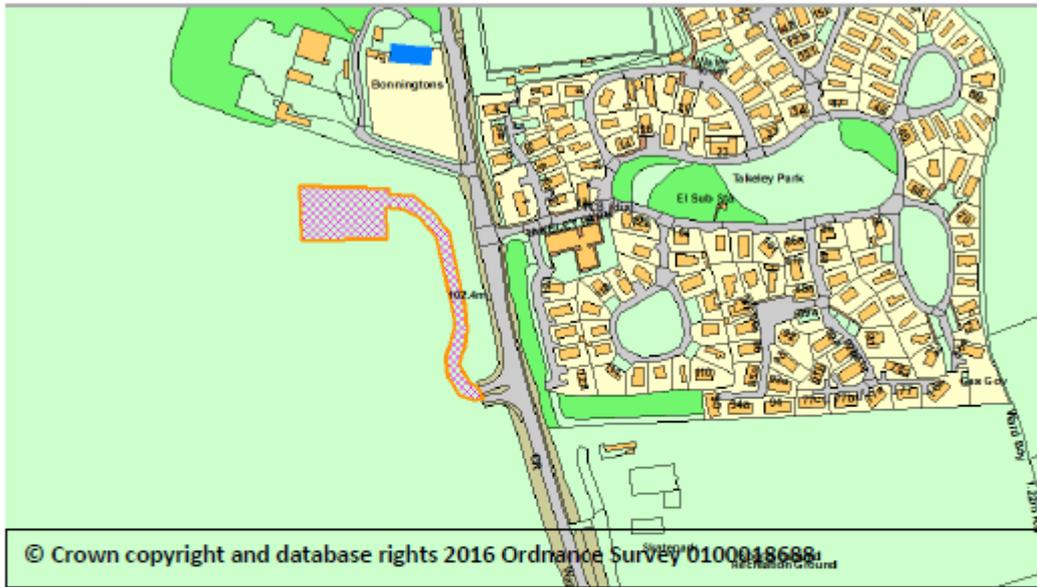
REASON: To make appropriate provision for conserving and enhancing the natural environment within the approved development in the interests of biodiversity and in the interests of the protection of rural amenity in accordance with Policies GEN7 and S7 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

5. The development hereby approved shall be used for agricultural purposes only and shall not be converted to any other use, including storage and distribution or industrial use without the prior written approval of the local planning authority.

REASON: To safeguard the rural and residential amenities of the area and in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies S7, GEN1 and GEN4 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

6. No grain drying facilities shall be installed within the agricultural storage building hereby approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To safeguard residential amenity in accordance with Policy GEN4 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).



Organisation: Uttlesford District Council

Department: Planning

Date: 16 JUNE 2021