

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE - 20 July 2016

AGENDA ITEM NO 3
APPLICATION NO 0722/16
PROPOSAL Continued use of land and buildings as an operational base for agricultural research and development. Erection of storage building and cabin (following removal of existing structure)
SITE LOCATION Meade Farm Buildings, Beyton Road, Drinkstone IP30 9SS
SITE AREA (Ha) 0.35
APPLICANT Envirofield Ltd
RECEIVED February 16, 2016
EXPIRY DATE April 29, 2016

REASONS FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason :

A Member of the Council has requested that the application is determined by the appropriate Committee and the request has been made in accordance with the Planning Code of Practice or such other protocol / procedure adopted by the Council. The Members reasoning is included in the agenda bundle.

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

1. Pre-application advice was given for the proposal and was supportable subject to the normal planning application process and consultation.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2. Meade Farm Buildings are located outside of the main village of Drinkstone but within a small cluster of dwellings and agricultural buildings. The site includes of a large agricultural building, a small timber office building and large parking area and has a shared access with the neighbouring residential properties. It is located on the edge of a Special Landscape Area and has screening with high hedges on the northern and eastern boundaries.

HISTORY

3. The planning history relevant to the application site is:

0883/11	Erection of log cabin to be used as office	Granted 09/05/2011
1131/00	Change of use to Class B1 (Business)	Withdrawn 24/04/2001
0564/00	Retention of building for use as farm office (revised design) and ancillary works (manege and field gate) and landscaping	Refused 02/10/00

0841/98	Retention of stationing of portacabin for use as farm office, and retention of gated vehicular access	Refused 29/01/99
0011/98	Retention of stationing of portacabin for use as farm office	Refused 10/03/98
0130/92	Retention of use of agricultural building to manufacture, store and sell garden sheds, fencing and ancillary equipment	Granted 15/06/92
0343/77	Erection of new cattle shed	Granted 05/07/77

PROPOSAL

4. The proposal seeks planning permission for the continued use of land and buildings as an operational base for agricultural research and development, and the erection of storage building and cabin (following removal of existing structure)

There is some question as to whether the whole site has planning permission for its current use. This application seeks to clarify the situation with a continuation of the use which is considered to fall within Class B1 (Research and Development).

A storage building for equipment is proposed in the north eastern corner of the site. The building would have a footprint of 12m by 24m with an eaves height of 5.5m. The building would have the appearance of an agricultural building, with juniper green box profile cladding sitting on top of concrete panels. The roof would have a shallow 12.5 degree dual pitch finished in natural grey fibre cement.

At the southern end of the existing agricultural building there is a small tin structure that has fallen into disrepair. The application seeks to remove the structure and replace it with a flat roof storage building. The building would have a footprint of 7.3m by 10.9m with a roof height of 2.7m. The building would be finished in thermoplastic render.

POLICY

5. **Planning Policy Guidance** - See Appendix below.

CONSULTATIONS

6. **SCC Highways** - Awaiting formal response following re-consultation. they are understood to have no objection subject to conditions.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust - No comments received

Drinkstone Parish Council - Objection

MSDC Economic Strategy - Support

The Environment Agency - No comments received

SCC Fire Service - Standing advice

MSDC Environmental Health - No objection

LOCAL AND THIRD PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

7. This is a summary of the representations received.

Rookery Meade Farm - Objection, Use Class, landscape impact

The Meade - Objection, highway safety, scale of building

Clay House - Objection, impact to neighbours, highway safety

Meade Barn - Objection, highway safety, working hours, visual amenity and landscape

Meade Cottage - Objection, highway safety,

ASSESSMENT

8. Introduction and Background

This application arises from an initial submission seeking planning permission for the removal of an existing structure at the site and the erection of two new storage buildings; a larger one for vehicles and other equipment and a smaller 'cabin' type building to be used for storage of small equipment and administration records.

The site was originally used for agriculture, in particular, cattle. The site was then used, without a valid planning permission, for the manufacture, storage and selling of sheds, fencing and ancillary equipment. This B2 Use was regularised in 1992 with planning permission being granted subject to conditions (please see the attached planning permission 130/92). Two of the conditions were challenged at appeal and the appeal was allowed. Condition 1 relating to the access detail was removed but condition 5 was replaced with one increasing the specification of the sound insulation.

At some point later the site appears to have reverted to agricultural use and planning permission was sought for the retention of an office building. The building (a portacabin) was already sited in the middle of what is now the parking area to the north east of the agricultural building. Permission was refused three times between 1998 and 2000 because the impact of the building on the Special Landscape Area and also a loss of operational space for the B2 use. One of these refusals (841/98) was taken to appeal and dismissed. Later in 2000 a planning application was received to change the use of the site to B1 use. This application was withdrawn.

Approximately ten years ago Envirofield, the applicant of the current application, purchased the site. In 2011 Envirofield applied for an office building. This was granted on the basis that they were thought to be running an agricultural based

business and that the office building was sited adjacent to the existing agricultural building. The office building was of timber construction. No objections were raised this application from local residents.

