



Bourne Valley Associates Ltd

Planning Statement

For a proposed Grain & Fertiliser Store

for

Abbotts Ann Farming Ltd

at

Oakcuts Farm, Stockbridge Road,

Redrice, Hants SP11 7PQ

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Page 1 of 16
Issue 1

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Site Context	3
2.1. The Applicant	3
2.2. The Application Site	4
2.3. Requirement for Development.....	5
3. Design	6
3.1. Introduction	6
3.2. Amount/scale.....	7
3.3. Appearance.....	8
3.4. Precedent.....	8
4. Landscape Impact	8
5. Access and Traffic Generation	10
6. Ecology.....	10
7. Flood Risk Assessment.....	10
8. Noise	11
9. Planning Policy.....	11
9.1 Introduction.....	11
9.2. Government policy - The National Planning Policy Framework.	11
9.3. Local Planning Policy.....	14
9.4. Supplementary Planning Documents - Landscape Character Assessment	15
10. Conclusion.....	16



1. Introduction

This Statement accompanies and supports a planning application made to Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC). The application relates to the proposed construction of a grain and fertiliser store on agricultural land at Oakcuts Farm, Stockbridge Road, Redrice, Hants SP11 7PQ. The application site lies to the South of Red Rice within a countryside location. The application is made on behalf of the Trustees of Lord Weinstock Will Trust, owner of the Abbotts Ann Estate, of which the farming enterprise – operated by Abbotts Ann Farming Ltd – extends over just over 1,000 hectares (2,500 acres) of agricultural land.

2. Site Context

2.1. The Applicant

Abbotts Ann Farming Limited is a substantial farming enterprise, operating out of three farm bases – at Eastover Farm (Abbotts Ann), Oakcuts Farm (Red Rice) and Benham Drive Farm (Middle Wallop). All three farm holdings are self-equipped with their own grain and fertiliser storage, and operate with their own arable rotation policies. Oakcuts Farm, which extends to approx. 1,076 acres and includes 888 acres of farmland – is situated at Red Rice, south of Andover, as indicated approximately on the geographic plan at Figure 1. This is a rural location, with the farm buildings being relatively central to that block of land, which spans Stockbridge Road. The aerial image in Figure 2 shows both Oakcuts Farm shown by the blue arrow, and the proposed location of the grain store, marked by a red arrow.

The Location Plan reference 02620-00-A sheet 01 shows the boundary marked as the blue line, outlining a proportion of the land holding. The red line shows the proposed location of the grain store.



