

Planning Statement

Proposed New Barn

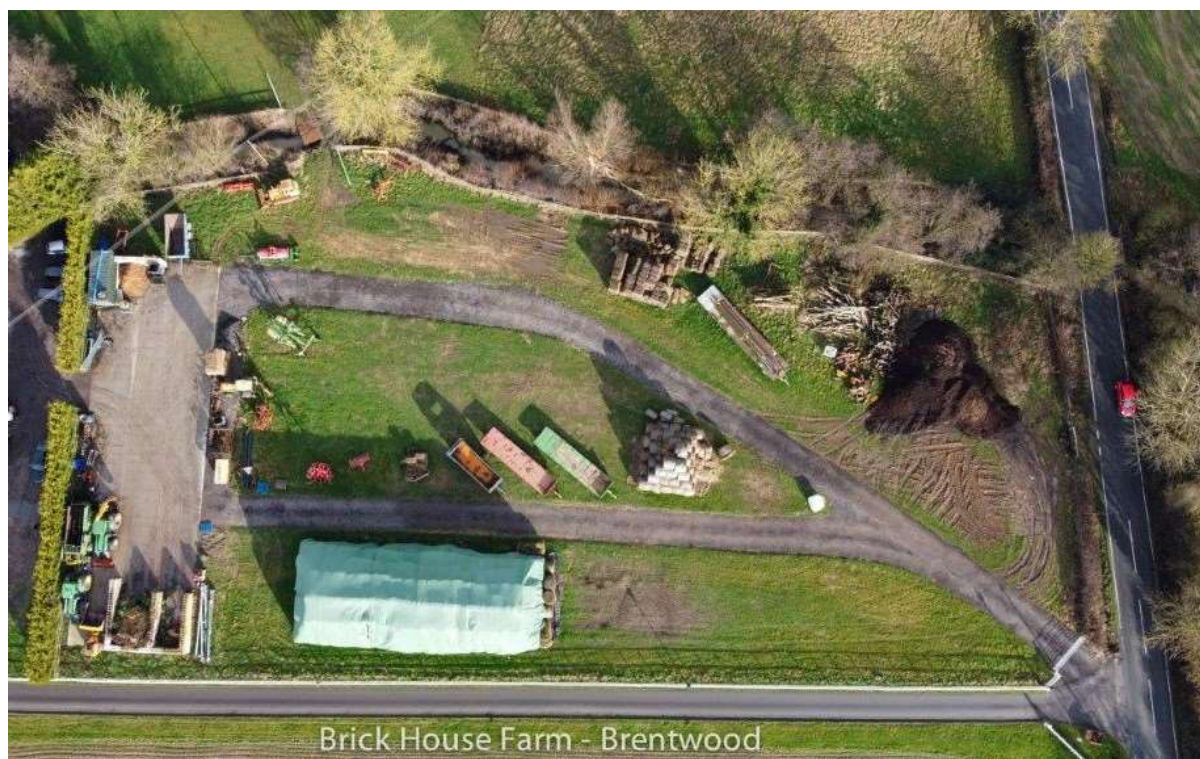
**Brickhouse Farm
Doddinghurst Road
Brentwood
Essex
CM15 0SG**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Whirledge and Nott have been instructed to prepare and submit a planning application for a new agricultural building at this site for the landowner, Mr Richard Bennett.
- 1.2 The agricultural unit at Brickhouse Farm has been owned and farmed by the Bennett family for some 60 years.

2 The site

- 2.1 The site is located within the administrative authority of Brentwood. It is located to the west of Doddinghurst Road immediately adjacent to the existing buildings on site.
- 2.2 The agricultural unit comprises some 150 acres growing 100 acres of wheat, barley, oats, beans and oil seed rape on rotation along with grassland.
- 2.3 The applicant has been seeking to obtain planning permission for new agricultural buildings since 2019 due to an urgent need for standard agricultural storage.



3 Planning History

- 3.1 21/00373/FUL. Construction of agricultural building and associated access and hard standing. Withdrawn.
- 3.2 20/00297/FUL. Construction of an agricultural building for the storage of hay and straw. Refused 11th May 2020.
- 3.3 20/00298/FUL. Construction of agricultural building for the storage of machinery, cereals, hay and straw. Refused 11th May 2020.
- 3.4 19/00051/AGR. Construction of a Class 2 Agricultural building for grain, machinery and straw storage.
Prior Approval Required
- 3.5 12/00300/LBC. Works to convert a barn to residential dwelling together with the conversion and use of an outbuilding for garaging.
Approved 21st May 2012.
- 3.6 09/00492/FUL. Change of use and conversion of barn to residential dwelling together with the conversion and use of an outbuilding for garaging (renewal of planning permission reference BRW/645/2002)

The applications 20/00297/FUL and 20/00298/FUL were refused for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposed agricultural building would appear unduly prominent from the main thoroughfare of Doddinghurst Road, and detract from the visual amenity of the area and open countryside setting, in conflict with policy CP1 (i) and (iii) of the local plan and paragraph 127 (c) of the NPPF, which states development proposals should be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.*
- 2. Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in harm to the historic character and setting of the adjacent designated heritage assets; 'Brickhouse Farmhouse' and 'Barn to the South West of Brickhouse Farm', contrary to local policy C16 and chapter 16 of the NPPF.*

Pre-application Advice

- 3.7 Following these refusals, pre-application advice was sought with regard to the visual impact and siting, with the heritage issues being addressed through the instruction of a heritage consultant.

- 3.8 In summary, the response to the pre-application advice enquiry was that whilst the principle of development was accepted, a proposal for an agricultural building would only be accepted by the Local Planning Authority if the building was located as close to the existing buildings on site as possible, which would require the building to be re-oriented. It was acknowledged that this would not be as efficient for farm purposes. An alternative site was discussed at the pre-application meeting, and the response in relation to this was as follows:

During the site meeting, it was also brought to the LPA attentions that another nearby field within the applicant's ownership was available and could potentially be used to site an agricultural building. Having viewed the alternate site, I would advise it is much more suitable, the field is large, set back from the road-side, is well screened by existing vegetation and has an existing access. I would advise the best siting for a building in this field would be set back some way from the roadside and any residential dwellings and ideally along the existing hedgerow. This proposal would result in less harm than a building at the proposed site, I would therefore advise this option is pursued.

- 3.9 As a result, a further application was submitted, application reference 21/00373/FUL, however this was also found to be unacceptable due to heritage and highways concerns and the application was subsequently withdrawn.
- 3.10 The outcome of the planning history set out above is that there is no other suitable location for the buildings required by the applicant, and as such the applicant has reverted back to the original site. The proposal has since been amended and the scale of the building has been reduced in order to minimise impact.

4 Justification for the Building - Siting

- 4.1 The building cannot be located at an alternative location due to the proximity of the land to the north of the farmhouse to the listed building, and cannot be accommodated within any of the existing buildings as these are old buildings which are not fit for purpose for modern day agricultural machinery or practices. The eaves height of the existing buildings are 3.65 metres which is not sufficient for modern day machinery.

Access

- 4.2 One of the main reasons for siting is access. As detailed on the plan the current access arrangement brings large agriculture vehicles closely past residential properties and the access route is far narrower and longer than the access to a new building. The current access used by large farm vehicles is located to the west of the site opposite Canterbury Tye which is on a bend with limited visibility. The access to the proposed site is shorter in length and direct to the building without heavy vehicles having to pass any residential properties.
- 4.3 The layout of the building in a north south orientation also enables vehicles to access the building more easily on site. The access proposed provides a one-way circular route for larger vehicles to avoid the need for turning in the yard area. The activity of loading and unloading crops will also be kept out of site from the road. If the building was to be orientated differently, as preferred in the pre-application response, then a significantly larger hard standing access area would be required to enable the efficient turning of hay and straw lorries and machinery.

Heritage Assets

- 4.4 The site at Brickhouse Farm has two listed buildings as shown marked with blue triangles on the map below.



Extract from Historic England Mapsearch

- 4.5 The proposed building has not been sited to the north west or south of the existing buildings as it is considered it would have a far greater impact on the Essex Barn which is a Grade 2 listed building.

Easement Restriction

- 4.6 The proposed building cannot be sited to the east of the site because of existing overhead electricity cables and the accompanying building restrictions. The line of the overhead line is shown on the accompanying plan. This is a further reason the building is orientated north/south on the site.

Agricultural Land Quality

- 4.7 The site of the proposed building is a poorer quality field than land to the north of the farm. The smaller size of the field makes it less economical to farm rather than the larger fields to the north. Furthermore the soil quality on the land to the rear is more suited to arable cropping and therefore more profitable for farming.

Current Use

- 4.8 The land is currently used for external storage of machinery equipment and hay currently stored under a tarpaulin because of the lack of suitable building space. The proposed building would enable machinery and equipment to be brought inside rather than stored outside further improving the visual impact of this area of the farm.

Flood Risk

- 4.9 The flood risk from the brook to the north and east of the site limits the siting of any new building to the north of the buildings and also to the north west behind the farmhouse.



[Extract of Flood Risk Map for Planning on gov.uk website](#)

Security

- 4.10 The orientation of the building increases the security of the buildings. By locating the access to the north of the site away from the roadside boundary there is less chance for opportunistic thieves to observe what is stored in the building, and the access into the building is more secure.

Landscape Impact

- 4.11 It is not considered that the siting of the building would be out of character in the rural landscape. The external materials and detailing have been selected to reflect and harmonise with existing farm buildings in the surrounding area. The nature of the materials proposed are standard materials for that of an agricultural building and as such it is not considered that the proposed building would appear out of context in the rural area.

5 Justification for the Building – Agricultural Need

- 5.1 There is currently no agricultural storage at Brickhouse Farm. Currently hay, straw and machinery is stored outside which leaves it susceptible to degradation and damage from the inclement weather. Agricultural buildings that are fit for modern day use are essential to the farming industry, and a farming business requires storage facilities in order to run efficiently and economically. Without appropriate storage a rural business cannot thrive as the produce cannot be stored appropriately and becomes devalued, and the machinery, which is a significant investment, is subject to wear and tear due to be stored outside in inclement weather.

- 5.2 Cereals are currently stored on a neighbouring farm, which is impractical and uneconomic for the business and results in additional traffic movements. This arrangement is however due to end in 2022 as the storage will no longer be available, and therefore there will be a further deficit in storage as there are 100 acres of arable land to farm which will require additional storage.
- 5.3 The changes arising out of Brexit and reductions in subsidy make it necessary to increase diversity of cropping to protect against market fluctuation and identify niche markets. This requires suitable storage which is capable of sub-division.

Farm Machinery

- 5.4 The proposed building will enable farm machinery to be parked more securely within a building on site rather than parked outside on open land which is not secure, leaving the applicant at risk of theft alongside damage to the machinery. The Applicant has already been subject to theft of a tractor and three tractor batteries being stolen from the site, and this further justifies the need for secure storage.

Hay and straw storage

- 5.5 This building would provide capacity for a proportion of the hay and straw storage required, however it would not be sufficient to store the majority of hay and straw.
- 5.6 Brick House Farm currently has no storage for hay, which is currently stored outside which is both impractical and uneconomic. The hay is currently cropped off 10 acres of grassland on site, however the applicants also contract farm other land (500-800 acres) where hay is also taken from.
- 5.7 In 2021 the business produced some 4900 bales of hay, straw and haylage all of which require storage.

Storage to Maximise Marketing

- 5.8 A premium is achieved for the crop if the applicant bales their own hay from the field compared with if the hay were to be sold direct from the field at harvest time or if a contractor were to bale and remove the hay. With a view of maximising farming returns, the applicant will store the hay for marketing so they have the ability to supply the produce when they consider the best market price can be achieved.

- 5.9 Dry and secure storage enables the crop to be kept on site prior to sale. The hay price at harvest time is invariably lower than later on in the year due to supply and demand and it often pays for the farmer to store the crop. By way of an example the difference between the sale price of good hay in the summer and good hay the following spring is usually in the order of £60/ tonne. When the farm is selling on average 1000 tonnes per annum this can make a difference of £60,000 to profit margins which is significant at a time when commodity prices are depressed.

