

MANOR FARM, CHURCH ROAD, BATTISFORD

Planning application for the erection of a crop / machinery store and farm office including construction of concrete hardstanding and vehicular access to Church Road

PLANNING STATEMENT

on behalf of

Georgina Knock & James Knock

TIM HARBORD ASSOCIATES
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANCY

2 RIVISH LANE, LONG MELFORD,
SUDBURY, SUFFOLK, CO10 9TH

Tel: 07909 968412

E-mail: timharbord3@gmail.com

Ref: TP/1516/TDH

Date: December 2022

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1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 Originally the two buildings proposed in this planning application were submitted as 'Prior Notifications' but it has been determined that this procedure cannot apply as the buildings would be within the 3 kilometres of Wattisham Airfield, within which limit buildings over 3 metres tall cannot benefit from permitted development rights.
- 1.2 Manor Farm is located on the north side of Church Road, Battisford, serving an agricultural unit of some 112.2 hectares. The site of the proposed development is situated in the south-west corner of the field that abuts the eastern boundary to the farm complex. It lies to the east of the grade II listed St John's Manor House and what remains of a medieval moated site from which it is visually screened by mature trees within the grounds of, and on the boundary to, the Manor House.
- 1.3 Some 185 metres to the east of the site, fronting Church Road, is a pair of Grade II listed cottages (Kestrel Cottage and Willow Cottage).
- 1.4 The farm track that runs alongside the above cottages and borders the eastern edge of the field is also a public right of way.
- 1.5 Until recently the farmyard on the west side of St. John's Manor House was populated by several livestock buildings dating largely from the 1980s / 1990s and which were used in the Applicant's pig rearing operation. Following cessation of this part of the business this the site is being currently redeveloped with 6 dwellings pursuant to a planning permission granted in December 2021 (LPA ref: DC/21/03639).
- 1.6 In the north-east corner of the yard is a functioning grain store that was erected in 1986. As part of the redevelopment of the yard permission has been granted for the demolition of a substantial part of this building and the erection of new B1 commercial buildings (Reserved matters approved in January 2022 (LPA ref: DC/21/06116). However, whilst the Applicants have no intention of resurrecting the pig rearing enterprise, they need to make alternative provision for crop storage before the existing grain store can be demolished.

- 1.7 The site is neither located within a conservation area nor an area of enhanced landscape importance.
- 1.8 The aerial view below, extracted from Google Earth, shows much of the overall context described above, as Manor Farm existed in 2020, prior to the commencement of the housing development.



Aerial view extracted from Google Earth, showing Manor Farm and its relationship to the site in 2020 prior to the commencement of the housing development. The modern pig sheds can be seen on the left side of the aerial view with the grain store in the north-east corner of the yard.

The application site is located on the righthand side of the aerial view, above the Church Road annotation and where the roof of an existing small building is visible.

2.0 THE SITE

- 2.1 The site is already roughly surfaced and used for storage in association with the farming operation. The upper photograph below is taken looking south across the rear of the site towards Church Road. The bottom photograph looks eastwards across the site with the outbuilding in the garden of Kestrel Cottage just visible in the distance.



2.2 The top photograph below, taken in early September from the track bordering the eastern edge of the field, looks westwards towards the site and the background of mature tree planting that's screens it from St. John's Manor House. The bottom photograph, taken in early December from the track, demonstrates that the tree cover between the Manor House and the field remains an effective screen to the house and its grounds, as well as a backcloth to the proposed development.



3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The application is for two buildings to provide, a crop store and separately, a small farm office and machinery store, both sited on a new concrete pad in the south-west corner of the field adjacent to the existing buildings at Manor Farm. Access to the site will be via a new access which will be constructed to meet Suffolk County Council's highway requirements. The Proposed Site Layout shows that splays of 2.4m x 90m in each direction, commensurate with those approved for the new housing development and retained agricultural store on the yard under development, can be accommodated without affecting the hedgerow behind the verge bordering Church Road. The Site Location Plan shows that, in practice, longer sightlines than these are available in both directions without affecting the hedgerow.
- 3.2 The new access will require removal of overgrown hedgerow solely sufficient to accommodate the width of the improved access. The tree shown on the topographical survey as growing immediately to the west of the access is a dead ash.
- 3.3 The existing field access in the south-west corner of the field will be closed off using an indigenous mix of hedgerow plants, as per the new hedge proposed along the eastern boundary of the site.
- 3.4 The crop store will have a floorspace of 387.5 square metres (measuring 15.5 metres x 25 metres) and will be constructed using a steel frame recycled from one of the demolished pig sheds in line with the Applicants' sustainability objectives. The building will stand 4.85 metres in height to the eaves and 7.075 metres to the ridge. Unlike many modern grain stores it will be clad with black stained weatherboarding to reflect traditional Suffolk farm buildings and will be roofed with black box profile metal sheets. Solar panels will be attached to the east and west facing roof slopes.
- 3.5 The smaller office and machinery store, measuring 10.6 metres x 6.4 metres will be similarly clad in black stained weatherboarding, but roofed in clay pantiles. It will stand 3.15 metres to the eaves and 6.775 metres to the ridge.

- 3.6 The concrete pad and access will be finished in eco concrete i.e. concrete mixed using recycled aggregate.

- 3.7 The site will be secured by a 1.8 m. black steel mesh fence and a new hedge comprising indigenous species is proposed alongside the eastern boundary (see Proposed Site Plan and submitted details of fence).

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should enable the development of agricultural businesses (paragraph 83).

