

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE B - 20th JANUARY 2016

AGENDA ITEM NO	1
APPLICATION NO	3328/15
PROPOSAL	<u>Erection of new offices, layout of new car park, erection of new industrial building, resurfacing of roadway and installation of a weighbridge.</u>
SITE LOCATION	Grove Farm, Mill Lane, Creeting St Peter, IP6 8QG
SITE AREA (Ha)	0.9
APPLICANT	Poundfield Products Ltd
RECEIVED	September 14, 2015
EXPIRY DATE	January 25, 2016

REASONS FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason:

- (1) 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. This application follows pre-application discussions providing detailed advice and guidance on the design and siting of the proposed buildings.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2. The Grove Farm site is located in open countryside south of the A14. The land falls away to the south towards the Gipping Valley. This topography allows extensive views to and from the site. Some screening is afforded by a hedge along the southern boundary and a landscaped bund to the north east and north west boundaries of the commercial area.

The existing complex of buildings comprise a number of modern former agricultural buildings, a large production area and storage yard associated with the production of concrete and two large gantry cranes which run on rails.

Grove Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building and land to the south is within a Special Landscape Area. Public Footpath No. 14 runs to the south of the site.

HISTORY

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

0956/99/	Retention of change of use of part building from agriculture to the manufacture of concrete products mainly allied to agriculture.	Granted 23/12/99
71/00	Erection of agricultural building for grain storage	Approved 7/03/00
1324/01	Change of use of agricultural land to form curing and storage area for concrete products	Approved 24/01/02
0936/02/	Reorganisation of Farmstead including erection of grain store (to replace existing used partly for industrial purposes), Change of use and extension of existing grain store for manufacturing of concrete products mainly allied to agriculture.	Granted 25/09/2002
1026/03/	Reorganisation of Farmstead including erection of grain store (to replace existing used partly for industrial purposes), Change of use and extension of existing grain store for manufacturing of concrete products mainly allied to agriculture, Variation of condition 3 in respect of working hours of planning permission register No. 936/02 in respect of working hours of planning permission register 936/02).	Refused 14/10/2004
0191/04/	Reorganisation of Farmstead including erection of grain store (to replace existing used partly for industrial purposes), Change of use and extension of existing grain store for manufacturing of concrete products mainly allied to agriculture, Variation of condition 3 in respect of working hours of planning permission register No. 936/02 in respect of working hours of planning permission register 936/02). Retention of use of land as car park and extension of site as indicated by revised plan submitted on 17 May 2004.	Refused 14/10/2004
0148/05/	Erection of agricultural storage building.	Granted 09/03/2005
2458/05	General agricultural storage building.	Granted 20/04/2006
0500/06	Proposed extraction and processing of sand and gravel for use in the manufacture of concrete	Withdrawn 13/10/2006

products at the adjacent works, followed by the restoration of the site to agriculture, wet and dry woodland, wet meadow and reed bed.

1233/06	Variation of Condition 3 of planning permission 936/02 to enable hours of working to operate between 7am and 6pm Monday to Friday and 7am & 1pm on Saturdays.	Withdrawn 10/04/2007
1885/07	Change of use from Agricultural to Class B2 for the storage of concrete products associated with the manufacture of concrete products. Construction of hardstanding and landscaped bund.	Granted 16/10/2008
3267/09	Extension to Agricultural storage building.	03/12/2009
0747/12	Retention of two mobile gantry cranes.	Granted 07/01/2013
1927/13	Variation of condition 1(a) of planning permission 0747/12 (Retention of two mobile gantry cranes)	Withdrawn 20/05/2014

PROPOSAL

4. The application seeks planning permission for a new industrial building and new offices. The new industrial building is to be located adjacent to an existing industrial unit on an area currently occupied by one of the gantry cranes. The gantry crane will be relocated onto the rails of the adjacent crane. The building will allow some of the production currently undertaken outside to be undertaken within the building. The building will have a maximum height of 6.7m and a footprint of 60m x 18.5m. The building will have an overall floor area of 1110sqm. It will be constructed with concrete and profile sheeting.

The office building is to be located to the front of the site on land currently used for agricultural purposes. The building has been designed to appear as a range of former agricultural buildings. The main office building is double height with a series of adjoining single storey units. The building will have an L-shape footprint enclosing the new car park. The building will have an overall height of 8.6m and an overall floor area of 536sqm. It will be constructed with a pantile roof and a mix of weatherboarding and brickwork.

The works will allow the site to be re-organised to achieve Health and Safety

requirements and enhance operational organisation on site.

POLICY

5. **Planning Policy Guidance**

See Appendix below.

CONSULTATIONS

6. **Creeting St Peter Parish Council:** The Parish Council of Creeting St Peter object to the proposal due to the impact on the surrounding highway network, visual impact, unsustainable location and no justification to have a major office building.

