

Committee Report

Item 7A

Reference: DC/20/02052

Case Officer: Bron Curtis

Ward: Mendlesham.

Ward Member/s: Cllr Andrew Stringer.

RECOMMENDATION – REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION

Description of Development

Full Planning Application - Erection of 3no. poultry houses with associated admin block, store, feed bins and alterations to vehicular access.

*** The original proposal for 4 poultry houses has been reduced to 3 poultry houses in response to consultee comments.**

Location

Castle Hill Farm, Castle Hill, Thorndon, Suffolk IP23 7JT

Expiry Date: 29/09/2020

Application Type: FUL - Full Planning Application

Development Type: Major Large Scale - All Other

Applicant: Castle Hill Chicken Ltd

Agent: Parker Planning Services Ltd.

Parish: Thorndon

Site Area: 1.90 ha

Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions and any member site visit: None

Has a Committee Call In request been received from a Council Member (Appendix 1): Yes

Has the application been subject to Pre-Application Advice: Yes (Screening Opinion and Scoping Opinion only)

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason/s:

1. The Head of Economy considers the application to be of a controversial nature having regard to the planning reasoning expressed by the Parish Council and the extent and planning substance of comments received from third parties and the location, scale and nature of the application.

2. The Ward Member considers the application to have significant impact on the limited local highway network.

PART TWO – POLICIES AND CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of Policies

GP01 - Design and layout of development
T10 - Highway Considerations in Development
CL08 - Protecting wildlife habitats
CL13 - Siting and design of agricultural buildings
CL14 - Use of materials for agricultural buildings and structures
CL15 - Livestock buildings and related development
CS02 - Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages
H16 - Protecting existing residential amenity
CS03 - Reduce Contributions to Climate Change
CS05 - Mid Suffolk's Environment
FC01 - Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development
FC01_1 - Mid Suffolk Approach To Delivering Sustainable Development

Neighbourhood Plan Status

This application site is within a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

The Neighbourhood Plan is currently at:-

Stage 5: Independent Examination

Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan has Limited weight.

A verbal update on the progress of the Thorndon Neighbourhood Plan will be given at the Committee meeting.

Consultations and Representations

During the course of the application Consultation and Representations from third parties have been received. These are summarised below.

A: Summary of Consultations

Town/Parish Councils (Appendix 3)

Thorndon PC: OBJECT

- Would generate significant HGV traffic on B and unclassified roads that are unsuitable for this type of traffic. Will endanger other road users and damage verges.
- There is a weight restriction on The Street, Thorndon which would be rendered irrelevant by agricultural HGV traffic.

- The Street, Thorndon has significant issues with parked vehicles obstructing traffic flow causing hazards for school children. This will be exacerbated with additional HGV traffic through the village.
- Serious concerns about the cumulative impact of other agricultural operations in the area on local roads (Bedingfield poultry development).
- Ammonia emissions will be blown towards Thorndon presenting a nuisance and health hazard for residents.
- The proposed lighting will contravene the 'Dark Skies' policy in the emerging Thorndon Neighbourhood Plan.
- Thorndon and Stradbroke Parish Councils dispute the submitted traffic assessment and have researched and submitted their own analysis of expected vehicle movements for the proposed development.

Occold PC: OBJECT

- Noise and environmental impact of traffic movements on the parish.
- Site is not suitable for such a big operation.
- Concerns about ammonia smell and pollution impacts on local residents, the eco system and environment.
- Concerns for users of the right of way affected by the proposed access road.

Rishangles PC: NO RESPONSE RECEIVED

Southolt PM: OBJECT

- Unacceptable loss of arable land.
- Increased HGV traffic is a health and safety issue and would conflict with SCC's objectives of improving walking and cycling.
- Ammonia pollution affects public health.
- Cumulative impact must be considered including location, traffic movements and pollution.

Eye TC: OBJECT

- HGV traffic generated by this development will add to the already dangerous situation in the centre of Eye.
- This has reached such a level that Eye TC has commissioned its own traffic survey. The report recommends an expansion of the existing weight limited zone.
- The application does not adequately assess the existing HGV impacts in Eye or damage to buildings, mostly heritage assets.
- The application does not adequately address new bird delivery or waste litter removal.
- The proposal will generate clear harm to pedestrian and resident safety.
- The harm caused by additional HGV movements outweighs any benefits.

