

AT Bone and Sons Limited

Earls Farm, Earls Lane, South Mimms, EN6 3LT

Design and Access incorporating Planning Statement

For the Construction of a New Agricultural Building at Earls Farm

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Design and Access incorporating Planning Statement is submitted to accompany an application in full for the construction of a new general purpose agricultural building.
- 1.2 The proposed development will be located at Earls Farm, Earls Lane, South Mimms, Herts, EN6 3LT. The application has been prepared by SBRice Limited on behalf of the applicants, AT Bone and Sons Ltd.
- 1.3 The application is in full and is accompanied by
- Design and Access incorporating Planning Statement
 - Agricultural Evaluation and Justification Report
 - Scaled plans and drawings.

2.0 THE PROPERTY

- 2.1 Earls Farm is located to the northeast of Ridge village and to the northwest of South Mimms, approximately 1.2km from South Mimms services. The farm is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and is opposite two residential properties known as 1 & 2 Earls Lane.
- 2.2 Redwell Wood, an ancient woodland and designated SSSI is located approx. 1.2km to the north of Earls Farm and Castle Lime Works Quarry SSSI is located approx. 2km to the northeast. Both of these designated areas are located on the opposite side of the M25 motorway.
- 2.3 AT Bone & Sons purchased Earls Farmyard and the adjoining 9Ha of land in 1999. Since that time, it has been farmed in association with their much larger farming operation based at Crossoaks Farm in Ridge. Crossoaks Farm is approximately 1 mile away to the southwest of Earls Farm via Deeves Hall Lane and Crossoaks Lane. AT Bone & Sons Ltd is a substantial and diverse farming enterprise which has been based at Crossoaks Farm since 1981
- 2.4 There are a range of existing buildings at Earls Farm including the farmhouse, stables complex with manege, agricultural buildings and buildings used for offices, workshop and storage.

2.5 The yard is served by an existing vehicular access off Earls Lane. The proposed location for the new building is within the existing farmyard.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

3.1 The proposal is to construct a new general purpose agricultural building that has been designed to provide storage for small bales of hay.

3.2 The Site Location Plan can be seen in **Appendix A** and the existing OS Plan is in **Appendix B**.

3.3 The development comprises one 240m² building measuring 10m x 24m, with a height to eaves of 4m and a ridge height of 5.838m. The steel portal frame will be clad with concrete panels to a height of 2m with olive green box profile steel above to eaves and on both gable ends. There will be a 5m wide roller shutter door and a personnel door on the western elevation and a single personnel door on the east elevation.

3.4 The building will be located behind the existing stable yard and will not be visible from the road.

3.5 The location of the proposed development in relation to the existing farmyard can be seen on drawing reference ATBoEF.AB-1-1-002PropSitePlan in **Appendix C**. Detailed drawings showing the elevations and floor plans of the buildings can be found on drawing reference ATBoEF.AB-1-2-001PropPlan+Elevs in **Appendix D**.

3.6 The existing access from the highway is already constructed to a high standard to serve the existing farmyard and does not require any upgrading or improvement.

4.0 PURPOSE OF DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

4.1 The Design and Access Statement illustrates that the applicants have fully considered the design issues associated with the proposed development. This is in accordance with section 9, part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

4.2 The Act advises that the Statement should cover

(a) The design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development;

- (b) The steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that concept into account;
- (c) The policy adopted as to access and how policies relating to access in relevant local development documents have been taken into account;
- (d) What, if any, consultation has been taken on issues relating to access to the development and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation;
- (e) How any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed.

4.3 This Statement is structured in accordance with “Design and Access Statements – How to Write, Read and Use Them” published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). It demonstrates the design process for the development and should be read in conjunction with the planning application, drawings and accompanying documents.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 Location

5.2 The site of the proposed new building lies within the existing farmyard at Earls Farm. The site postcode is EN6 3LT and centres at approximately X: 521623, Y: 200900, OS grid coordinates (National Grid) TL 21623 00900.

5.3 The application site falls under the jurisdiction of Hertsmere Borough Council and is located in designated Green Belt. To the north of the site lies Earls Lane, the public highway from which Earls Farm is accessed.

5.4 The closest residential properties are 1 & 2 Earls Lane which can be seen on the existing OS Plan in **Appendix B** and the farmhouse and converted barn which are owned by the applicants.