Creeting St Mary Parish Council: The Parish Council of Creeting St Mary object to the proposal on the grounds that the development is out of character with the rural area, will result in the loss of high quality agricultural land, will increase traffic and cause harm to local rural roads. Additionally they advise that there is evidence of surface flood water flowing down the road flooding Watering Farm.

MSDC- Environmental Health- Land Contamination: The Environmental Health Officer has no objection to the proposal but requests that they are contacted in the event of unexpected ground conditions encountered during construction.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue: Suffolk Fire and Rescue advise that no additional water supply for the fire-fighting purposes is required in respect of this planning application.

Highways Authority: The Highways Authority have no objection and recommend that any permission should include a condition requiring the area for the purposes for turning, manoeuvring and parking is provided prior to the first use.

Suffolk County Council Flood: Suffolk County Floods team recommends that additional information is provided to agree the appropriate means of drainage.

MSDC- Economic Development: The Economic Development team requested to be consulted on the application which was actioned on the 18 November 2015. No further response has been received.

Environment Agency: The Environment Agency state that the disposal of foul water through a private treatment plant is appropriate and they have no objection. The Agency also provided advice on foul water disposal at the site.

Landscape Officer: The Landscape Officer assesses the impact in relation to the landscape and visual impact. The officer concludes that the scheme is acceptable subject to conditions agreeing landscaping, external lighting and materials.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust: Suffolk Wildlife Trust offer comments on the impact of potential external lighting on bats and barn owls. Additionally they recommend that surface water runoff and waste water should be controlled in order to ensure it cannot reach the River Gipping County Wildlife Site (CWS).

MSDC- Environmental Health- Noise/Odour/Other: The Environmental Health Officer has no objection in principle to the new industrial building subject to conditions controlling working hours and the level of noise, In regards to the office building the officer has no objection in principle but the residential amenity at Orchard Lea could be affected by the noise of the office starting work at 7am. To restrict this conflict the officer recommends the property should be tied to the business operation.

Environmental Health- Sustainability (Low Carbon Europe): The development is required to demonstrate how the development will secure energy efficiency and sustainability standards/measures through condition.

LOCAL AND THIRD PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

7. This is a summary of the representations received.

Summary of objections

- Inappropriate in size and scale for the location
- Detrimental impact on landscape
- Harm to country roads through increased traffic
- Increase in congestion from HGV lorries and increase in road safety harm
- Cause irreparable damage to the landscape and environment
- Should re-locate to the proposed Mill Road Industrial/Business Park
- Proposal will increase productivity
- Road network is inappropriate
- Use of weighbridge as an additional service
- Office not intended for sole use by Poundfield Products Ltd.
- Needs to be considered as a new business venture to provide office space in the countryside (sub-let)
- Harm and restrict views of the Special Landscape Area
- Loss of agricultural land
- Inappropriate feature
- Damage is not outweighed by the benefits
- Out grown the site
- Flooding issues
- Better to relocate to more suitable site
- Dust issues
- Harm to amenity from noise and lighting
- Contrary to policies
- The site and surrounding area is unsustainable for this operation
- Long history of development without consent and breach of planning condition
- Increase in surface water runoff causing drainage problems
- Bridge not suitable for traffic
- Impact on landscape cannot be mitigated by landscaping scheme

Summary of support

- Office space is needed in regards to health and safety
- Good neighbours
- Benefit the business and help the business operate efficiently and safely
- Provide a good impression to visitors
- Current facilities inappropriate
- New industrial building will enclose dust and noise
- Supports businesses in Needham
- Production will not increase due to lack of storage and number of moulds.
- New facilities include shower room to promote cycling and walking to work
- Improve conditions for employees

ASSESSMENT

8. Principle of development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports economic growth in rural areas. Paragraph 28 of the NPPF details that to promote a strong rural economy local plan policies should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.

Policy E8 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998) accords with the NPPF and states that applications for industrial or commercial development involving extensions to existing premises, new buildings within an existing industrial curtilage, or the extension of an industrial curtilage, will normally receive favourable consideration. This is provided that the development is properly related to the character and appearance of its surroundings, would not create unacceptable environmental or traffic problems and would not conflict unduly with neighbouring residential amenity. In the countryside extensions to existing industrial or commercial premises should not adversely affect the landscape setting or wildlife features.

The site is occupied by Poundfield Products Ltd. Poundfield Products is a precast and pre-stressed concrete manufacturer producing products for mainly agricultural purposes. The business has been in operation for over 16 years and now employs 80 people.

Whilst the site is located within the countryside the development relates to the existing commercial operation of the site by providing a bespoke office building and providing covering to an outside production area. Consequently the principle of development is considered acceptable subject to the considerations detailed in policy E8 of the Local Plan.