4.1.2 Other parts of the NPPF advise on the need to conserve the natural and historic environment, including the need to protect biodiversity (sections 15 and 16).

4.2 Mid Suffolk Core Strategy 2008

4.2. Policy CS2 includes agricultural development in the categories of development that are allowable, in principle, in the countryside.

4.2.2 Policy CS5 encourages development that is consistent with conserving the overall character of the landscape and requires that development be of a high-quality design that respects the local distinctiveness and built heritage of Mid Suffolk.

4.3 Mid Suffolk Local Plan 1998 (saved policies)

4.3.1 Policy CL13 advises that new agricultural buildings should normally be sited within or adjacent to existing farm building groups and be sympathetically related to them in style, size and use of materials. Regard should be had to their effect on the visual amenity of the landscape and a scheme of landscaping should be prepared as part of any development.

4.3.2 Policy CL14 requires the colour, texture and use of materials to be carefully selected to be sympathetic to their setting.

4.3.3 Policy HB1 advises that particular attention will be given to protecting the setting of listed buildings.

4.4 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan – Pre-Submission (reg 19) Document, November 2020

- 4.4.1 The leading policy on new agricultural buildings (policy LP24) requires that appropriate and demonstrable evidence must be submitted for proposals that are remote, isolated or detached within the countryside.

This provision does not apply to the current proposal which is well related to the existing, long-established farmstead.

Part 2 of the policy states that all relevant planning applications will be subject to the following considerations:-

- a) The suitability and sustainability of the location proposed (including access and surrounding road networks).
- b) The nature of any proposals in the locality and its relationship and impacts with surroundings (including but not limited to landscape, design and amenity, habitats sites and protected species, heritage assets and their settings).
- c) Proposals within rural areas must provide safe access. It must be demonstrated that such proposal would not cause significant levels of traffic, particularly lorries/HGVs on rural roads.

- 4.4.2 Other relevant policies include:-

Policy LP19 – protecting and enhancing landscape character;

Policy LP21 – protecting of heritage assets;

Policy LP18 – protecting biodiversity, in particular protected species;

Policy LP17- preventing, or where not practicable, reducing all forms of pollution including from noise and light.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 The principle of erecting a new agricultural building needed by the established farm business is allowed for in both national and local planning policies. In this case the key detailed issues are considered to be:-

- any impact on the landscape / visual impact;
- impact on any protected species;
- any impact on heritage assets in the local area; and

5.2 It is of note than none of the above issues, nor any other material planning issue were stated as a reason for rejection of the two preceding prior notifications. In his delegated report the case officer concluded that:

- the buildings' siting was acceptable; and
- the proposed materials were suitable, as were their overall size and scale.

In the above respects this application makes no changes.

5.3 Landscape/Visual Impact

5.3.1 The site does not lie in countryside with any special status. Both buildings are small and low profile. They will be clad with black stained weatherboarding to reflect traditional Suffolk farm buildings. The use of black sheeting on the barn and clay pantiles on the farm office will enhance their traditional appearance and mitigate any impact from the public footpath bordering the eastern boundary to the field. Further mitigation will be provided in the form of the new hedge, composed of indigenous species planted alongside the eastern boundary to the site.

5.4 Biodiversity

5.4.1 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) concluded as follows:

- (i) at the time of survey, the proposed construction zone supported common and widespread habitats which were of low-negligible in ecological value. No signs or evidence of protected, priority or rare species were identified;

- (ii) however, great crested newts have been confirmed from the adjacent Moat and a nearby pond requiring the Applicant to provide any necessary mitigation. In this respect he has applied to join Natural England's District Level Licence (DLL) scheme to fund off site mitigation;
- (iii) the risk of significant impact to any other protected or notable species was considered low-negligible; and
- (iv) further ecological surveys are considered unnecessary.

5.4.2 The recommendations in Section 5. Setting out 'Impact Avoidance Precautionary Measures' during construction work and biodiversity enhancements in the operational phase will be followed. There will be additional biodiversity enhancement provided by the proposed hedge abutting the site's eastern boundary

5.4.3 Further to 5.4.1(ii) above Natural England have counter-signed the Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate and advised that this may be submitted to the local planning authority in support of the application on the site detailed in the Certificate.

5.5 Heritage Assets

5.5.1 The impact on the setting of heritage assets was not raised as an issue in the officer's previous delegated report. St John's Manor House, grade II listed, is visually screened by mature trees within the grounds of, and on the boundary to, the Manor House. The photograph on the following page was taken in early December from within the grounds to the Manor House and looking towards the site, so demonstrating the effectiveness of the afore-mentioned screen, even during winter months.



5.4.2 The photographs on page 4 demonstrate that it will not be possible to appreciate the development in the context of the Manor House.

5.4.3 The pair of Grade II listed cottages (Kestrel Cottage and Willow Cottage) are some 185 metres away to the east and the site has no historical connection to their setting (see photograph at the bottom of page3) The degree of separation, the low visual impact of the buildings and the new hedge planting will ensure that there is no unacceptable impact on their setting.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 In conclusion, the assessment demonstrates that this proposal complies with both the Council's and national planning policies in that:-

- (i) the proposal is required for an existing agricultural operation based at Manor Farm;
- (ii) the siting, design and scale of the buildings will respect the character of the surrounding landscape as has been already accepted in the officer's previous assessment of the Prior Notification;
- (iii) the building would not have an adverse impact on the setting of St. John's Manor House or the two cottages to the east (Kestrel Cottage and Willow Cottage); and
- (iv) subject following the advice in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal there would be no adverse impacts on protected species.