Figure 1 - Application site

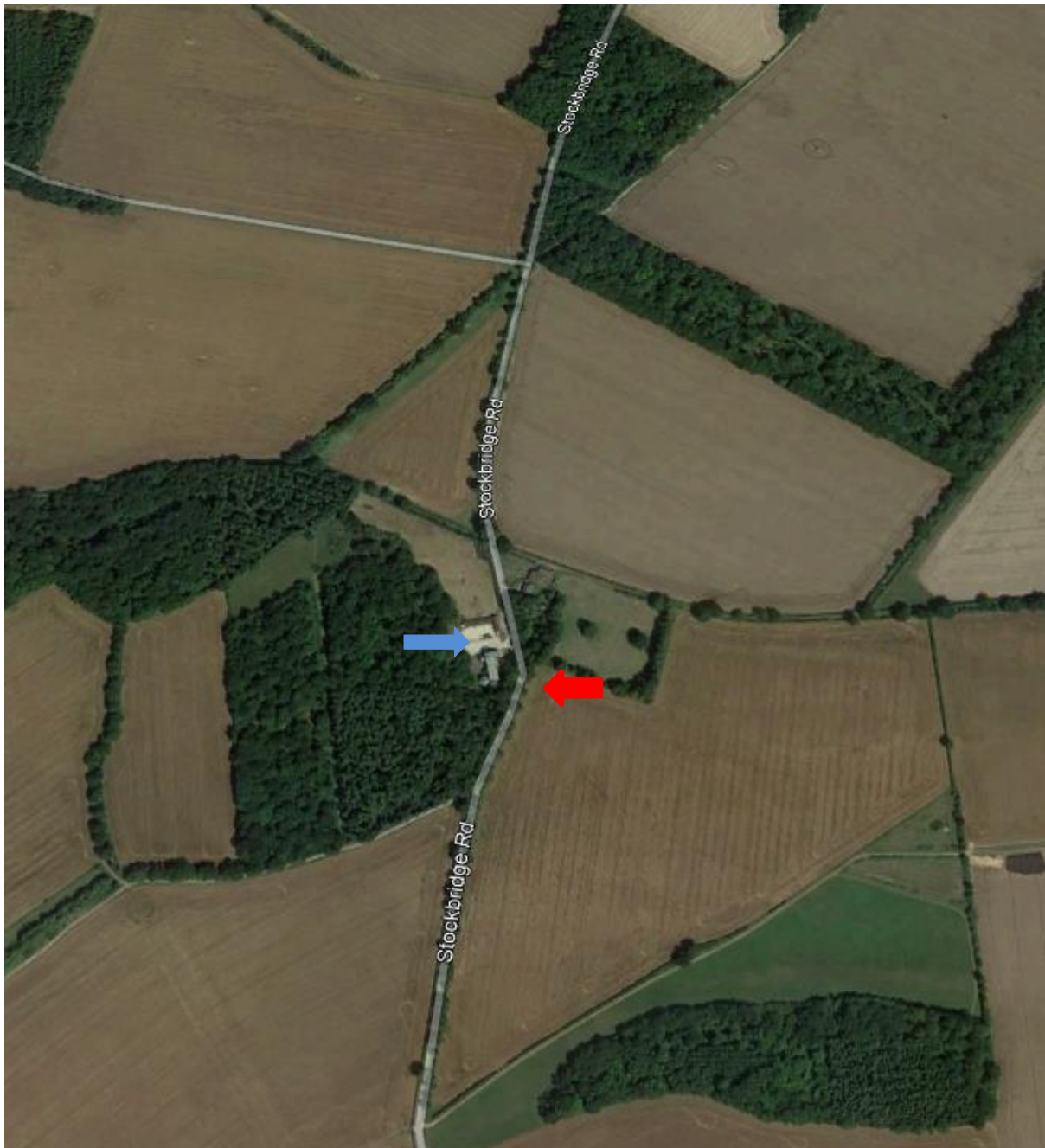


Figure 2 - Site Location Aerial Image

2.2. The Application Site

The proposed location of the grain store is shown by the arrows in Figure 2. This site clearly has good access onto Stockbridge Road, with better visibility than the existing farm building complex across the road. The arable nature of the area is evident from the photograph. The existing farm buildings at Oakcuts Farm can be seen opposite the proposed site. Lower Oakcuts Copse woodland is also visible surrounding the existing farm.