Stradbroke PC: OBJECT

- Traffic movements from this development will have severe highway impacts in the area.
- Eye are consulting on a lorry ban (HGV routing). A significant amount of the traffic from this development will pass in and around Stradbroke and the B1118.
- Concerns the traffic assessment may underestimate the traffic movements for the development having regard to other developments in the area (e.g. Barley Brigg).
- Concerns regarding public health and biodiversity risks of avian flu from the development have not been properly assessed.
- Stradbroke and Thorndon Parish Councils dispute the submitted traffic assessment and have researched and submitted their own analysis of expected vehicle movements for the proposed development.

- Dispute methodology for traffic assessment and reference appeal decision in which Inspector decided that a decision could not be made where methodology is disputed.
- Comments on the SCC Highways Officer assessment of the application.
- Waste disposal has not been addressed by the applicant.
- Reference case law judgement extracts regarding cumulative impact assessment.

Denham PC: OBJECT

- Would not significantly benefit employment opportunities in the area.
- Goes against current opinion on animal welfare. Small-scale, higher welfare operations should be favoured.
- Noise and smell pollution.
- Concerns regarding suitability of local road network for increased HGV movements.
- Cumulative impact and consideration of communities in the wider area must be given.
- The Cranswick development is leading to a proliferation of industrial scale agricultural operations and the impact must be carefully considered.

National Consultee (Appendix 4)

Historic England: NO COMMENTS

Natural England: NO OBJECTION

- Will not damage or destroy the Major Farm, Braiseworth SSSI.
- Ammonia emissions can affect sensitive habitats and wildlife. The ammonia assessment shows the emissions to be below the national criteria and Natural England concurs with this view.

The Environment Agency: OBJECT (3RD July 2020)

- The location of the development is too close to the existing research facility /workplace to the north (Covance Inc. - contract research, pharmaceutical development).
- As such the development will not be able to adhere to Best Available Techniques in relation to odour required for an Environmental Permit.
- Odour modelling has resulted in a reduction in broiler sheds from 6 to 4. Whilst welcome this does not allay our concerns.
- The modelling does not include Elm Farm Cottages, located within the research facility complex, or any dwellings within the control of the applicant.
- If granted permission this development will have unacceptable odour impacts, contrary to para 183 of the NPPF.

Additional comments 15th September 2020:

- The applicant has responded to our previous comments.
- We are maintaining our objection.
- Objection relates to the impact of odour from the development on the nearby research facility.
- The planning authority must decide the sensitivity classification of the research facility.
- If 'medium' the levels are unacceptable. If 'low' the levels are acceptable.
- We consider that odour pollution is likely to be caused at this receptor despite building and management techniques.

Additional comments 16th December 2020:

- The revised odour modelling for 3 shed proposal shows part of the Covance site to be within the 3-5 OU/m³ odour contour and suggests this is acceptable for a low risk receptor.
- Covance is considered a medium receptor due to the employee numbers and shift patterns.
- We also note air intake equipment at Covance which could pass odours into the building.

- The odour impact on residential properties is acceptable.
- Even if the development is built and operated to Best Available Techniques the potential for odour at the research facility will be unacceptable.
- Objection maintained.

The Stowmarket Group: COMMENTS

- Application lacks detail.
- Concern the users of the right of way will come into conflict with HGV traffic where it crosses the proposed access way.
- Proposed screening of the right of way is unclear.

County Council Responses (Appendix 5)

Archaeology: COMMENTS

- There is high potential for below ground heritage assets.
- No grounds for refusal.
- Conditions to secure archaeological investigation and recording if permission granted.

Developer Contributions: NO COMMENTS

Fire and Rescue: COMMENTS

- Development must comply with Building Regulations for access and fire fighting facilities.
- No additional water supply is required.
- Sprinkler system should be considered.

Flood and Water Management: COMMENTS

- A comprehensive FRA and surface water drainage strategy have been received.
- Recommend approval subject to conditions.

Highways: COMMENTS

- The submitted transport statement sets out the current and proposed HGV movements to/from the site as 0.7 and 3.3 per day respectively.
- The most intensive period for HGV movements will be a 2 day period when birds are removed from the site. This equates to 2 HGV movements an hour during a 12 hour period over the two days. This would happen 7-8 times a year.
- The proposal would result in an average increase of 2.7 HGV movements per day.
- The increase is significant for the site but is not considered to be severe in terms of the highway network affected by the proposal.
- Consideration should be given to the likely routing of HGV traffic, through Eye town centre on the B1117, to avoid the weight restriction in Thorndon.
- SCC are aware of the Eye Town Centre Traffic Review commissioned by Eye TC and its recommendations that more roads through the town be weight restricted. If implemented this may result in HGV traffic travelling from the site to the A140 being directed through local villages and less suitable minor roads.
- Overall, the development does have an impact on the highway network but this impact is not considered to be severe, in accordance with the NPPF.
- The cumulative impact on roads through Eye could be considered significant.
- As traffic movements are low and the peak flows are not during the normal working day we should not recommend refusal of planning permission on transport grounds.
- A condition to secure an HGV routing plan is recommended if permission is granted.