5.5 The proposed new building is located behind the existing stable yard and will not be visible from any residential properties. The location of the proposed new building in relation to the residential properties can be seen on the Site Location Plan in **Appendix A**.

5.6 The village of Ridge lies approximately 0.5km to the south and South Mimms is approximately 0.7km to the northeast on the opposite side of the M25.

5.7 The M25 motorway is only 160m from the farmyard.

5.8 **Physical Context**

5.9 The proposed location for the new building is to the south of the existing stable yard at Earls Farm. The site and surrounding area is level and is surrounded by mature trees and shrubs. As such, the existing farmyard is well contained within the landscape.

5.10 The farm is located within the Green Belt. There are no statutory designated sites within 1km of the application site. The closest Sites of Special Scientific Interest are located approximately 1.3km to the north at Redwell Wood and 2km to the northeast at Castle Lime Works Quarry.

5.11 Redwell Wood is an ancient woodland and heathland with well-developed scrub and secondary woodland with woodland rides running through it. Redwell Wood is on the opposite side of the M25 motorway and it is highly unlikely that it would be affected by the construction of a modest agricultural building.

5.12 Castle Lime Works Quarry is a disused and partly backfilled chalk quarry which received its designation due to the exposure of extensive piping in the top of the chalk layer. The disused quarry is 2km away to the northeast adjacent to the A1M and on the opposite side of the M25 from Earls Farm and as such, the quarry will be unaffected by the proposed development.

5.13 **Assessment of Potential Flood Risk.** - In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) all forms of flood risk need to be considered in relation to any development.

5.14 The Environment Agency's Indicative Flood Risk Map shows that the site lies completely in Flood Zone 1.

5.15 The Framework requires six types of flooding to be assessed which are;

- Fluvial flooding
- Flooding from the sea

- Flooding from land
 - Flooding from rising ground water
 - Flooding from blocked, overloaded or burst sewers or water mains
 - Flooding from reservoirs, canals or other artificial sources.
- 5.16 The fact that the site is located within Flood Zone 1 means that it is at extremely low risk of fluvial flooding (less than 1:1000) and therefore highly unlikely that the site will be adversely affected by fluvial flooding.
- 5.17 The site is located well inland on a ground level in excess of 100m AOD and therefore the risk of the site flooding from the sea is considered minimal.
- 5.18 Intense rainfall often of a short duration that is unable to soak into ground water or into drainage systems can quickly run off land and result in local flooding.
- 5.19 The site is largely surrounded by permeable agricultural land and therefore, in the majority of rainfall events, it is considered that water would either percolate into the topsoil and through to ground water or be lost through evaporation.
- 5.20 Ground water flooding will only occur when water levels in the ground rise above surface elevations and is most likely to occur in low lying areas underlain by permeable rocks containing aquifers.
- 5.21 Due to the topography of the site and the fact that the current land drains well, it is highly unlikely that the site would be subject to any risk of ground water flooding.
- 5.22 The fifth form of flooding that has to be considered is that caused by blocked, overloaded or burst sewers and water mains.
- 5.23 There are no sewers or water mains in the vicinity of the site considered to pose any significant flood risk to the site.
- 5.24 Finally, there are no reservoirs or artificial sources of water in the vicinity of the site considered to pose a flood risk to the site, and Environment Agency mapping indicates that the site is not at significant risk of flooding from any reservoir.
- 5.25 **Social Context**
- 5.26 The proposal is to construct a new agricultural building upon land that is wholly within the ownership of the applicants.

- 5.27 The proposed building is to be used predominantly for storing small bales of hay which will be used to meet demand from smallholders with livestock and horse owners. The applicants have identified that there is a strong market for hay sold in small bales which are easier to handle than the large bales that are now produced for large scale commercial agricultural use. Small bales attract a premium and the applicants are intending to expand their production of this type of bale.
- 5.28 The hay will be stored securely under cover in order to minimise the risk of arson
- 5.29 The building will help to ensure the long term economic viability of the farming business which currently employs at least 19 full time employees many of who live locally. The farm also employs up to 15 temporary staff at busier times of the year such as harvest and drilling. Providing secure storage for the hay within the new building forms part of a strategic plan to diversify the existing agricultural business which is essential to its ongoing economic viability and preservation of important rural employment opportunities.

6.0 EVALUATION

- 6.1 The site is located within and immediately to the south east of the existing farmyard at Earls Farm. The farmyard is well served with an existing highways access and other infrastructure associated with a working farmyard. The site lies within open countryside. .

7.0 DESIGN AND ACCESS

- 7.1 The application seeks
- 1 x general purpose agricultural building
- 7.2 The new building has been designed to provide modern storage facilities for small bale hay whilst taking into account the need to provide an efficient and safe working environment for their employees.
- 7.3 The design has also taken account of the potential impact of the development on the landscape and immediate environment surrounding the farmyard.
- 7.4 The construction of the new building will not require the removal of any existing vegetation.

- 7.5 The construction will not require any significant excavation, other than that normally associated with the construction of such a building such as foundations etc.
- 7.6 The iterative design process has involved an evaluation of several different locations at Earls Farm. This site has been chosen to ensure that the building is located as far away from existing residential properties as possible whilst ensuring that the building remains part of the existing farmyard.
- 7.7 The proposed location has been chosen to minimise the impact within the landscape and on the landscape character of the wider surrounding area.
- 7.8 The proposed new building has been designed to meet the specific requirements of its intended use and follows acknowledged and recognised agricultural building design principles and construction techniques.
- 7.9 The building will have a maximum height of 5.838m which is quite low for a modern agricultural building. It has been possible to keep the height to a minimum as the small bales that will be stored in the building do not by their very nature require very large agricultural machinery to move them, thus it will be possible to stack them in the building using smaller machinery with the bales stacked by hand in the traditional manner
- 7.10 The existing buildings in the yard are higher than the proposed new building; it will therefore be well contained within the yard and will not be visible in the wider landscape. Mature hedges surround the site of the new building, these hedges and small earth bund surround an area of yard that was previously used to stockpile manure/silage when livestock used to be kept at the farm. The hedge ensures that the building which is 5.8m high is fairly low will not be visible in the wider landscape. The dark green box profile steel cladding and matt dark grey roof will also help the building to blend in with the existing agricultural and equestrian development in the yard.
- 7.11 The western elevation of the building has a galvanised steel roller shutter door and a personnel door and there is a single personnel door on the eastern elevation.
- 7.12 The building will be of conventional construction with concrete panels to a height of 2m, with box profile steel cladding above to eaves and ridge level.

7.13 The box profile steel will be dark olive green in colour in order to blend into the surrounding landscape.

7.14 The roof of the building will be at a pitch of 20 degrees and will be finished in Marley Eternit Farmscape Anthracite Big Six profile roofing sheets. The Farmscape Anthracite roofing material has been designed with a dark grey matt finish that blends into the landscape.

8.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

8.1 The application site is located within the Green Belt. It is important to consider the application in the context of national and local planning policies, these include:

8.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

8.3 The NPPF was published and adopted as national planning policy guidance in February 2019. The NPPF clearly sets out the Government’s intention for any new development to be sustainable and clarifies the important role that planning has in ensuring the delivery of sustainable development.

8.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. When considering a proposal, Local Planning Authorities should approve development proposals that accord with the development plan or where the plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, grant permission unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

8.5 Section 6 of the Framework confirms that planning policies and decisions should **enable** both the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

8.6 The site is located within the Green Belt, as such section 13 of the Framework is relevant. In particular paragraph 145. This confirms that construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless they comply with one of the exceptions. The exceptions include buildings for agriculture or forestry. As the proposed building is for agricultural use, it complies with the requirements of paragraph 145.

8.7 Hertsmere Local Plan 2012-2027

8.8 The Hertsmere Local Plan comprises of a number of separate documents including the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2013 and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan which was adopted in 2016.

8.9 The policies within the Core Strategy that are relevant to this applications are SP1, Sustainable Development and CS13, Green Belt.

8.10 The Site Allocations and Development Plan policies SADM26 – Development Standards in the Green Belt, SADM27 – Diversification and development supporting the rural economy and SADM30 – Design Principles, are also relevant to this application.

9.0 **KEY PLANNING ISSUES**

9.1 The key issues are:

1. Impact on highways;
2. The principle of development in the Green Belt;

10.0 **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH PLANNING POLICY**

10.1 The farming business, which currently has approximately 2,590 hectares of land in arable, root cropping and grass is spread over an area between Luton and Hitchin, mostly to the south of the A505.

10.2 The key objective for the new building is to provide the existing farming business with modern, secure, undercover storage facilities. The principle use for the proposed building would be to provide secure storage for small bales of hay, the majority of which will be cut from fields surrounding Earls Farm and the neighbouring Crossoaks Farm. The hay will be delivered to the end user either by pickup for small loads, or by tractor and trailer for larger quantities.

10.3 The additional vehicle movements over and above those already associated with the operation of the existing business from Earls Farm will therefore be minimal.

10.4 The existing vehicular access from the farmyard onto Earls Lane is constructed to a high standard that already meets Highways requirements. The additional building will not require any

improvement to the existing access.

10.5 The other key issues relate to whether the building is appropriate development in the Green Belt and the effect it would have on the openness of the Green Belt.

10.6 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF confirms that

- *“A Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, exceptions to this are:
 - *Buildings for agriculture and forestry;”*.*

9.1 The proposed building provides storage facilities for an existing farming business.

9.2 The Basic Payment Scheme which subsidises farmers is gradually being phased out between 2021 and 2027. This drastic reduction in subsidies will mean the difference between profit and loss for a vast number of farms and has forced farmers to look at diversifying their operations so that they can optimise the use of all of their land and assets in order to become self-sufficient.

9.3 The Government has acknowledged the impact of removing farming subsidies and the need for farms to diversify by amending the wording of Section 6 of the Framework which now confirms that planning policies and decisions should **enable** both the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

9.4 The applicants have identified the small bale market as a viable opportunity to diversify and improve profitability from grassland which is losing government subsidy completely from 2027 and they require this proposed agricultural building in order to store the hay that they wish to produce.

9.5 The desire to become self-sufficient has seen an increase in the number of people growing their own vegetables and keeping small numbers of livestock. These small holders usually have limited storage space and do not own or operate large machinery for handling heavy hay bales. The wish to lead a more sustainable life means they tend to choose manual labour over machines.

- 9.6 In recent years farming equipment has got larger as farmers have had to scale up their operations in order to remain economically viable. As a result, hay bales have also got larger and these larger bales have to be moved around using large telehandlers.
- 9.7 The picture below shows how bale sizes have grown in recent years. Small bales are depicted as Conventional (Flat 8).



Figure 9.7 - Different bale sizes including Conventional (Flat 8).

- 9.8 Small bales measure approx. 450mm x 350mm x 1000mm and weigh approx. 20kg, they have two strings and can be moved around by hand. A Heston bale is equivalent to 10 small bales and weighs approx. 200kg.
- 9.9 Large Heston bales are suitable for large farming operations with large storage barns needing to feed herds of cattle and large flocks of sheep etc. Those farming operations have the large equipment required to handle the large bales and it is economically viable for them to do so. The figure below shows a large loader moving Mini Heston bales. Full size Heston Bales are even larger.



Figure 9.9 – Large machinery required for moving Mini Heston Bales.

- 9.10 Smallholders that keep small numbers of cattle, sheep and goats do not have the storage space required or the machinery needed to move large bales around. Horse owners that are not based on large livery yards have the same issue.
- 9.11 The fact that the small bales can be moved around by hand and stored in small buildings means that there is a high demand for them from smaller scale operators and as a result, they can attract a premium.
- 9.12 The applicants have identified this market and will invest in the equipment to produce the smaller bales for this lucrative market.
- 9.13 Small bales can vary in size depending on how compacted they are, but on average you can store 6-8 bales in a cubic metre. The proposed building, whilst modest in size at approx. 735m³ capacity, will be able to store between 4400 – 5880 small bales of hay when completely full.

