

Agenda Item 46.

Development Management Ref No	No weeks on day of committee	Parish	Ward	Listed by:
F/2015/1235 150544	13/13	Hurst	Hurst	Major

Applicant	Mr Belcher	Postcode	RG10 0SP
Location	Hatch Gate Farm, Lines Road, Hurst		
Proposal	Erection of cattle shed and farm machinery store/cattle handling shed and formation of cattle yard.		
Type	Major development		
PS Category	6		
Officer	Graham Vaughan		

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on 20 th August 2015
REPORT PREPARED BY	Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

SUMMARY

The application site is in designated countryside and is part of a larger farm located in Hurst. The site currently has some buildings used for storage of farm materials and is located at the end of the main group of farm buildings and adjacent to fields. The proposal is to utilise the site for a cattle yard including cattle sheds and store. A new access road would be created but this would replace an existing road adjacent to it.

The proposal would provide further agricultural buildings on a working farm utilising part of the farm that is already occupied by buildings. As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle. Existing views towards the site are of agricultural buildings set against a tree lined backdrop and although the proposal would introduce built form in the countryside, it is considered this view would not be impacted upon in a significantly harmful way. Subject to conditions, no harmful impacts are identified and therefore the application is recommended for approval.

PLANNING STATUS

- Countryside
- Wind turbine safeguarding zone
- Sand and gravel extraction
- Groundwater protection zone
- Minerals consultation zone

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:

A. Conditions and informatives:

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

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered 'Site Plan', 'Location Plan', 'Cattle yard fencing detail', 'BPL-17/01 Rev B', 'BPL-17/02 Rev B' and 'BPL-17/03 Rev B' received by the local planning authority on 22nd May 2015 and the revised plans on 8th July 2015. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.
3. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building/s shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.
Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.
Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3
4. Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees/shrubs to be planted, and any existing trees or shrubs to be retained. Any hedging shall be planted 1 metre from the fence.
Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s). Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting (or within a period of 5 years of the occupation of the buildings in the case of retained trees and shrubs) die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species or otherwise as approved in writing by the local planning authority.
Reason: To ensure adequate planting in the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21
5. a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (the Approved Scheme); the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the Approved Scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless otherwise provided by the Approved Scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery.

b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.

c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.

d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

6. Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a scheme of wildlife enhancements associated with the proposed surface water run-off pond. The enhancements shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and thereafter maintained.

Reason: To ensure a positive impact on local wildlife occurs. Relevant Policy: Core Strategy policy CP7.

7. No development shall commence until a programme of archaeological work (which may comprise more than one phase of work) has been implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. *Reason: The site is identified as being of archaeological potential. Investigation is required to allow preservation and recording of any archaeological features or artefacts before disturbance by the development. Relevant policy: National Planning Policy Framework Section 12 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB25*

8. No development shall take place until full details of the Drainage System(s) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These shall include:

- Location, size and full working details of the pond associated with water run-off from the proposal.
- Demonstration that infiltration rates at the application site are sufficient to allow surface water discharge to ground.
- Demonstration that the design of the drainage system accounts for the likely impacts of: climate change, (30% allowance) and changes in impermeable area, over the design life of the development.
- Full details of all components of the proposed drainage system including source control, conveyance, storage, flow control and discharge. Details shall include dimension, locations, reference to storm simulation files, gradients, invert and cover levels and drawings as appropriate. This shall be identified for all catchments.

- Full details of the maintenance and/or adoption proposals /agreements for the development covering every aspect of the proposed drainage system.
- Full details of water quality treatment components of the proposed drainage strategy. Details of component(s) including type, dimension, locations, capacity, maintenance requirements and frequency, gradients invert and cover levels and drawings as appropriate. This shall be identified for all catchments.

The submitted details shall be implemented as approved and thereafter maintained unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development would not have an adverse impact on flood risk for the surrounding area.

9. Prior to occupation of the buildings hereby approved, a “lighting design strategy for biodiversity” for the cattle yard shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:
- i) Identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key area of their territory; and,
 - ii) Show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

Reason: To ensure impacts on a protected species are mitigated. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP7

10. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation. *To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the are.*
Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

11. All site operatives involved in the removal of potential amphibian refugia or ground disturbance during construction shall be briefed with the submitted Tool-box talk document [Ecological Walk-over Survey, AA Environmental, 3rd September 2015] before commencing work
Reason: To ensure that great crested newts, a European Protected Species, are not adversely impacted upon as a result of the development. Relevant Policy: Core Strategy Policy CP7

12.

Informatives

1. The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.
2. Should any Great Crested Newts or evidence of Great Crested Newts be found prior to or during the development, all works must stop immediately and an ecological consultant or the Council's ecologist contacted for further advice before works can proceed. All contractors working on site should be made aware of the advice and provided with the contact details of a relevant ecological consultant.
3. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of:
 - planning issues relating to ecology and drainage;The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

PLANNING HISTORY

SO/2015/1249 - Screening Opinion for an Environmental Impact Assessment for the erection of cattle shed and farm machinery store/cattle handling shed and formation of cattle yard determined on 20th May 2015. EIA not required.