During consultation on the originally submitted application for an agricultural building it was identified that the Use Class is actually B1 (Research and Development) as Envirofield complete soil sampling and crop trials all over the country. They do not farm land themselves and therefore cannot be classed as an agricultural business. From the history outlined above it would appear that part of the site has an agricultural use and the remainder a B2 use.

Special Landscape Area

The site lies within a Special Landscape Area. Previous applications for the erection of buildings on the site have been refused on grounds of impact on the Special Landscape Area. The current application has the larger building tucked into the rear (north east) of the site against a backdrop of the poplar belt and a mature hedge on the south eastern boundary. The building is agricultural in character and uses green cladding to help blend in with the landscape. The building is of a design that is generally acceptable in a rural landscape and is therefore considered acceptable.

The smaller building to the south of the site would be placed within close proximity to the existing agricultural building and within a cluster of other buildings and would therefore not impact on the Special Landscape Area.

Highway Safety

Five local residents and the Parish Council have raised concerns over highway safety. SCC Highways have been out to the site and have no objection to the proposal as historically from both the agricultural use and the B2 use large vehicles would have used the access and the highway. It is anticipated that the overall traffic movements will decrease because there will be no travelling between the two sites.

It is understood that the operators store some equipment off site. The proposed storage buildings would allow the business to consolidate and run from one base. This will reduce the number of vehicle movements travelling between sites.

The site currently has two accesses. The existing southerly access is shared with neighbouring dwellings. The proposal includes ceasing to use this access point and to use the currently stopped up access to the north west of the site which serves the existing parking area. This access includes an electronic gate which would allow the gate to be opened before arrival and therefore avoid blocking of the highway.

SCC Highways have advised that the visibility needs improvement and this can be achieved with lowering of part of the hedgerow either side of the gate.

Contamination Issues

The buildings at Meade Farm are used for storage of agricultural equipment but the work is carried out on farms around the UK. Spraying is mainly done with

hand held sprayers on small plots with fairly precise amounts of chemical and this is all cleaned out on the farm where it is used. Envirofield do have a vehicle wash-down area near the current office building and drains to a purpose built sump before it goes to a soakaway.

Envirofield has a small tractor mounted sprayer for over-spraying variety plots but again these are on commercial farms and at present it is cleaned after use before returning to base. The company keep chemical usage to a minimum. It is understood that Envirofield is considering installing a Bio-bed so they can wash the sprayer down if on farm cleaning was not possible.

As a safeguard, a condition has been added to enable the local planning authority to retain oversight of surface water drainage arrangements.

Conclusion

The NPPF (paragraph 28) supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings, and well designed new buildings, and is keen to promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land rural businesses. The adopted Local Development Plan is consistent with those aims in supporting the appropriate establishment and expansion of rural businesses.

This application seeks to regularise the use of the land as a Class B1 use. It is anticipated that a further two full time jobs will be created. This is considered acceptable. Part of the site has a Class B2 use and it can be argued that Class B1 use will cause less noise and disturbance to the neighbouring residents. Class B2 is interchangeable with B1 up to 500 square metres under permitted development.

The proposed buildings are laid out thoughtfully in terms of impact to the surrounding area. The larger building is agricultural in character and is coloured green to blend with the surrounding area. The impact on the wider landscape could be minimised with a landscaping scheme. The reasons for refusal on previous applications for buildings on the site have been overcoming with the parking/turning areas being maintained and the building set back in the plot.

The proposal would allow the consolidation of two sites to one and the creation of two further jobs. The buildings are considered to be in-keeping with the surrounding area and the concerns over highway safety can be dealt with by lowering the hedgerow to a level to ensure that the visibility splays are considered to be safe.

Having regard to the location and surroundings, it is considered a reasonable precaution to restrict the use within Class B1 to that specifically applied for. A condition covering this is therefore recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

That Full Planning Permission be Granted subject to conditions

- Time scale for implementation
- Approved documents
- Landscaping scheme

- Timescale for landscaping
- Visibility splays as conditioned by SCC Highways
- Operating Hours 8am-6pm Monday to Friday and 8am-1pm on Saturdays
- No commercial vehicle movements outside of the above hours
- Clarification of surface water drainage arrangements
- Restriction on use within Class B1

Philip Isbell
Professional Lead - Growth & Sustainable Planning

Samantha Summers
Planning Officer

APPENDIX A - PLANNING POLICIES

1. Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Development Plan Document and the Core Strategy Focused Review

CSFR-FC1.1 - MID SUFFOLK APPROACH TO DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Cor2 - CS2 Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages

Cor5 - CS5 Mid Suffolks Environment

CSFR-FC1 - PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2. Mid Suffolk Local Plan

GP1 - DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF DEVELOPMENT

CL2 - DEVELOPMENT WITHIN SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

T10 - HIGHWAY CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

E8 - EXTENSIONS TO INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PREMISES

3. Planning Policy Statements, Circulars & Other policy

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

APPENDIX B - NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS

Letter(s) of representation(s) have been received from a total of 5 interested party(ies).

The following people **objected** to the application

[REDACTED]

The following people **supported** the application:

The following people **commented** on the application: