

Reference:

BA/2019/0105/OUT

Location

Homestead Farm, Beccles Road, Bungay

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Application for Determination
Report by Planning Officer

Target Date	3 June 2019
Parish:	Bungay Town Council
Reference:	BA/2019/0105/OUT
Location:	Homestead Farm, Beccles Road, Bungay, Suffolk
Proposal:	Erection of a steel framed building to house milking parlour
Applicant:	Mr David Utting
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions
Reason for referral to Committee:	Major development

1 Description of Site and Proposals

- 1.1 The application site is an established farm yard which is situated approximately 1 km south east of the main centre of the small town of Bungay. It is situated in an area which has a residential character, but with an agricultural land-use tucked behind the housing. Housing development runs along Beccles Road in front of the existing farm on either side of the farms existing site access. To the north of the farmyard and housing is a large open area of marsh on which the applicants graze their existing dairy herd. This marshland runs to the banks of the River Waveney. Views into the site are afforded from Wainford Road to the east which runs north to south through land farmed by the applicant. This road is used by the applicant currently to move cattle to grazing land to the north of the River Waveney.
- 1.2 The farm yard and numerous existing associated large agricultural buildings are located behind these dwellings, which run along this road to the south of the application site, and the marshes and river to the north. The farm yard is made up of a variety of agricultural buildings and stores located around a

large T shaped area of hard standing. The application site is slightly elevated to that of the surrounding marsh land and is of a similar height to the ground level on which other buildings adjacent are built.

- 1.3 Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of a large steel framed agricultural building to form a dairy, milking parlour, collecting yard and associated storage and office. The outline application includes approval of the access, layout and scale, with the landscaping and the appearance to be dealt with in a subsequent reserved matters application. The scale of the building is proposed as being 30m x 60m and with a ridge height of 8.76m and eaves height of 6.0m.
- 1.4 The application drawings identify the location of the proposed building as being to the north of the existing dairy (81m x 42m), to the east of the feed building (32m x 20m) and to the south east of the existing recently constructed steel frame hay store (37m x 25m). The hay store (As approved by BA/2014/0376/AGR) is approximately 2.0m taller in height than the proposed building.
- 1.5 The site would be accessed from the existing site entrance to the south of the proposed building onto the B1062 Beccles Road. The application also proposes strip of hardstanding on the western side of the proposed building. The existing hardstanding would be used as a turning area for dairy and cattle lorries.
- 1.6 The site is located within Flood Risk Zone 3a.

2 Site History

- 2.1 The most relevant planning history are a series of planning permissions and agricultural notices which have approved/allowed the construction of agricultural buildings present on site. These permissions date from the 1980's through to present and show the most recent development of the farm site.
 - Planning permission was granted for the Erection of covered cattle yards and dairy unit building in 1981 (BA/1981/5923/HISTAP) and its subsequent extension in 1997 (BA/1997/5925/HISTAP) and 2003 (BA/2003/5926/HISTAP).
 - In 1995 a Prior Notification Application was approved for a Strawed cattle yard
 - In 2000 a Prior Notification Application was approved for the Erection of a Dutch barn.
 - In 2014 a Prior Notification Application was approved for an agricultural building (Hay store) at the site (BA/2014/0376/AGR). In 2017 a Prior Notification Application was made to extend this building (BA/2017/0099/AGR).
- 2.2 Additionally planning permission (BA/2014/0133/FUL) was granted to create a new bridge and access track to allow movement of cattle away from the Wainford Road on the applicants own land.

3 Consultations

3.1 Consultations received

Bungay Town Council – Recommend approval with no further comments.

Suffolk County Council as Local Lead Flood Authority – No objection, following the submission of the Rainwater Harvesting and Storm Management Proposals. Recommends conditions.

Suffolk County Council as Highways Authority – No objection. Further works on site may be required in the event of further applications here.

Environment Agency – No objections. Notes that the LPA will need to take into account the flood risk considerations which are its own responsibility.

Waveney District Council Environmental Health Officer – No objection. Recommends condition.

BA Landscape – Landscape comments

Natural England – Based on the information submitted within the planning application documents and due to the nature of the proposal, it is Natural England's view that the proposals are unlikely to have a significant effect on any statutory designated site. Natural England has no objection to the proposal.

3.2 Representations Received

No representations have been received in relation to this proposed development.

4 Policies

4.1 The adopted development plan policies for the area are set out in the Local Plan for the Broads (adopted 2019). It was adopted at the Full Authority meeting on 17th May 2019. [Local-Plan-for-the-Broads\(May2019\)](#)

This document was used in the determination of the Planning Application.

SP1 (Sustainable Development in the Broads)

SP6 (Biodiversity)

SP10 (A prosperous local economy)

DM5 (Development and Flood Risk)

DM21 (Amenity)

DM23 (Transport, Highways and access)

DM46 (Design)

5 Assessment

- 5.1 In determining this application the main issues to be taken into consideration include the principle of the development; the impact on the landscape; flood risk; and residential amenity. Other points to consider are highways access and ecology.

Principle of Development

- 5.2 The purpose of the proposed development is in effect to allow an existing agricultural business to modernise and continue its existing use as a dairy farm. The application site is in part existing hardstanding, part grassland and is located on the edge of the farm unit. The farm itself operates over an extensive area of grazing marshland on both sides of the River Waveney, which is located to the north of the site.
- 5.3 Adopted planning policies support the continued use of agricultural land and buildings, recognising that this is a traditional land use in the Broads, with grazing in particular contributing to the maintenance of the protected landscape. The continued use of land and proposed new building associated with this proposal are considered in accordance with Policy SP1 (Sustainable Development in the Broads) and SP10 (A prosperous local economy). This is because the scheme does not propose a change of use of land from the existing agricultural use, and in allowing for improved facilities on site this will support the existing farming business.
- 5.4 The farm supplies Arla Dairies and the application advises that the proposed new milking parlour could not be housed within the existing farm buildings, as these are either too small, or have been constructed incrementally and so do not meet the required standards. The proposal explains that the existing buildings would be used to store machinery and in the winter house part of the existing herd. It states that the additional space represented by the proposed new building is not necessarily to increase the size of the dairy herd significantly, but is to avoid overcrowding to improve herd health and animal wellbeing.
- 5.5 Overall, it is concluded that the application is in accordance with policy SP10 (A prosperous local economy) of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Impact upon the Landscape

- 5.6 The application site is located within a Landscape Character Area which is characterised as being a traditional pastoral landscape. It is noted that the open areas which abut the settlements of Bungay, Ditchingham and Geldeston are all subject to pressures from different settlement fringe type development which potentially can erode the character of the marshland and even small scale developments or activities can incrementally have cumulative adverse effects on the local landscape character. It is the case

that care needs to be taken in relation to the siting of new structures and the type of materials used to ensure the positive landscape characteristics are not eroded further.

- 5.7 The extension of farm development within the grazing marsh environment and the increased scale of farm buildings can bring about a loss of grazing marsh habitat whilst also having the potential to impact on the visual amenity and landscape character of the area. Farm expansion both within the marshland and valley side landscape needs therefore be sensitively designed to conserve and enhance the positive landscape characteristics of the area and where effects are likely to be adverse, alternative solutions and/or mitigation should be considered.
- 5.8 This application is considered in this context as the site is located within a farm setting on the valley floor and on the edge of the marsh, although it is noted that the building would be sited alongside other similar large modern agricultural buildings. The siting of the building is close to similar structures, which helps to mitigate the impact and as the site is low lying it would not break any skylines. Overall it is considered that the siting is acceptable.
- 5.9 The site is part hardstanding and part grass/field and overall approximately 900 square m of the marshland field would be lost to the building. The loss of the marshland habitat does represent a negative landscape effect, albeit of fairly minor significance given the extensive nature of the marshes locally.
- 5.10 The main concern relates to the scale of the proposed building, which is significant and is likely to have an impact – and potentially an adverse one - on the visual amenity and landscape character. The applicant has considered smaller building form, or reducing the height of the building. However, as modern farming practices have changed the applicant considered that the scale of the building proposed is the smallest functional building which would house modern milking parlours and equipment for a farm of this scale. The eaves height shown in the drawings would not be more than 6.0m, and the ridge height would not be more than 8.76m. Other buildings on site are taller (up to 10.5m tall), and other buildings are of a larger footprint. As such the scale of this specific building is not out of character with existing buildings.
- 5.11 Limited indicative details have been provided of the design of the building, and potential materials however this is not for approval as part of this application and could be subject to change. No details regarding landscaping, which would also be a form of mitigation, have been submitted. However, as this proposal is in outline only these matters are not being considered as part of this application. Taking into account the land use of dairy farm and the contribution this has on the wider marshland area, as well of the context of the existing buildings on site and acceptable siting of the building, the scale of the building is considered on balance acceptable. This would be subject to conditions requiring a high quality, sympathetic design and landscaping scheme to overcome the highlighted issues.