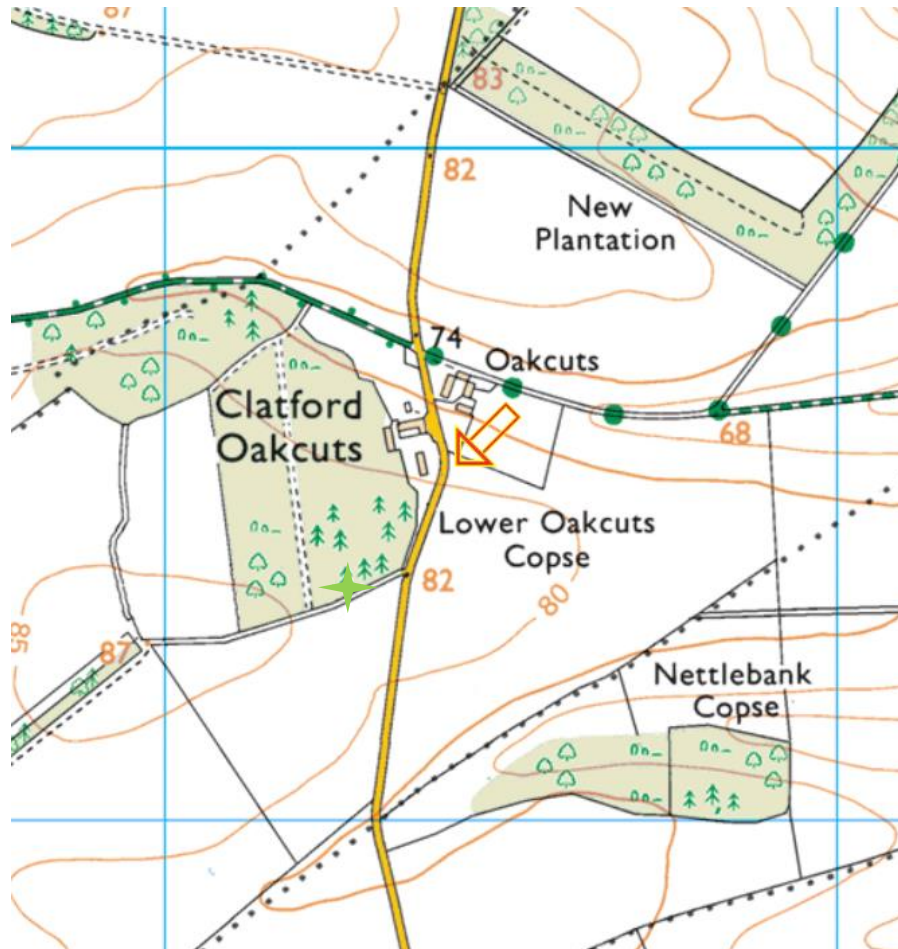


Figure 3 - Application site in its geographic setting

Figure 3 shows a more detailed map of the proposed siting for the grain store in relation to the existing farm site and the neighbouring properties.

2.3. Requirement for Development

The current grain storage and fertiliser storage facilities at Oakcuts Farm are woefully inadequate. The existing grain store was built in the 1980's and is therefore some 40 years old. The building contains 10 x 100T grain storage bins and 6 x 50T storage bins, which are small and slow to empty, requiring employees to shovel out the last bits of grain in each bin, which is unacceptable for Health & Safety reasons in today's world. There are also two round steel grain storage bins, one of capacity 650T and the other 500T, and two wet grain holding bins, each of capacity 40T. Accordingly, the total capacity is approximately 2,500T. Adjacent to the grain store and located externally, is a large continuous flow grain dryer which, when new, would have had a theoretical capacity of approximately 10T/hour. In practice, the throughput of grain depends on the moisture content of that grain, and might now range from 5-8T per hour. This is well short of what is required. Given that the combine is likely to be cutting 40T per hour or more of grain, this is the necessary speed at which the grain needs to be dried and then elevated and conveyed into the grain store, in order for the combine to be in continual use. Clearly, this is impossible, thus large heaps of grain have to be stored on the open concrete outside the building during combining hours, with staff then working long hours to gradually work



through the pile and bring it into the store, which makes the whole operation very susceptible to weather change. The system relies on a great many moving parts – with grain needing to be transported through elevator and conveyor into the dryer, then through the dryer, then up through another elevator and along other conveyors to eventually discharge into the relevant grain storage bin.

The metalwork on all of these elevators and conveyors and the electrics are approaching the end of their effective life, and therefore will soon need substantial replacement, but it would be wholly inappropriate to invest in replacement outdated technology, when far less labour, machinery and energy intensive alternatives are available. It is also noteworthy that the bins within the grain store rely on ladders and platforms for human access, not only for checking the grain and directing it into the appropriate bins, but also for maintenance purposes (such as greasing, repairing or changing gearings), and for cleaning. This is all very unsatisfactory from a Health & Safety perspective in today's world, and it is relevant that modern grain stores do not operate on this type of design.

To the west of the grain store is an old Dutch Barn, being an open-fronted steel-framed storage barn with asbestos roof, which is used for the storage of fertiliser. This again is unsatisfactory, with nitrogen fertiliser being a possible component of explosives, and it would be far better for the fertiliser to be stored within a locked building with a solid concrete floor and good levels of security.

This is a justifiable agricultural development warranting a location in the countryside. There are many such similar developments on farms within Test Valley Borough. In order for this farm enterprise to compete, and to provide the food that the UK population deserves, it needs to utilise modern machinery and modern, well-designed buildings such as this.

3. Design

3.1. Introduction

Noting the comments in the previous section, the proposal is to cease using the existing grain store once the new store has been constructed. The new store will be of a much simpler design, namely an on-floor grain store with ventilated drying and cooling facilities. In effect, the grain store will be a replica of the grain store which was constructed at Eastover Farm 10 years ago – planning ref. 112/02604/FULLN. For such a design, there are minimal moving parts – grain drying fans located to the rear of the building concerned, supplemented by gas heating where necessary, which blows warm/cool air through ventilated floors underneath the grain, which air then serves to dry the grain. The process is enhanced by a mechanical stirrer which helps to stir the grain in each compartment, this located internally within the building. The new store will be far better sealed with regard to keeping vermin out of the building, particularly rats/mice, but also birds, which is a very



important aspect for Food Safety Act requirements. The new store will be of capacity approx. 3,500T of grain, being sufficient to accommodate the anticipated production from the Oakcuts Farm block.

3.2. Amount/scale

The requirement for storage dictates the size of the building. Farming is becoming more efficient, and yields are increasing. Based on existing production and anticipating further efficiency, it is considered that 3,500T of storage is needed.

The building height is determined by its use, telehandlers will operate within the building along with trailers tipping the grain, and 7m needs to be provided to the eaves, to allow for easy access, turning and egress, as tipper trucks are becoming larger. The roller shutter doors on the North-East elevation are 6m tall. The roof pitch is 12.5o, which is shallow, with a balance achieved between minimising height in terms of visual impact, and yet providing adequate capacity. Thus, the ridge height is 10.1m.

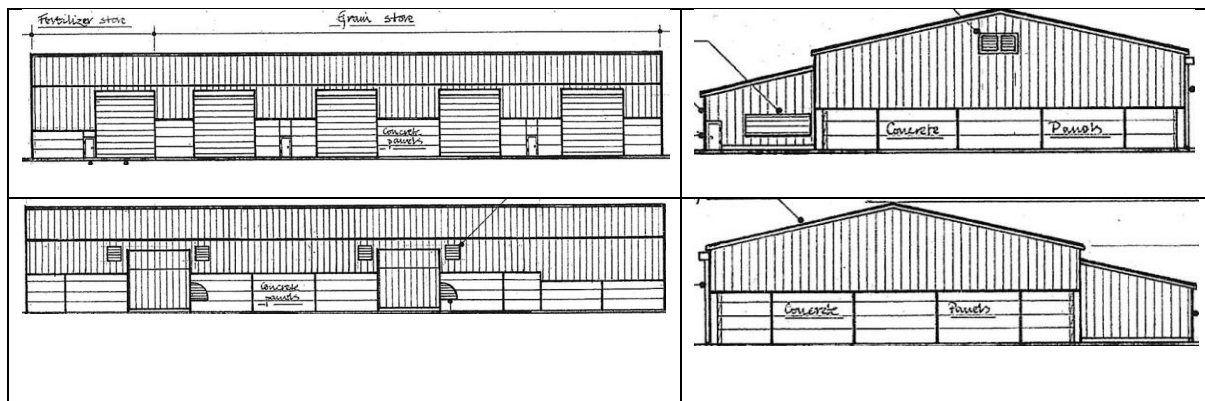


Figure 4 - Proposed Elevations

The basic form of the grain store is rectangular, with the length running parallel to the nearby hedge/tree belt, and thus roughly following the slope of the land, which rises initially slowly to the South. The alignment minimises the degree of cut into the slope, which limits earth moving and expenditure, and limits the landscape impact. The way that the structure fits into the topography is as shown in the Section drawing ref 02620-00-A sheet 04, also submitted with this application.

The length of the building is 62.16m and it would be 27m wide. There would be two Fan houses built outside the main fabric, on the South-West side. They will be 8m by 6.096m with air entry ducts. Often, these structures are set within a building, but a ground level fan allows easy maintenance. Indeed, it can be seen on the plans that there would be a peripheral area of hardcore around the building to ensure easy access for maintaining the building, and the fan houses.

The total footprint of the building is 1,776m². There would be a concrete apron on the North end of the building, allowing the manoeuvring of tractor/trailer, materials handler and grain lorries on firm ground. It is thus necessarily impermeable. The size of the apron has been based upon previous experience and using swept path analysis, based upon the use of 29 tonnes vehicles, and allowing them to enter and leave the site in forward gear. The area of the apron is about 1,554m².

There are proposed to be 4no. LPG Gas Tanks, which will be positioned on the West side of the building and screened by new hedgerow planting. The Gas is required for the grain drying process.



3.3. Appearance

The proposed elevations of the building are shown the drawing dated February 2023 by Andrew Walker.

The proposed building has been designed to have an agricultural appearance, complementing the rural character. The materials selected will be fit for the primary purpose of the building. So, the lowest 4m would be precast concrete panels in natural grey. Concrete is well able to accept the weight of the stored grain and to resist most accidental knocks from vehicles.

The cladding and the steel louvres would be plastic coated steel profile panels, painted Olive Green (RAL 6003), which is a “recessive” colour, allowing visual integration into the rural backcloth. It is a colour regularly used for modern farm buildings.

There would be four extraction fans on the side of the building, set into the walls. These would also be in Olive Green.