Rights of Way: COMMENTS

- The application site includes a public right of way (footpath 24), which crosses proposed the access way.
- Proposal is acceptable but the development must contact SCC to discuss any works affecting the right of way.

Suffolk Police: NO RESPONSE RECEIVED

Travel Plan Coordinator: NO COMMENTS

Internal Consultee Responses (Appendix 6)

Heritage and Design Officer: COMMENTS

- The site is close to several listed buildings and their setting includes the plateau landscape of the surrounding area.
- The location of the site in a small river valley reduces the visual impact on the setting of the listed buildings to virtually nil.
- It is also relevant that the nearby research facility buildings already compromise the setting of the listed buildings.
- The proposal is also for the removal of the existing buildings at the site and as such there would not be any harm to the significance of the nearby listed houses.
- All Saints church at Thorndon is a landmark and its setting should be taken to include the application site.
- Given the considerations above the impact on the church's setting would be low and would not result in harm to the significance of the listed church.
- Recommend the colour finishes be controlled so as to minimise the visual impact of the development.

Communities Officer: COMMENTS

- The Cranswick development has naturally led to an increase in applications for supply chain operations.
- Jobs at Cranswick are at risk if supply chain operations are not available.
- There are understandable concerns from residents of Eye regarding HGV movements. Suggest a condition to ensure HGVs are routed through Thorndon and not Eye.
- White meat consumption is increasing and red meat consumption decreasing. This is a positive health trend that we would wish to see continue.
- Expect sheds to be constructed to highest achievable energy efficiency design and welfare standards.

Public Realm Officer: NO COMMENT

Environmental Health Officer (Noise/Odour/Light, etc): COMMENTS

- This type of development is regulated by the Environment Agency.
- I note the EA objection and concur.

Additional comments 16/12/2020:

- The odour modelling for three sheds shows that the odour concentration is between 3 and 5 Odour Units (OU) for a significant area across the Covance site and for Environment Agency Guidance (H4) this is unacceptable odour pollution.

- The report relies on the institute of Air Quality Management guidance (IAQM) to classify the Covance site as industrial and of low sensitivity such that there is no loss in amenity, in order for the impact to be acceptable. This has been challenged by the Environment Agency (EA) and in my previous advice I have concurred with the agency. I have not seen any additional information that changes my previous advice for this commercial site.
- For the closest residential premises the predicted odour concentrations are below 3 OUs, which appears to be acceptable.

Environmental Health Officer (Contamination): NO OBJECTION

Environmental Health Officer (Air Quality): NO OBJECTION

Environmental Health Officer (Sustainability): NO OBJECTION

- Conditions recommended.

Economic Development Officer: COMMENTS

- This farm diversification proposal will replace existing sheds and improve access and welfare standards.
- The operation would be part of the wider supply chain of poultry production which is worth £3.5bn to the Suffolk and Norfolk economies and supports over 900 jobs in the area.

Planning Policy Officer: NO COMMENT

Waste Management Officer: NO OBJECTION

B: Representations

At the time of writing this report at least 87 letters/emails/online comments have been received. It is the officer opinion that this represents 86 objections, 0 support and 1 general comment. A verbal update shall be provided as necessary.

Views are summarised below:-

(Note: All individual representations are counted and considered. Repeated and/or additional communication from a single individual will be counted as one representation.)

- Negative impact of additional HGV traffic.
- Impact on pedestrian and highway safety.
- Road network condition / capacity unsuitable.
- Poor visibility, speed limit ignored.
- Odours, smell of ammonia, especially as roof vents are below the level of Thorndon village and prevailing wind will blow smells towards the village.
- MSDC has a duty of care for communities and heritage.
- Noise from ventilation fans and from lorry movements at night which disturbs residents' sleep.
- HGVs travelling on narrow roads cause damage to property including historic buildings and the Conservation Area (Eye).
- Might set a precedent for similar applications.
- More lorries through Eye is at odds with the BMSDC documents 'Vision for Prosperity in Eye'.
- HGV movements already have negative impacts on the quality of life of local residents.
- Additional HGV traffic will have a negative impact on the pleasantness of Eye and deter visitors.