Some further applications related to typical farm activities not directly on the site

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways	No objection
Archaeology	No objection subject to condition (7)
Biodiversity	No objection subject to conditions (6, 9, 11)
Tree and Landscape	No objection subject to conditions (4, 5, 10)
Environmental Health	No objection
Drainage	No objection subject to conditions (8)
Waste Services	No comments received
Conservation	No objection
Hurst Parish Council	Objection due to lack of traffic prediction
Local Members	No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

- One letter of support stating that the farm buildings need updating

APPLICANTS POINTS

- Demonstrated agricultural need for cattle provision
- Acceptable use in the countryside

- Accords with relevant criteria for cattle rearing

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP11	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB25	Archaeology
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development:

1. The proposal is for the erection of multiple buildings (albeit through a phased development) in order to use the site as a cattle yard. This requires five separate buildings, four as cattle sheds and one for the farm workshop and cattle handling shed. The cattle sheds would each be 30.5 metres in width and 36.6 metres in length with an eaves height of 4.9 metres and a ridge height of 7.8 metres. The farm workshop would be 15.2 metres in width and 61 metres in length with an eaves height of 4.7 metres and a ridge height of 5.7 metres. A new perimeter fence is proposed around the site which would be 1.68 metres in height and additional hedge row planting would occur next to an existing fence. Additionally, a new internal access road is proposed with the existing blocked up.

Principle of Development:

2. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
3. The site is located outside any defined settlement area and therefore the

principle of development is acceptable subject to impact on the countryside. Policy CP11 of the adopted Core Strategy states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where, *inter alia*, it contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough and does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original building. With regards to sustainable rural enterprises, the proposal is for the formation of a cattle yard and its associated buildings and in this respect could be considered to come under this exception criterion.

4. An Agricultural Report has been submitted which details the reasoning for the application. Belcher farms operate a number of farms including the one at Hurst. As part of the business, there is a need to rationalise the existing cattle stock and this has become more urgent due to the loss of another farm (Allanbay Farm, Binfield). The loss of the cattle space is due to the landowner serving notice to vacate the building due in part to the significant costs required to maintain and update the building. In addition, Belcher Farms are required by legislation to keep cattle in an appropriate manner and this relates in part to suitable buildings. To ensure the continued production of cattle and to help maintain Belcher Farms as a business, new buildings are required. This also allows an opportunity to design more appropriate buildings which assist in running the farm efficiently. This would therefore amalgamate the Hatch Gate Farm and Allanby Farm cattle onto one site.
5. Overall, there is considered to be a recognised need for the buildings, particularly as it would help ensure the protection of Belchers Farms as a business which contributes to the local economy. As such, this is considered to comply with policy CP11 as it would contribute to a rural enterprise and is therefore acceptable in principle. However, the impact on the character of the countryside is discussed below.

Environmental Impact Assessment:

6. The site and development have been subject to a screening opinion with regards to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (reference SO/2015/1249). This found that the impact on the environment was not substantial and therefore an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required.

Character of the Area:

7. The area is rural in character and appearance and particularly influenced by agricultural buildings and views to wooded areas. Surrounding the application site, the land is flat and low hedge rows delineate fields. Although there are other land uses in the area, Hatch Gate Farm itself occupies a significant amount of land with the farm buildings approximately central in this.
8. The buildings proposed would be of a large size and occupy a large footprint. Nonetheless, they would be of an appearance typical of agricultural buildings and it is noted the size relates partly to the requirement of legislation on cattle herding. In addition, agricultural buildings are common in the area and in this respect additional buildings are not considered to have a harmful impact. However, criterion 2 of policy CP11 requires that proposals do not encroach on

the countryside and it is acknowledged that due to their size and location, the buildings would create additional built form. Nonetheless, consideration should be given to the fact there are existing buildings associated with the farm within the application site on a large area of hard standing which is already used for farm activities.

9. Weight should be given to the impact on the countryside as a result of the additional built form but this is considered to be outweighed partly by the benefits of ensuring an agricultural use remains on the site and the economic benefits this would bring but also as it would be in keeping with the character of the area. Additionally, mitigation of the impact of the proposal would be provided through landscaping which over time would help it integrate into the landscape. On balance therefore, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact on the countryside.