It is proposed that the roof would be constructed from fibre cements sheets. The proposed colour of “Anthracite” is a dark grey (RAL 7016), which will also enable easy visual integration. Again, both the material and colour are regularly used on farm buildings.

Neither the materials nor colours will change, unless advised by officers. Therefore, we strongly suggest that no pre-commencement condition related to materials should be applied to any permission granted.

3.4. Precedent

The new grain store at Eastover Farm which was built 10 years ago – planning ref: 12/02604/FULLN – provides a useful example of and precedent for the new grain store now proposed at Oakcuts Farm. The Eastover grain store was built just outside of the Eastover Farm buildings complex, albeit in close proximity to it. So far as the applicant is aware, there have been no concerns raised with the grain store or objections or complaints with regard to its use. It has provided a sufficient, excellent and most valuable facility for the storing and drying of grain from the Eastover Farm block.

4. Landscape Impact

The impact on the landscape is a significant factor in considering a planning application. Therefore, in considering both the best location and the impact of development on the landscape at that selected location, consideration of landscape impact has not been an “add-on”. It has been central to design evolution.

The Landscape Assessment (LA) identified vantage points at which the site will be visible, and the landscaping plan has mitigated against this by providing suitable planting to soften the building’s appearance.

The planning statement does not seek to replicate the LA which has considered both effects on landscape character and visual amenity. The former is especially important because of the site’s location, while the latter takes account, in particular, of views from rights of way.



The LA concluded that, in terms of landscape character the landscape resource at the development site is low, and that the medium to long term impact would be minor, taking into account the beneficial aspects of the proposed mitigation measures of hedge and copse planting.

In terms of the visual impacts, the LA considers how views from key viewpoints would be affected and summarises these effects for each viewpoint.

The LA identified viewpoints in close proximity to the site from Stockbridge Road and as a result the landscape plan has been developed to use additional planting to soften these views. There are limited longer range views of the site. It is proposed to enhance the existing field hedgerow boundary by filling in existing gaps with the native mix species depicted within the Landscape Plan. This hedgerow is 540m in length and will be allowed to grow to 3m in height and maintained as such. There will also be a comprehensive landscaping scheme including copse tree planting to the South and hedgerow to the East to soften any longer-range views.