- Additional HGV traffic would deter pedestrian and cyclists in conflict with the walking and cycling strategy.
- Should factory farming be supported when global pandemics have been linked to these practices and COVID clusters have been commonly located within meat processing plants? Concerns regarding the conditions animals are kept in and animal-human disease transmission risks.
- There are a number of other poultry operations nearby, overloading the local area.
- Risk of contamination of ponds, rivers and streams.
- Impact on property values.
- Impact on biodiversity by attracting larger numbers of rats and foxes into the area.
- Light pollution, contravenes the Thorndon Neighbourhood Plan 'Dark Skies' policy.
- Should be considered cumulatively with past and future applications.
- Site is unsuitable for this unsightly, out of character development.
- Drainage is already an issue, the B1077 floods regularly close to the farm entrance.
- Overdevelopment too close to Thorndon.
- Intensive chicken rearing is unethical, inhumane and an unsustainable form of food production. Together with the animal testing at Covance (formerly Huntingdon Life Sciences) this will be distressing.
- Can't achieve 'best available techniques'
- Nuisance of flies associated with livestock uses.
- Loss of and danger of using the public rights of way.
- Concerns not all HGV traffic generation is being assessed.
- Disagreement with SCC Highways consultation advice.

PLANNING HISTORY (application site only)

REF: DC/19/03606	Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Opinion Request for the development of a Poultry Production Unit with capacity to house 288,000 Birds	DECISION: EIA 13.09.2019
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Please refer to agenda bundle for details of other permitted livestock and associated operations that are relevant to the cumulative assessment of this application.

PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

1. The Site and Surroundings

1.1 The application site is part of an agricultural field forming part of the Castle Hill Farm holding, located in the countryside between the villages of Thorndon and Occold. The farm occupies an area of gently sloping land towards the bottom of the Dove river valley and has access from the B1077 highway.

1.2 The main part of the development site lies to the east of the existing Castle Hill Farm complex, comprising a dwelling and 3 poultry sheds, and to the south of the Covance research complex (formerly Huntingdon Life Sciences). A public right of way leads from the B1077, along the accessway to the site then turns north between the existing Castle Hill Farm complex and the application site.

1.3 The character of the surrounding area is predominantly open and rural, with a number of interspersed residential and agricultural buildings. The site is partly screened from public views from the highway by

existing built development, bunding and mature hedges and trees. Views of the site from the public footpath are currently unscreened.

2. The Proposal

2.1 The proposal is for an intensive livestock operation for the growing of broiler chickens. This type of operation sees chicks delivered to the site to be grown for meat production and then delivered to an off-site processing operation once grown. The complex is then cleaned down and prepared to receive another delivery of chicks. In the case of this operation the growing cycle is 7 weeks.

2.2 The development comprises the following elements:

- The demolition of 3 existing poultry sheds.
- The erection of 4 new broiler poultry sheds to house up to 188,000 birds at a time.
- The erection of an office / store / staff building.
- The erection of a cold store building.
- The erection of 2 feed bins.
- The construction of hard surfaced access way and yard areas.
- Alternations to the existing vehicular access.

3. The Principle of Development

3.1 The NPPF sets out the primary focus for planning practice with the aim of achieving sustainable development. This involves consideration of the three overarching objectives of social, economic and environmental factors in determining planning applications.

As an agricultural diversification proposal, this application is for an economic development, the principle of which is supported, in general, by paragraphs 80 and 83 which state:

“Planning...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.” (para 80)

Planning...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;*
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; (para 83)*

This positive emphasis must, however, be balanced with the concurrent objectives of supporting the health, social and cultural wellbeing of local communities and the need to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment.

3.2 The saved policies of the Development Plan reflect these objectives, supporting appropriate agricultural and economic development subject to all material considerations. The main issues for consideration include highway safety, landscape impact, heritage, residential amenity, pollution and other amenity impacts, flood risk and drainage and ecology.

3.3 Having regard to the scale, nature and location of the proposal, where there are a number of other existing and proposed livestock and poultry production supply chain operations, it is also appropriate to consider the cumulative impact of the proposal. Consideration has been given to the cumulative impacts arising from the proposal in context with existing and permitted livestock operations in the northern part of

the Mid Suffolk district including the practical supply chain impacts of these operations. Each of these issues is discussed in the following sections of this report.

4. Highway safety

4.1 The majority of objections from local residents and parish councils include concerns relating to the impact of traffic movements to and from the site, particularly HGVs, on highway safety including pedestrians, residents and other road users. The main issues raised are summarised above and the full text of comments received is available in the agenda bundle and application file.