The main planning considerations are therefore:

- Highways
- Drainage
- Residential Amenity
- Impact on Landscape
- Impact on Wildlife
- Impact on Listed Building

- Other Matters

Highways

The proposal is to re-organise the existing layout to reduce conflict between users of the site and the manufacturing process as required by the Health and Safety Executive. The layout will provide for a new car park and staff facilities replacing the existing temporary offices. The proposed new industrial building will sit adjacent to an existing industrial building. It does not result in further production space but will allow for increased efficiency where work undertaken outside will be undertaken inside.

The planning statement details that the proposal will not result in an increase of production processes. Nonetheless the proposal will inevitably lead to an increase in productivity allowing for more products to be manufactured regardless of weather. The proposal will as such result in an increase in traffic movements to and from the site. However this is considered to increase to a similar level produced during spring and summer. It is noted that the operating hours are restricted to 8am until 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays with no working on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Traffic movements are subsequently also restricted by these hours.

The site is close to the A14 however it is accessed by minor roads from Stowmarket and Needham Market. The development will utilise the existing access track which has good visibility splays. Consequently the site has suitable access for vehicular movements to and from the site. The car parking to be provided is appropriate to the level of staff and the new office building.

The Highways Authority has considered the proposal and raises no objection to the additional units. The development is not considered to risk harm to highways safety.

Drainage

The introduction of the car park and new office building will result in an increase in surface water runoff. Given the topography of the site soakaways will be required to control the surface water drainage as to avoid flood risk to other areas. Furthermore this should not drain towards the County Wildlife Site which is within 250m of the site. Details of this will be secured via condition.

The proposal will result in the creation of a private sewage treatment plant. The Environment Agency agrees this is an appropriate measure. Details of the plant shall be controlled via condition.

Residential Amenity

As detailed above the proposal will not result in the increase of production processes. The existing operation located outside will be within the proposed building. Consequently this is likely to result in an improvement to noise implications of the site.

The proposed new industrial building is over 600m from dwellings to the north-west and over 300m from properties to the north and east. The nearest properties are Grove Farmhouse and Orchard Lea. Orchard Lea is occupied by

a relatives associated with the Managing Director of the Company and Grove Farmhouse is occupied by an employee.

The Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection to the proposal provided that the existing business unit operates within the existing hours of operation and the noise limit is further controlled consistent with previous permissions.

The Environmental Health Officer has also recommended that the adjacent property Orchard Lea should be linked to the existing commercial operation. This would be through a legal agreement. This is recommended due to the potential noise disturbance from the new office building opening at 7am.

It is agreed that the use of the office car park at 7am could cause disturbance to neighbour amenity. However it is recommended that the opening hours of the office is also controlled to commence at 8am. A condition to restrict the office use hours will provide control in this respect and as no increase in processes and no material increase in traffic such that there would be no unacceptable harm.

Impact on Landscape

The new industrial building will be located within the Gipping Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA). The new office building is located outside of this area but will affect views from and into the SLA. The landscape officer has raised no objection to the proposal subject to conditions. However objection has been raised by residents, the parish council, neighbouring parish council and Suffolk Preservation Society in regards to the impact on the landscape.

It is recognised that the SLA is characterised by its gentle rolling character. However the location of the office building is in an area with prominent views of the commercial areas of Stowmarket and the A14 trunk road.

The office building has been designed to appear and reflect a complex of traditional Suffolk barns. Details such as varying roof heights, footprint, materials and roof pitch have all been appropriately incorporated. This is deemed in keeping with the rural and agricultural context.

The design and appearance to provide a bespoke building fit for purpose rather than the potential piecemeal development of office extensions and temporary units which is likely to have an unacceptable impact.

The offices will be in a prominent position given the topography however the building is of a good quality design as not to be considered incongruous. It will be viewed as a rural building wholly appropriate and in character to the traditional agricultural context and local vernacular.

It is located in a manner that it will stand-alone but will not appear isolated given the proximity of the existing buildings. The building has been positioned to sit within the northern corner utilising the existing access and allowing the building to sit comfortably on the site. Additionally it has been sited to limit views from Mill Lane of the existing commercial units and therefore enhance views into the special landscape area. It has been set back from the roadside as to retain a

level of openness experienced when travelling along Mill Lane. The fields to the north, north east, north west and south east will remain open.

The building cannot be located within the existing site without requiring significant expansion, re-configuration and alteration of the existing commercial area. The existing units are located within the SLA and land to the south is restricted by virtue of the river and the grade 2 listed building known as Grove Farmhouse. Additionally by locating the offices closer to the existing units the traditional design would sit in stark contrast with the modern industrial scale buildings.