Maintaining Quality

- 5.10 Like any harvested commodity the quality of the product is important. Harvested hay needs to be maintained in a good condition to ensure it can be sold for the best price. Storage of hay and straw outside in large stacks results in a loss of quality to the external bales in the stack. Wet weather deteriorates the hay and straw and damaged bales cannot be sold. Wet hay and straw will then need to be removed from site and disposed of which is an additional cost to the business. There is a great deal of unnecessary waste in the hay and straw supply chain, as the top bales on these stacks will be ruined after November in a typical winter.

Arson risk

- 5.11 It is important that hay and straw can be stored in an environment where there is minimal risk of arson. Stacking bales outside or in open barns poses a fire risk. Increasingly the police and insurers are asking for combustible crops to be stored in buildings rather than in open stacks.
- 5.12 Since the applicant started the process of trying to obtain planning permission for new agricultural buildings, he has suffered further monetary loss due to the lack of storage available as a result of the deterioration of produce being stored outside, and due to theft of farm machinery.

6 Proposal

- 6.1 The application is for a steel portal framed agricultural building measuring 16.36m x 24.384m. The building will be used in the farm business for the storage of farm machinery, hay and straw.
- 6.2 The building would have an eaves height of 6.1m and a ridge height of 7.210m, a reduction in height from the previous application of approximately 1.2m and to match the height of the existing buildings at Brickhouse Farm.

7 Planning Policy

National Policy

- 7.1 National Planning Policy sets out a clear presumption against inappropriate development subject to 6 exceptions. One of these exceptions is that the buildings are required for agriculture or forestry. By definition this proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt as it is essential for the purposes of agriculture.
- 7.2 The NPPF supports economic growth in rural areas to promote a strong rural economy. Paragraph 83 confirms that the plans should promote the development and diversification of agriculture. The ability to store the hay crop beyond the harvest period makes a significant difference to the profitability levels of the farm business. It is also critical that the hay is maintained in the correct condition to prevent a reduction in quality to be able to obtain premium prices.

Local Policy

- 7.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.4 The site is located within the administrative boundary of Brentwood Borough Council. The Brentwood Replacement Local Plan (2005) is the current adopted Development Plan and provides the basis for determining planning applications within the Borough.

Relevant Policies

- GB1 New Development
- GB2 Development Criteria
- GB14 Agricultural Buildings

Emerging Local Policy

- 7.5 Brentwood Borough Council is in the process of consulting with stakeholders for the creation of a new Local Plan that will cover a 20 year period between 2013 and 2033. The Plan sets out the aspirations of Brentwood Borough Council including policies, proposals and site allocations to shape development in the Borough. The plan has reached an advanced stage and therefore some weight can be given to the policies within this document. The relevant policies to this application are set out below:

- Policy NE10: New Development, Extension And Replacement Of Buildings In the Green Belt

8 Planning Assessment

- 8.1 As set out above, this proposal is in accordance with National and Local Planning Policy and therefore the principle of development should be supported. The agricultural and siting justification has been clearly set out and careful consideration has been given to the location of the facility having regard for landscaping and impact on nearby dwellings.
- 8.2 The building is a standard steel portal framed building that has been designed to accommodate its intended agricultural use. New buildings for agriculture are considered acceptable within the Green Belt, the proposed design of a typical agricultural building would be entirely in keeping with the rural landscape. The colour of the building has been designed to be consistent with other agricultural buildings in the area to ensure that it does not appear out of character.

Siting

- 8.3 The building is located having regard to surrounding landscape appearance and sits in the context of the farmyard albeit it is set to the east of the existing buildings on site. This site is currently used for outside storage of farm equipment and hay and is therefore in the same use as proposed.
- 8.4 The building cannot be sited vertically within the site as the size of the building would not be accommodated when oriented this way due to a power line which runs along the northern boundary of the site.
- 8.5 It is not, however, considered that the siting of the building would be out of character in the rural landscape. The external materials and detailing have been selected to reflect and harmonise with existing farm buildings in the surrounding area. The nature of the materials proposed are standard materials for that of an agricultural building and as such it is not considered that the proposed building would appear out of context in the rural area. Whilst not sited immediately adjacent to the existing buildings due to the reasons stated above, it is sited as close as possible when taking into account the site constraints and practicalities of its intended use. The overall impact of the new building will be merged into the existing block of development whilst having regard for access and impact on residential amenity, which would be compromised should an alternative site be sought.