Local Plan policy CL17 supports farm diversification proposals providing:

“There is no excessive traffic generation or adverse effect on the free flow and safety of traffic”

Policy T10 requires consideration of the following:

“- The provision of safe access to and egress from the site

- the suitability of existing roads giving access to the development, in terms of the safe and free flow of traffic and pedestrian safety;

- whether the amount and type of traffic generated by the proposal will be acceptable in relation to the capacity of the road network in the locality of the site;

- the provision of adequate space for the parking and turning of cars and service vehicles within the curtilage of the site;

- whether the needs of pedestrians and cyclists have been met, particularly in the design and layout of new housing and industrial areas. Cycle routes and cycle priority measures will be encouraged in new development.”

The NPPF states:

“ Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.” (para 109)

4.2 The proposed development will make use of an existing access serving the farm complex from the B1077, which is proposed to be altered as part of this application. A new internal roadway will link the access to the proposed poultry sheds, passing through the position of the existing poultry sheds that are to be demolished.

4.3 The application documents include a transport assessment (TA) which describes the anticipated traffic and highways impacts of the proposal. The TA estimates the maximum traffic generation for the proposed operation to be 139 vehicles (278 movements) to the site during each 7 week growing cycle. Most of these movements will be HGVs delivering or collecting birds, feed, waste, etc. The figure also includes management and staff cars. The ‘catching’ period of the cycle is expected to generate the worst-case peak estimated vehicle numbers of 30 HGV movements per day for 2 days in the 7 week cycle.

4.4 As a comparison; the existing operation generates 22 vehicles (44 movements) per month, most of which are described as ‘lorries’.

4.5 The HGV movements to and from the site are expected to include the delivery of chicks to the site and grown birds to the Cranswick processing site at Eye Airfield. Waste processing from the operation has not yet been determined but it is likely that dead birds will go to the Cranswick site and litter waste to Thetford biomass power station. Waste water will also be removed from the site by a contractor, yet to be determined.

4.6 The most likely routing of these HGVs from the site to the A140 highway would either be west through the village of Thorndon (Rishangles Road - The Street - Stoke Road – A140 junction) or north-west through the town of Eye (B1077 – Cranley Green Road – Eye town centre – B1117 or Castleton Way – A140 junction). There are weight restrictions in parts of Eye town centre and in the village of Thorndon.

4.7 Suffolk County Council Highways have considered the estimated increase and likely concentration of traffic movements over the growing cycle and advise that, whilst in comparison to the existing operation the increase is significant for the site itself there is not considered to be a severe impact on the highway network. They have also considered the impact of HGV movements through the local settlements, the concerns raised by local residents and the recommendations of the Eye Town Centre Traffic Review. Whilst acknowledging that cumulative impacts of the proposal with the existing conditions of HGV movements through Eye in particular could be considered significant, they conclude the impacts are not severe such as would conflict with the NPPF. Furthermore, the number and timing of movements from this proposal is such that does not justify the refusal of planning permission on transport grounds. Conditions are recommended to secure a construction management plan, appropriate visibility for the amended access works and a transport plan to agree appropriate HGV routing for the operation.

4.8 SCC highways do not advise that the estimated traffic generation is excessive or there would be any unacceptable impact on the safety of pedestrians and free flow of traffic. They also confirm their opinion that the impacts on the surrounding road network would not be severe.

4.9 This position differs from that expressed by parish councils and local residents as summarised above. Concerns are particularly felt by those living on and using the main routes between the site and the A140 in Eye and Thorndon where the existing circumstance of HGV and other traffic movements on the local road network is considered to be harmful to the safety and amenity of local residents. It is felt that this proposal would further exacerbate the harm experienced by these communities.

4.10 It is relevant to have regard to the context in which this proposal is being considered, that being a predominantly rural area where the local economy is characterised by agricultural operations. The settlements within this part of the district are, therefore, reliant on either private cars to obtain groceries and other products, or on supermarket and other delivery services such as Amazon, DHL, etc. This characteristic of contemporary life is likely to have been felt more keenly in recent months as reliance on delivery services has increased.

4.11 Regard has been had to cumulative impact of the proposed development on highway safety in the context of the existing circumstances of the area and together with existing and permitted livestock operations in the northern part of the Mid Suffolk district including the practical supply chain impacts of these operations in terms of vehicle movements.