- 9.14 On average, you can get approximately 250 small bales per hectare of grassland which means that in order to fill the barn, the applicants will need to be cutting between 18 – 24 ha (44 – 58 ac) of grass in order to fill the building.
- 9.15 The total area of grassland at Earls farm is approx. 9 ha which is grazed on rotation by the horses on livery at the yard or cut for hay. The hay is currently baled into Heston bales which are sold to other large farming operations. A plan of the grassland at Earls Farm can be found in Appendix E.
- 9.16 There are grass paddocks at Crossoaks Farm which are also used for the grazing of horses and mowing for hay. A plan of the land at Crossoaks farm can be found in Appendix F. Earls Farmyard is located less than 300m to the west of Deeves Hall Lane which is located to the North East of Crossoaks Farmyard.
- 9.17 The smaller equipment used for baling small bales lends itself to smaller paddocks used for grazing horses.
- 9.18 Once the subsidies are removed from the grassland in 2027, the rent from grazing or production of Heston baled hay alone does not make this land viable to maintain.
- 9.19 The provision of this building will allow the applicants to secure another revenue stream from the sale of small (conventional) bales of hay which sell at a significant premium. This new enterprise will make a small but valuable contribution to overall farm profitability.
- 9.20 As such, the building will help to ensure the long term economic viability of the grassland and the farming business which is a significant employer in the local area.
- 10.7 The proposal for agricultural development therefore complies with policy 145 of the NPPF and CS13 of the Hertsmere Local Plan.
- 10.8 We have also considered the proposed development in the context of compliance with Policy SP1 which is a strategic policy that sets out criteria that all developments should adhere to, however, many of them are not strictly relevant to the proposed agricultural building. We have already noted that the agricultural building will not constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt, it is of high quality design and appropriate in scale, appearance and function to its local

context, being agricultural in nature and forming part of an existing farmyard. The minor amount of roof surface run-off will drain to the existing farmyard drainage system which is dealt with in an efficient environmentally sustainable manner through the use of soakaways.

- 10.9 The proposed hay storage building will not generate any adverse impacts on the environment through increased generation of noise, dust, lighting, emissions or pollution and the proposal does not require the removal of any trees or hedgerows and is located within an existing farmyard. The proposal therefore complies with the requirements of policy SP1.
- 10.10 The building is not located in close proximity to residential dwellings. The closest residential properties are those to the north, however, these are separated by the existing substantial equestrian development, the building will not therefore be visible from the northern dwellings. The proposed storage activity will not generate any noise or dust that could present any issues with regard to residential amenity.
- 10.11 The closest residential properties to the South are located in in the village of Ridge some 320m away. The building is extremely unlikely to have any impact on these properties.
- 10.12 The applicants have also assessed the building for compliance with policies SADM26 & SADM30 within the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016. Agricultural buildings are designed to be functional rather than purely aesthetic. The building has been designed to match many other agricultural buildings that have been permitted in the Borough and is of the minimum scale for the required purpose.
- 10.13 The building is located within an existing farmyard in a location that provides sufficient access for the loading and unloading of the hay to be stored within the building. When considered in the context of policy SADM26, the proposed building fully complies.
- 10.14 Building has been designed to fulfil a functional need for the existing agricultural business and as such, it is compliant with policy SADM30
- 10.15 Paragraph 83 in the framework states that

- *“Planning policies and decisions should **enable***

(a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;

(b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.”

10.16 Policy SADM27 also confirms that proposals for the diversification of farm enterprises that involves the construction of buildings with no loss of good quality land will be supported. Therefore, both the Framework and the Council’s own Development Management Policies support the expansion and growth of farming businesses.

10.17 There are no public rights of way which will be affected by the development.

10.18 There are no Listed buildings in the vicinity of the development.

11.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The proposal is for a storage building at Earls Farm for use by the existing agricultural business.

11.2 The building will be 10m wide by 24m long, 4m to the eaves with a ridge of 5.838m.

11.3 The proposed building would be located within the existing farmyard at Earls Farm

11.4 The proposal has been considered in the context of relevant national and local planning policies, particularly those relating to agricultural land within the Green Belt

11.5 The proposed enterprise will have little or no impact on vehicle movements and access to the new building is via the existing farm access which is already designed to a high standard.

11.6 The building will not be visible from the road, the design has been carefully considered to be of an appropriate scale and construction and it has been carefully sited to ensure that it minimizes the impact on the landscape.

11.7 The phasing out and removal of farming subsidies in 2024 has forced farmers to review their land and assets and to diversify their operations in order to maximise the yield from all of the land in order for the farming business to survive. The applicants have identified a market which will

improve the profitability of their grassland and require a building for the storage of the small bales of hay that they are intending to produce from the grassland at Earls Farm.

Although development within the Green Belt is considered inappropriate there are certain exceptions, these include development that is necessary for agricultural purposes .

- 11.8 The proposal accords with the requirements of the relevant national and local planning policies and we dutifully request that planning permission is granted.