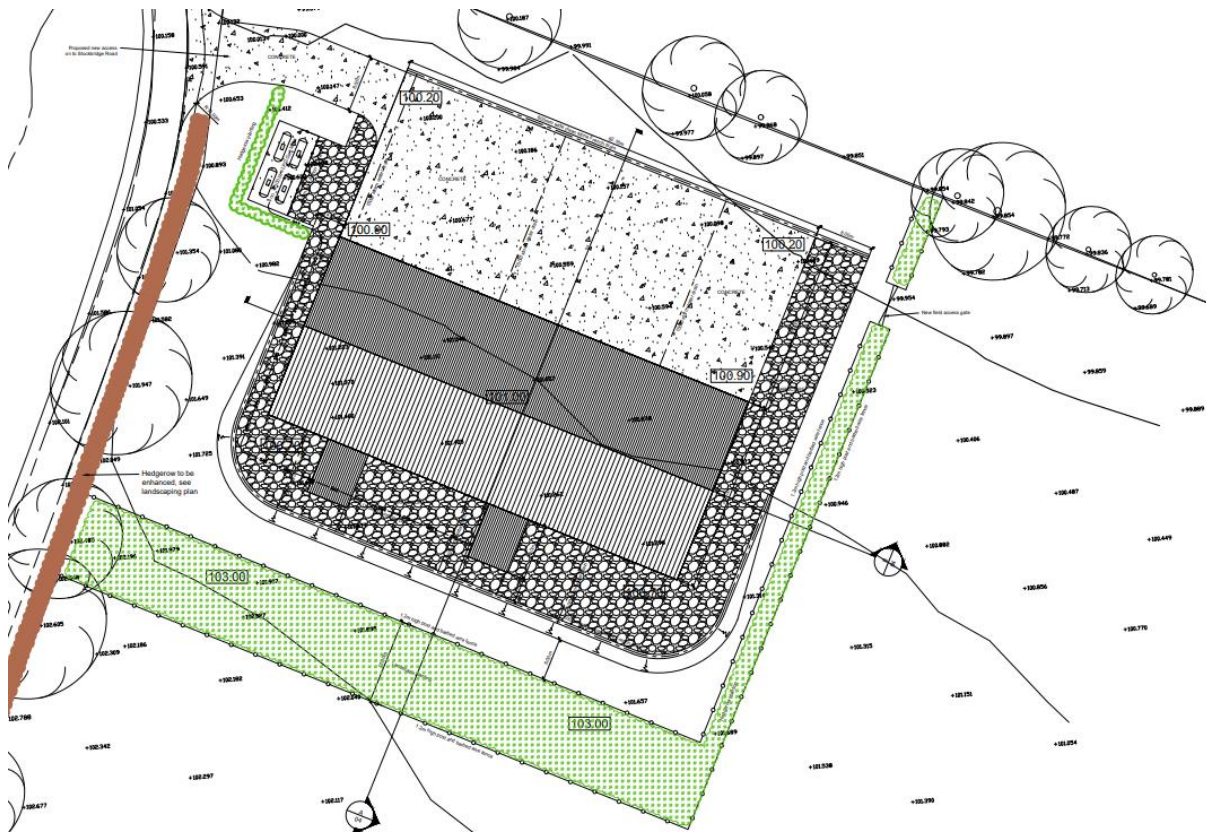


Figure 5 - Landscaping Scheme

By locating the proposed Grain Store on an area of land that is screened in longer range views by the woodland copse and at closer range by the mature trees and hedgerows, the farm has ensured that any adverse visual effect even in the short term is considered of low importance, and capable of mitigation in the short to medium term, through planting in a locally appropriate manner. This will also enhance the visual quality and biodiversity of the local landscape.

We consider that consideration of the landscape has been a focal point of site selection and design and with the added landscaping the grain store will not be harmful.



5. Access and Traffic Generation

There will be no increase in agricultural vehicles and grain lorries using Stockbridge Road.

At the grain store site, the proposed concrete apron will not be excessive, but will allow for parking and turning of tractors; trailers; and other equipment, and will also allow safe manoeuvring of grain lorries, so they can enter and leave the site in a forward gear.

6. Ecology

The site is an arable field with no intrinsic value in terms of habitat currently growing crops. There are no ground nesting birds resident at the site and no other protected species. No trees or hedges are proposed to be lost. Our plans ensure that the significant trees in the hedgerow to the boundary of the building will not be physically affected by the development. We will be content to abide by any condition that safeguards the roots of those trees.

We have sought to enhance the ecological value of both the site around the building and improvement to the existing field hedgerow. The details are set out in the landscape plan. In addition, we propose that the cut and fill is used to create a small bund around the building and seeded with a mix appropriate for the soil type concerned.

Such a mix would have the advantage that they would add to the limited resource of chalk grassland in Hampshire: a known habitat of rich biodiversity. The mix would contain legumes, the roots of which would help stabilise the slope. However, we have experience of similar cut slopes around grain store sites on chalk in Hampshire, and are content that the angle of slope would be stable. Chalk grassland created through seeding established promptly without application of fertiliser and requiring minimal maintenance. The sward is often kept short by rabbits, but one strim a year would maintain the ecological value and prevent colonisation by shrubs.

7. Flood Risk Assessment

This application site is on chalk well away from areas at risk of flooding, as evidenced by the Environment Agency showing flood risk from rivers and streams. As such, the site lies in Flood Zone 1. The surface water flood risk map shows there is very low risk of flooding from that source.

A flood risk assessment is only necessary for developments in Flood Zone 1 if they are over 1 hectare in area or, if smaller, if a “vulnerable” land use is proposed. Neither is the case here.

Experience from farming the land also shows it is very well drained. It is therefore appropriate to use a French drain to discharge into soakaways placed around the building, on the slightly lower ground adjacent to the access drive.

The hardcore/crushed stone to be placed around the building for maintenance purposes would be permeable. It would therefore provide some degree of infiltration and allow a good means of slowing the rate of run-off from the site before it reaches the French drain.



8. Noise

Our previous experience with grain stores suggests that noise is a potential cause for concern because of the noise of the dryer fans. We therefore commissioned Clarke Saunders Acoustics to conduct a noise impact assessment which concluded ‘in the worst case, emissions associated with operation of the grain drying building would constitute a low impact. There would consequently be a low likelihood of the residents experiencing adverse sound impacts’.

A copy of the Clarke Saunders acoustics report is included with this Planning Application. Noise emissions from the new grain store will be offset by the cessation of grain drying and machinery movements in the old grain store, noting in particular the amount of machinery which was needed to operate the old grain store.