4.12 In considering all of the above it is necessary to determine whether the highway impact is unacceptable, or the residual cumulative impacts severe. SCC Highways do not conclude so on either count and whilst there is no definition of the term 'severe' in the NPPF or NPPG it is reasonable to expect a degree of subjectivity and difference between the professional opinion of the Highways Officer and the experiential opinion of local communities. The matter has previously been considered at appeal in which Inspectors have commented that:

'the term 'severe' sets a high bar for intervention via the planning system in traffic effects arising from development' and that 'the critical elements in assessing whether the impact was severe were firstly, increase in the number of vehicles likely to be generated by the proposed development in relation to the capacity of the road to accommodate such an increase, both in terms of free-flow of traffic and highway safety, [and]...the ability for pedestrians to cross the main road conveniently and safely and the ease of vehicles to gain access to the main road from side streets and access points'.

4.13 In this case there is no indication that the increase in the number of vehicles generated by the development would exceed the capacity of the local road network which is, generally, lightly trafficked at most times. Further, there is no indication that additional significant wait times or other congestion would result from the traffic generation of the proposal. In terms of pedestrian safety, it is considered that drivers would be adequately aware of the likelihood of pedestrians when travelling through towns and villages, past schools and shops, etc. such that the impact on pedestrian safety is not considered to be significantly different to the existing circumstance.

4.14 In assessing the overall highway safety impacts of the proposal, in terms of the NPPF and Development Plan considerations, it is concluded that the proposal would not result in excessive traffic generation, would not be unacceptable in relation to the capacity of the local road network, would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe impact on the highway network when considered cumulatively with other development in the area.

4.15 Further, development can be adequately controlled such as to secure safe access, parking and turning and vehicle routing for the operation. On this basis the proposal is considered to be acceptable on highway safety grounds.

5. Landscape impact

5.1 The prevailing character of the surrounding landscape is that of generally open, rolling, arable land interspersed with residential and agricultural buildings. The Covance research site is a significant feature of built development in the otherwise relatively sparsely developed landscape on this stretch of the B1077 between Debenham and Eye.

5.2 The site is partly screened from public views from the highway by the topography of the surrounding landscape as well as existing built development, bunding and mature hedges and trees. Views of the site from the public footpath are currently unscreened.

5.3 The scale, design and materials of the proposed buildings are typical of modern agricultural developments, similar to those that exist in the wider landscape and a more modern version, but similar style, to the existing poultry shed buildings at Castle Hill Farm.

5.4 The application documents include a landscape and visual impact assessment which concludes the proposal will have minimal impacts in this respect and recommends some landscape planting to mitigate the new buildings.

5.5 Modern agricultural buildings such as those proposed here are a common feature within the rural working landscape of this part of the district. The complex of proposed development is sited close enough to the adjacent Covance site that some views will experience the two operations together and there will be a degree of amelioration. There is not considered to be an unacceptable cumulative visual impact arising from this proposal in context with other development in the landscape.

5.6 Overall there is not considered to be any unacceptable visual impact subject to conditions to secure appropriate landscaping.

6. Heritage

6.1 There are no known heritage assets within the site itself but there are a number of listed buildings within the wider landscape, including Grade II listed Occold Hall and Thorndon Hill and Grade II* listed Church of All Saints in Thorndon village. There are no other known heritage assets within the area.

6.2 The BMSDC Heritage officer advises that, having regard to the character of the landscape the site falls within the setting of these listed buildings. However, the screening afforded by the topography of the area and the presence of the Covance complex are such that limit the impacts of the proposed development. The Heritage officer concludes that there is no harm to the significance of the two identified listed dwellings and the impact on the setting of the church would be very low and would not result in harm to the significance of that listed building. It is recommended that materials are controlled to minimise the visual impact of the development.

6.3 The SCC Archaeology officer advises that there is high potential for the site to have archaeological assets due to its location and that finds have been recorded on adjacent land. SCC has raised no objection to the proposal and recommends conditions to secure an appropriate scheme of archaeological investigation and recording for the site.

6.4 On the basis of advice from specialist officers the impact on heritage assets is considered to be low and the development is acceptable in this respect.

7. Residential and other amenity impacts

7.1 The nature of the operation is such that has the potential to give rise to residential amenity impacts in terms of noise, smell, disturbance, etc. Whilst the site is located in the countryside it is in fairly close proximity to the villages of Occold and Thorndon and the operation of the development is such that disturbance from associated traffic movements has the potential to affect residents in Eye. There are also number of more isolated properties closer by.

7.2 Noise: Some concerns have been raised regarding the noise impact of the development on the residential amenity of nearby properties. The most likely sources of noise impact from this type of operation is associated with vehicle movements, including the use of forklifts and the use of extraction fans used for ventilation of the buildings.

7.3 The application documents include a noise impact assessment which established the background noise levels at the nearest dwellings to the site and compared this to the levels of noise expected to be generated by the operation of the proposed development. The assessment concludes the noise impacts of the proposal to be low in terms of plant operations and negligible in terms of vehicle operations.