Landscape Impact

- 8.6 The main concern in relation to the previous application related to the impact on the visual amenity of the area when viewed from Doddinghurst Road, with the report stating that it *'would appear unduly prominent from the main thoroughfare of Doddinghurst Road, and detract from the visual amenity of the area and erode the pleasant and attractive countryside setting'*.

- 8.7 Photographs have been provided in Appendix 1, taken in September 2021, which show the visibility of the site from Doddinghurst Road. The map included in Appendix 1 shows the route that the photographs were taken from. From these photographs, it is clear that the site is not in open view for the majority of the route, and whilst some glimpse of the farm can be seen through the hedge and tree boundary (photographs 1 and 7), it is not prominent and furthermore, the area in view is mostly the northern part of the site and the area to the north which includes the farmhouse and existing buildings, and not the part of the site that relates to this planning application.
- 8.8 As the approach to the site nears the stud farm opposite, the hedging clears and the site becomes prominent (photograph 9). It is not considered that the proposed building would be out of character with the landscape when viewed from this position as it is viewed within the wider context of the farm and associated buildings and is bound to the north by mature trees, which in any case prevent an extended view past the proposed building.
- 8.9 When viewed from the north of the site along Doddinghurst Road (photograph 10), there is very little, if not no visibility of the site due to the higher elevation at this point in relation to the application site, in addition to the tree and hedge boundary to the north of the application site.
- 8.10 The proposal cannot, therefore, be considered prominent when viewed from this main thoroughfare and as a result it does not detract from the visual amenity of the area, nor does it erode the pleasant and attractive countryside setting. The site is not visible for the majority of the route, and whilst it does come into view when the established boundary ends some 70 metres before the entrance to the site, this short distance is not considered to be significant when taking the visual impact into account.

Heritage

- 8.11 A heritage report has been prepared in association with this application. In summary, the report finds that the impact to the character and appearance of the listed buildings is considered to be minimal because the creation of a modern agricultural building in the rural landscape is not an incongruous feature. The proposed building will be constructed of materials that will blend with the surrounding landscape.
- 8.12 The proposed agricultural development will have a low impact to the setting of the listed buildings. This impact is considered to be less than substantial harm, at the lower end of the scale, in the test provided by the NPPF. Public benefit is needed to overcome the harm, and this is provided by the development of a new agricultural building, which will contribute to the growth of the rural economy and the management of the agricultural land for the production of commodities for the benefit of the population.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 National and local planning policy outlines support for the rural economy and defines agricultural development as appropriate development in the Green Belt. In particular new buildings for agriculture are considered appropriate development in the Green Belt, and therefore their appearance has been considered to be in keeping with open countryside settings as a result. Whilst siting is a consideration when assessing any application, this statement clearly sets out the justification for the proposed building in this location.

- 9.2 Explicit support for the rural economy is set out in both local and national planning policy. This application supports a justified need for an agricultural business which is currently disadvantaged due to the lack of suitable storage. The proposed building is essential for agricultural purposes; to improve the efficiency of the existing farm business and support its continuous development and expansion. Without appropriate storage, the farming business will be unable to run efficiently and the long term viability of the business will be hindered.
- 9.3 The proposed development has been sited on land currently used for farm machinery storage to minimise any impact on the landscape.
- 9.4 A supporting heritage statement has been provided which confirms that the proposed development would be acceptable in relation to the nearby heritage assets.
- 9.5 This proposal is appropriate development and should be supported.

Appendix 1

The photographs provided in this appendix were taken on the 28th September 2021 and are intended to serve as a demonstration of the visual impact that the proposed building would have when viewed from Doddinghurst Road.

Photographs 1-8 were taken along the route shown on the map extract below.

Photographs 9 and 10 have been annotated individually.

Plan showing route taken for photographs 1-8



Photograph 1



Photograph 2



Photograph 3



Photograph 4



Photograph 5



Photograph 6



Photograph 7



Photograph 8



Photograph 9 – taken from the entrance of Graytoni Stud Farm to the south east of the farm entrance.



Photograph 10 - Taken from the north of the site on Doddinghurst Road, looking towards the site to the south.