9. Planning Policy

9.1. Introduction

Under the “plan-led” approach of the English planning system, proposals should accord with the development plan, which encapsulates policy from governmental through to site specific level. This is detailed in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, there is an examination of the implications of Government policy, specifically through its National Planning Policy Framework; and to local policy, both statutory and non-statutory. The statement considers how development proposals either accord with policy or there is a justifiable exception to policy. In this case, the local policy is set by Test Valley Borough Council. In determining applications for planning permission, greater weight is given to statutory policy which has been subjected to full public scrutiny.

We set out below our initial thoughts as to which policies, at both government and local level, are likely to be material to the determination of a forthcoming planning application.

9.2. Government policy - The National Planning Policy Framework.

In March 2012, the Government published its National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government’s policies for England and how it expects them to be applied. This document forms a simplified planning policy structure, replacing Planning Policy Statements and Guidance, Minerals Policy Statements and Policy Guidance, and numerous Letters to Chief Planning Officers.

In July 2021, the Government published a revised NPPF. This section of the statement sets out elements of the NPPF pertinent to this application, and considers whether the proposals are consistent with the document and its principles.

This latest version of the NPPF continues to pursue economic, social and economic objectives, of which the first and last are significant here:

- a) *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and*



coordinating the provision of infrastructure;” In this case, the farm business will be able to operate more effectively and competitively, producing food to current high regulatory standards, so ensuring that farming is able to maintain local jobs and the quality of the landscape South of Andover.

- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being;* In this case an existing rural business will have an opportunity to operate more effectively and efficiently and continue to provide local produce to the rural community; and
- c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.* The new barn would have a negligible impact on the environment as the important ecological features of the site will be retained.

Part 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy

“83. 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;*
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside;”*

These proposals will enable a rural agricultural business to operate more effectively and have storage facilities for the grain to enable the farm to sell produce in the optimum market.

Paragraph 84 then goes on to clarify that developments should be sensitive to local circumstances, as is the case here. This development will facilitate the more efficient running of an existing rural business, and the barn has been designed to ensure it fits into the landscape as sensitively as possible. The proposals meet both criteria.

The NPPF within section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. At para 174 states: (relevant parts only):

‘Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*



- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*

This proposal will utilise an area already used for arable crop production, which has little value for wildlife. The surrounding hedgerow and tree features which constitute a valued natural landscape and support biodiversity will be protected and retained. Additional landscaping will also be incorporated to enhance the connectivity of wildlife corridors achieving biodiversity net gain.

Achieving well-designed places

The revised NPPF has a specific section on good design – more attention is paid to this aim than in previous policy. Paragraph 127 includes the following:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks;...”*

The proposals will fit into an existing agricultural rural area, so the character of the barn is generally of a fit-for-purpose design, rural in appearance and agricultural in style.

Summary of review of the NPPF

The proposals would accord with policy at the national level across the full, relevant range of topics.



9.3. Local Planning Policy

The most significant local policy document is the Test Valley Revised Local Plan, which was adopted by the Council in November 2016. This review analyses those policies within that document that are relevant to this proposal.

Policy SD1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Development that accords with the policies in the Revised Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved through the correct planning process without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy COM2 - Settlement Hierarchy

Within the boundaries of the settlements identified in the hierarchy (Table 7) and identified on inset maps 1 - 55 the principle of development and redevelopment will be permitted provided that it is appropriate to the other policies of the Revised Local Plan. Development outside the boundaries of settlements in the hierarchy (as identified on map 1 - 55) will only be permitted if:

- a) it is appropriate in the countryside as set out in Revised Local Plan policy COM8-COM14, LE10, LE16- LE18; or*
- b) it is essential for the proposal to be located in the countryside.*

The site is located within the defined countryside, however the building is required in relation to the existing agricultural land and activity and is essential to be located within the countryside.

Policy E1: High Quality Development in the Borough:

Development will be permitted if it is of a high quality in terms of design and local distinctiveness.

The application, as has been described in previous sections within this statement, is fit for purpose in terms of design, however it has been sensitively positioned using the existing natural screening of the mature trees and hedgerows, so in terms of layout, appearance, scale, materials and building style the building will not be incongruous.