7.4 The MSDC Environmental Health Officer advises that the scale and nature of the proposal is regulated by the Environment Agency environmental permitting scheme, such that noise impacts are controlled through that process. The Environment Agency have made no comments regarding the noise impacts of the proposal. On the basis of this advice and the findings of the noise impact assessment the proposal is not considered to have any unacceptable noise impact.

7.5 Odour: As an agricultural operation the proposed development has the potential to emit odours that arise from the keeping of live animals. The operation would be subject to control through the Environmental Permitting regime administered by the Environment Agency which includes consideration

of airborne pollutants. The NPPF advises that, whilst planning decisions should not seek to duplicate controls that exist in other regimes and those regimes must be assumed to be effective, it is necessary for the planning process to consider whether the proposed use of the land is appropriate and that includes consideration of the impact of any odours on the amenity of people living and working in the locality.

In assessing the impact of odour from the proposal on the amenity of the locality regard has been had to Guidance on the assessment of odour for planning version 1.1 (IAQM, 2018).

The location and nature of the proposed development has the potential to have an unacceptable odour impact on the amenity of local residents and workers. A number of concerns have been raised by residents and Parish Councils regarding the impact of odour from the development, in context with existing odour impacts from other operations in the area on the health and living conditions of the community.

The application documents include an odour and ammonia assessment for the proposal. These documents explain that odours from intensive livestock operations have the potential to be 'moderately offensive' with the likelihood of impact increasing as the birds mature through the cycle with increased odour production and the need for ventilation resulting in greater emission levels. Peak emission levels are predicted to occur at the end of each cycle when the litter is cleared out of the buildings.

The odour assessment concludes that the predicted odour levels at the nearest residential properties would be below the Environment Agency threshold for moderately offensive odours and would therefore be acceptable but it finds that the levels likely to be experienced at the Covance site would exceed the threshold and have potential for significant complaints.

There are approximately 300 people employed at the Covance site, working in office and laboratory spaces within the complex. The buildings are also understood to have air intake equipment which may have the effect of passing odours into the buildings.

The Environment Agency maintain an objection to the proposal on the basis of the odour impact on the Covance site if that premises is considered to be a receptor of a medium sensitivity, a matter to be determined by the Planning Authority.

The magnitude of an odour effect is determined by the scale of the exposure to the odour and the sensitivity of receptors at which the odour is experienced. The IAQM guidance defines receptor sensitivity by three categories, low, medium and high as can be seen in the extract below:

<p>High sensitivity receptor Surrounding land where:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • users can reasonably expect enjoyment of a high level of amenity; and • people would reasonably be expected to be present here continuously, or at least regularly for extended periods, as part of the normal pattern of use of the land. <p>Examples may include residential dwellings, hospitals, schools/education and tourist/cultural.</p>
<p>Medium sensitivity receptor Surrounding land where:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • users would expect to enjoy a reasonable level of amenity, but wouldn't reasonably expect to enjoy the same level of amenity as in their home; or • people wouldn't reasonably be expected to be present here continuously or regularly for extended periods as part of the normal pattern of use of the land. <p>Examples may include places of work, commercial/retail premises and</p>

	playing/recreation fields.
Low sensitivity receptor Surrounding land where:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the enjoyment of amenity would not reasonably be expected; or • there is transient exposure, where the people would reasonably be expected to be present only for limited periods of time as part of the normal pattern of use of the land. <p>Examples may include industrial use, farms, footpaths and roads.</p>

Following discussion with the Senior Environmental Protection Officer and Environment Agency the Covance employment site is considered to be a medium sensitivity receptor as it is a place of work of a significant number of employees, working shift patterns and is a premises that does not have a significant likelihood of an existing odour impact from its own operations (such as may be expected in an industrial processing or agricultural workplace for example).

The odour modelling shows that part of the Covance complex would fall within the 3-5 OU/m³ odour contour and both the Environment Agency and your Senior Environmental Health Officer advise that this impact would be unacceptable in terms of the amenity impact of the users of the Covance site.

There is likely to be an odour impact experienced by employees at the Covance site that would result in an unacceptable loss of amenity at this site. The land is therefore not appropriate for the proposed use because the odour generated by the operation would contribute to unacceptable levels of air pollution in the locality, contrary to the objectives of the NPPF.

7.6 Lighting: Some concerns have been raised regarding the impact of external lighting on the surrounding area, with reference to the dark skies policy THN12 in the emerging Thorndon neighbourhood plan which states that outdoor lighting should have a minimum impact on the environment and should reduce energy consumption, keeping night-time skies dark and reducing glare.