Landscape and Trees:

10. The only significant tree that could be potentially impacted is an oak tree to the west of the site as the fencing around the buildings would be close to the tree. However, there would be a gap of two metres from the fence to the extent of the canopy of the tree and therefore any impact on the tree would be minimal. Additionally, tree protection methods could be put in place during construction via a standard condition (5) and, as such, it is considered the application could not be refused on this basis.
11. In terms of the wider landscape, the current views into and around the site are of agricultural buildings set against a wooded background. Hedgerows at the edge of roads prevent many long range views and the farm buildings themselves are set a significant distance from the road. Within the site, it is acknowledged that views from dwellings are possible however this tends to be from first floor windows only. Given that the proposal would introduce further agricultural buildings in an area which already has such buildings, no significant harm is considered to occur. In order to ensure that the buildings can appropriately integrate into the landscape, further landscaping details including standard hedging can be required by condition (4). Furthermore, appropriate materials and colour of the building can also be agreed at conditions stage (3). In this respect, the application is considered acceptable.

Residential Amenities:

12. Due to the significant separation distances to any neighbouring properties (approximately 50 metres to the nearest property which is on but not associated with the farm), no harmful impact on residential amenity is considered to occur.

Heritage Assets:

13. Old Hatch Gate Farm Cottages are a Grade II listed building (and the nearest residential property to the site). Whilst the built footprint of the farm would be increased, the cottages are considered to be of a sufficient distance away to mitigate any harmful impact on the setting of the listed building. As such, the Conservation Officer does not object to the proposal.

Highways and Access:

14. Access to the farm is achieved from three different points with the main being from Lines Road however the proposal would not alter any of these. On the farm itself, an internal road would be stopped and a new one created next to it leading to the proposal site. This would be similar in size and width to the existing and therefore no detriment on highway safety would occur. Similarly, the farm already has vehicle movements and parking associated with typical farm activities. The addition of the cattle yard is not considered to increase the pressure for parking on the site. It is noted the Parish Council have raised an objection regarding traffic resulting from the proposal however the likely traffic generation is not considered to be significantly above what is already generated by the farm. As such, the Highways Officer does not object to the proposal.

Flooding and Drainage:

15. An initial assessment of the site regarding drainage has been submitted detailing how surface water drainage would be impacted. Whilst it is acknowledged the roof form of the buildings would be large and therefore would increase run-off, it is proposed to discharge this into an existing pond subject to viable capacity or if not, into a new pond. This is considered to be an acceptable solution given that the site is in an area of very low risk from surface water flooding. Further details can be agreed by condition (8) and this has been confirmed by the Council's drainage consultant, WSP.

Environmental Health:

16. The site is a working farm and the proposal would be an extension of this. In this respect there is already an impact in terms of environmental health. The Environmental Health Officer was concerned there may be an impact in terms of odour however is now satisfied that the separation distance to nearby properties would mean no harmful impact would occur.

Biodiversity:

17. Due to the proximity to ponds and the prevalence of Great Crested Newts (GCN) in the area, a survey of these ponds has been submitted. The survey concludes that GCN are unlikely to be present. Whilst the Council's ecology officer accepts this, given the extent of the work proposed, a condition (11) requiring site operatives to be made aware of GCN is considered necessary.

18. The site is also in close proximity to a known bat roost and therefore there is potential for the proposal to impact negatively on local bat populations through additional artificial light. However, the Ecology officer considers that if external lighting was required, a suitably worded condition (9) which requires a lighting strategy to take account of this impact would be sufficient.

19. Additionally, any landscaping (i.e. standard hedging) or ponds for surface water run-off that may be provided could also utilise wildlife enhancement methods which would be a positive impact. The precise details of this would be agreed at a later stage and therefore condition 6 relates.

Community Infrastructure Levy:

20. As the proposal is not for new residential or retail floor space, the proposal is not CIL liable.

Employment Opportunities:

21. Whilst the proposal is a major application and Policy TB12 of the MDD states these should be accompanied by an Employment and Skills Plan, the opportunities provided by the scheme are considered to be limited and not of a type that would suit an employment skills plan. As such, it is considered there is no identified harm in not requiring a plan to be submitted.

Archaeological Impact:

22. Due to the archaeological potential of the site and surrounding area, Berkshire Archaeology has requested a condition (7) for a written scheme of investigation to be submitted prior to the commencement of development. Subject to this condition, no harmful impact is considered to occur.

Other Issues:

23. The Parish Council have raised a concern regarding the existing buildings that are used for cattle rearing as it is likely these will be removed in the future. Whilst it is acknowledged there would be additional built form in the countryside with both the existing and proposed buildings together, this is not considered substantially harmful to the extent it would warrant refusing the application. In any case, the existing buildings are within the farm complex and already impact on the landscape.

CONCLUSION

The proposal is for an acceptable use in the countryside and no significant harmful impact on the character of the area would occur. Subject to appropriate conditions, it is considered no harmful impact would occur in terms of highways, ecology or tree and landscapes. Furthermore, the site is located a sufficient distance from residential properties in order to not have a harmful impact on residential amenity. As such, the proposal accords with the development plan and is recommended for approval.

CONTACT DETAILS

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