Policy E2: Protect, Conserve and Enhance the Landscape Character of the Borough:

To ensure the protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the Borough development will be permitted provided that:

- a) it does not have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the immediate area and the landscape character of the area within which it is located;*
- b) it is designed and located to ensure that the health and future retention of important landscape features is not likely to be prejudiced;*
- c) the existing and proposed landscaping and landscape features enable it to positively integrate into the landscape character of the area;*
- d) arrangements for the long term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping have been made; and*



e) it conserves the landscape and scenic beauty of the New Forest National Park or the North

The trees adjacent to the site will not be harmed as a result of this building. Additional landscaping will be incorporated for the enhancement of the appearance on the landscape character of the area.

Policy T1 Managing movement, and T2 Parking Standards.

The development will not present any highway issues. The building to house the grain will not increase any traffic movements from the existing situation.

9.4. Supplementary Planning Documents - Landscape character assessment

A landscape assessment for Test Valley was the Landscape Character Assessment updated in 2018 based on work previously undertaken in 2004. The Assessment identifies twelve landscape character types (LCTs) within the Borough, which are sub-divided into landscape character areas (LCAs). The maps provided within the Landscape Assessment determine the site as being on the boundary with two LCA's, the site is within LCA 6E Amport Wooded Downs which is an Enclosed Chalk and Clay Woodland Type and the wider field that the grain store is to be located is within the 10C Thruyton and Danebury Chalk Downland which is Open Chalklands Type.

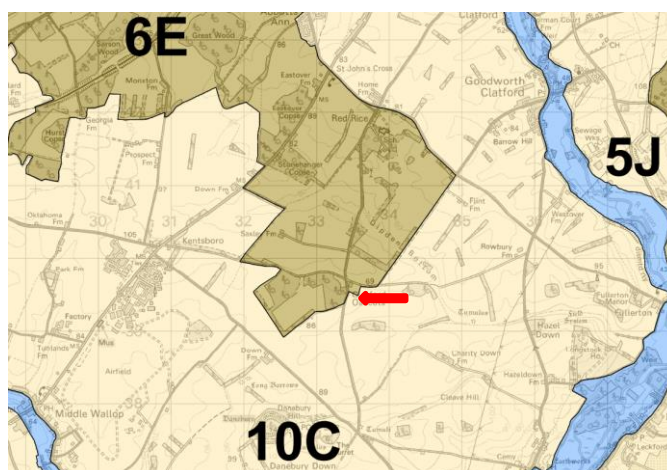


Figure 6 - Test Valley LCA Map

LCA 6E is described as follows: 'The Enclosed Chalk and Clay Woodland landscape character type consists of woodland with associated fields which are predominantly arable, but mixed in size ranging from large to small scale. Smaller fields of pasture are found adjacent to settlements and areas of steep gradients. The fields have a strong hedgerow structure, which is more intact than the Open Chalklands LCT10.' The site is not within one of the key designated areas such as the AONB/Conservation Areas/Historic Parks/SSSI's.

The enhancement priorities are 'Manage the agricultural landscapes for biodiversity such as incorporating hedgerows or grass field margins, encourage replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, discourage further merging of fields and loss of hedgerows, seek opportunities to use smaller plots for pasture.' There is existing vegetation in the form of dense shrub/hedgerows and mature trees within the field boundaries, which are proposed to be retained.



The agricultural field will continue to be used for crops. The landscaping enhancement measures proposed will contribute to the LCA objectives and the land management objectives can be considered to be met.

This proposal will not be contrary to the landscape strategies for this Character Area as the site is not within any historic or nature conservation area. The proposals will not affect any designated landscape, building, or wildlife sites. No trees or hedges will be removed, and the landscape framework around the site will be strengthened as set out within the Landscape Plan.

This review has shown that the development proposals would accord with the policies of both national and local policy, so that there are no policy reasons why this application should be refused.

10. Conclusion

This application represents the culmination of a comprehensive review of a large farm holding to select a site that both meets the legitimate needs of the farm enterprise and minimises negative impacts on the environment, both natural and human.

We consider that it is important that British farming is allowed to promote legitimate proposals for capital investment, in order to allow farms to become more efficient, flexible and competitive on the world stage now the UK has left the European Union. The case is even stronger because these proposals will make the farm unit more sustainable in terms of economics and environmental enhancement.

Summaries of the impacts of the development are set out in this statement, taking full account of landscape and noise impact reports submitted with this application. There are no significant negative impacts and there are some limited benefits: for example, to biodiversity through enhanced wildlife connectivity corridors with the new native planting.

Therefore, the review of the proposal against planning policy concludes that the proposal accords with policy, at both national and local level, and therefore there are no good reasons why planning permission should not be granted, subject to only material and necessary conditions.