The proposal does require some external lighting to ensure the safety of people and vehicles on site. The application documents include a statement of lighting design which explains how the external lighting for the proposal has been designed to ensure energy efficiency and minimise light-spill impacts on the surrounding countryside.

Providing the development is constructed and operated in accordance with the lighting design scheme, which can be controlled by condition, there would not be any unacceptable impact on either residential amenity or the appearance of the surrounding landscape in terms of light pollution.

7.7 Disturbance: A number of concerns have been raised regarding the disturbance impacts the proposal on residential amenity, particular concerns have been raised by residents in Eye explaining how existing HGV traffic through the town disturbs residents' peaceful enjoyment of their properties, including sleep.

As described above in terms of highway safety, it is relevant to consider the context of this development in the countryside where there is an existing level of disturbance experienced by residents arising from the mix of uses and range of other agricultural operations in the locality, together with the recent increase in delivered goods and services.

In assessing the disturbance impacts of this proposal it is therefore necessary to consider the difference the operation of the development would have on local residents. The site itself is relatively isolated from residential properties such that on-site operations are not likely to result in significant unacceptable disturbance impacts. The associated vehicle movements from the operation, most likely routed through Thorndon or Eye, would be experienced in context with the existing vehicle movements in the local area and, as described above, are not considered to be so significant as to be unacceptable.

8. Flood risk and drainage

8.1 The application site lies adjacent to the north of a river. A number of concerns have been raised regarding flood risk, in particular flooding of the highway in the area at the access to the site which is known as The Wash.

8.2 application documents include a flood risk assessment that describes the flood risks to the development and from the development on the surrounding area. It also includes recommendations for mitigation of these impacts. The assessment describes the site as being located in flood zone 1 (areas at least risk of flooding) with some groundwater and surface water flooding risk.

8.3 The SCC Floods Officer raised some initial queries and requested additional information which has since been received. He now advises approval subject to conditions to mitigate the flood risk impacts of the development.

8.4 On the basis of the advice from the SCC and subject to the conditions recommended there are not considered to be unacceptable flood risk or drainage impacts arising from the development.

9. Ecology

9.1 The location of the application site, close to a river and in a rural setting, means that there is potential for ecology impacts. The application documents include an ecological assessment that describes the value of the site in terms of protected species and habitats. It concludes that the development would not have significant impacts and sets out recommendations for compensation and enhancements that will enable the development to be carried out whilst secure a biodiversity net gain, in accordance with the NPPF.

9.2 The council's ecology adviser has reviewed the assessment and proposed mitigation measures submitted with the application and advises that the information is sufficient to determine the application and that the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures proposed should be implemented in full in order to safeguard protected species and habitats.

9.3 On the basis of this specialist advice and subject to conditions as recommended below the development is considered to have no unacceptable impact on ecology and the council has discharged its statutory duties in this regard.

10. Other matters

10.1 The proposal will make a contribution to supporting the rural economy by aiding farm diversification and creating / supporting local employment.

10.2 The size of the development triggers the requirements of Core Strategy policy CS3 to secure the use of renewable energy to meet some of the development's energy needs. Whilst there are no specific details in the application submission this can be controlled by condition.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

11. Planning Balance and Conclusion

11.1. The principle of appropriate agricultural diversification development is generally supported by the NPPF and the Development Plan providing the impacts of such development are acceptable or can be made so by planning conditions. Officers recognise the changing demand in the poultry market and the role of operations such as is proposed to the food production industry and the ongoing viability of the wider district and regional economy.

11.2. The impacts of the proposed development on the surrounding area and communities has been considered, taking account of specialist advice. Although it is considered that, in most cases, the potential for harmful impacts in terms of most material issues arising from the development can be removed and / or mitigated by appropriate conditions on the grant of planning permission.

11.3. However, the impact of odour from the operation would result in an unacceptable level of air pollution that would harm the workplace amenity of the users of the adjacent employment site.

11.3. The development is therefore contrary to the objectives of the NPPF and the development plan in terms of the protection of local amenity.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application is REFUSED planning permission/listed building consent/other for the following reasons:-

The operation of the development will produce an unacceptable level of odour impact experienced by users of the adjacent Covance employment site that would result in a loss of amenity at this premises. The land is therefore not appropriate for the proposed use because the odour generated by the operation would contribute to unacceptable levels of air pollution in the locality, contrary to the objectives of paras 170 and 180 of the NPPF and policy CS4 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy 2008.