The new industrial unit is located adjacent to existing buildings within the manufacturing area. It is orientated in a manner that only the flank ends will be visible from the footpath and road. This building is well screened by the existing landscape bund and will appear as a modern agricultural unit.

Subsequently whilst the proposal will affect the openness of the site the buildings have been positioned and designed to appear as either modern or traditional agricultural buildings. This is therefore considered to accord with policy CS5 of the Core Strategy where the proposal conserves local distinctiveness.

Impact on habitat

The proposal will not result in the loss of wildlife habitat. However any new external lighting could cause harm. Any proposed lighting shall be agreed via condition which provide adequate control to address harm.

Impact on Listed Building

This site lies within the setting of Grove Farmhouse, which is listed at grade II. The conservation issue to consider is the effect of the development on the setting and thus the significance of Grove Farmhouse as a designated heritage asset. The development includes a new industrial building to the north-west of the existing site, and a complex of office buildings on agricultural land between the existing site and Mill Lane.

The setting of Grove farmhouse is already much altered from the time when the farmhouse was the focal building of a working farm and includes a number of large, modern industrial buildings. These lie mostly to the north of the farmhouse, and the site for the new offices lies beyond these, even further to the north. The key view of the building from the footpath remains intact. The Listed Building is not clearly visible from Mill Road and is obscured by the existing units.

The Heritage Officer has advised that the proposal will lead to less than substantial harm; indeed this is likely to be minor. The industrial unit will not be viewed in context with the Listed Building being screened by the existing unit.

The provision of this office will allow temporary units to be removed thus adding an enhancement to the setting of the Listed Building. This improvement is considered to outweigh any harm caused by the new office building. Furthermore it is deemed that the design of the office building as a 'barn conversion' will complement the farm house indicating its former farming

connections.

The public benefit of the proposal is considered to outweigh the minor harm caused by an additional unit within the Listed Building's setting.

Other Matters

It has been argued by neighbours and the parish council that the site is an unsustainable location. However the proposal is an extension to an existing use and additional units to existing commercial premises is accepted by policy. It is accepted that travelling to and from this site would inevitably be by car. The site is close to both Needham Market (walking distance) and Stowmarket (cycling).

The business is viable and successful offering employment opportunities to the small rural communities. This is vital to supporting a rural economy. The business mainly produces products used for the purposes of agriculture and therefore does support the agricultural businesses and rural economy.

Overall given that this is an existing business use and supporting the local economy is the aim of paragraph 28 of the NPPF; and that the site does have alternative means of access the location is not considered to be unacceptable in this respect to warrant refusal.

Conclusion

In conclusion the proposal will support the expansion of a successful business which supports the rural economy. As required by Policy E8 this will not result in harm to the environment, traffic problems, adverse impact on neighbour amenity, the landscape nor will it harm wildlife. Consequently the proposal is deemed in accordance with the Local Plan and should be approved.

RECOMMENDATION

That Full Planning Permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Time limit**
- 2. Accord with approved plans**
- 3. Proposed site levels**
- 4. Drainage plan and details**
- 5. Provision of renewable energy sources**
- 6. Provision of area for manoeuvring and parking cars**
- 7. Hard and Soft Landscaping scheme**
- 8. Implementation of landscaping and replacement planting within 5 years**
- 9. Materials**
- 10. External Lighting**
- 11. Removal of temporary office accommodation**
- 12. Hours of operation**
- 13. Noise restriction**
- 14. Removal of permitted development to office**
- 15. Limit use of buildings to be associated with the B2 use of concrete manufacturing.**

Philip Isbell
Corporate Manager - Development Management

Rebecca Biggs
Planning Officer

APPENDIX A - PLANNING POLICIES

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

CSFR-FC1 - PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CSFR-FC1.1 - MID SUFFOLK APPROACH TO DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Cor2 - CS2 Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages
Cor5 - CS5 Mid Suffolks Environment
CSFR-FC3 - SUPPLY OF EMPLOYMENT LAND

2. Mid Suffolk Local Plan

GP1 - DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF DEVELOPMENT
CL2 - DEVELOPMENT WITHIN SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS
H17 - KEEPING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AWAY FROM POLLUTION
HB1 - PROTECTION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS
HB13 - PROTECTING ANCIENT MONUMENTS
H16 - PROTECTING EXISTING RESIDENTIAL AMENITY
CL11 - RETAINING HIGH QUALITY AGRICULTURAL LAND
E8 - EXTENSIONS TO INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PREMISES
E12 - GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR LOCATION, DESIGN AND LAYOUT
T9 - PARKING STANDARDS
T10 - HIGHWAY CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

3. Planning Policy Statements, Circulars & Other policy

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

APPENDIX B - NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of representation have been received from a total of **30** interested parties.

The following people **objected** to the application

[Redacted text block]

The following people **supported** the application:

[Redacted text block]