Flood Risk

- 5.12 The siting of the building is located within flood zone 3a. Additional information from the applicants in the form of a topographical survey has identified the land to be elevated above Flood Zone 3b, as delineated by the 20% (1 in 20) annual probability flood event. Previously the Environment Agency had objected because 'less vulnerable' development is inappropriate in Flood Zone 3b. However, as the applicant has now demonstrated through their site specific topographic survey that the building footprint does not flood in this (20% (1 in 20) annual probability flood) event the Environment agency are satisfied that this area can be considered to be Flood Zone 3a and do not object to the proposal in principle.
- 5.13 Assessing the Flood Risk of the proposal is the Local Planning Authorities responsibility when determining the application. The location of less vulnerable development (of which this is classified) within Flood zone 3a is subject to a sequential and exceptions test. This is because the site remains at risk of flooding but is not considered to be the functional flood plain, where this type of development would not be acceptable in principle.
- 5.14 The finished ground floor levels have been proposed at 3.87m Above ordnance datum (AOD). This is below the 1% (1 in 100) annual probability flood level (of 4.53m AOD) including a 35% allowance for climate change and therefore at risk of flooding by 0.66m depth in this event. The 0.1% (1 in 1000) annual probability flood level is 4.78m AOD and therefore at risk of flooding by 0.91m depth in this event.
- 5.15 As such because the site is considered at risk of flooding, consideration of alternative siting of the building is required through the Sequential Test to see if a suitable site is available for development which would be of a lower risk of flooding. If no alternative is available then the development would also need to meet the exceptions test.
- 5.16 In approaching the sequential test there is an acknowledgement that the application site is an existing large farm which covers land to the north on either side of the River Waveney. The majority of which is considered to be functional flood plain and therefore already at a higher risk of flooding. Access to the grazing land for dairy cattle is across marshland, but also currently along Wainford Road for the land to the north of the River Waveney. This has become problematic in recent years and as such the applicant has previously had planning permission granted for a bridge and access track within his own land over the River Waveney. This would allow for movement of cattle within his own land and not on Wainford Road.
- 5.17 The need for livestock to cross roads, in particular the B1062, on a regular basis would not be considered safe. This therefore precludes land to the south of the B1062, even if it were available for development.
- 5.18 Within the farm land adjacent to the existing farm yard no land is at a lower risk of flooding, apart from a narrow strip directly behind the residential dwelling houses directly to the north of the B1062 (Beccles Road). This land is not considered appropriate for development as the constraint of this area

would preclude this proposal. Constraints include the harm to residential amenity through proximity of an additional building housing livestock and dairy plant, as well as insufficient space for access of farm vehicles and dairy tankers into a small area of land.

- 5.19 On balance therefore the application site which is elevated above the surrounding marsh land and considered within flood zone 3a, is the available area where this development could be sited. The proposal is considered to meet the exceptions test following consideration of the applications site-specific flood risk assessment. The improvement of the dairy and milking parlour function would improve the economic viability of the farm. In turn this would improve animal welfare, and by relocating certain functions away from neighbouring residential properties, mean that this development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community. Within the FRA details of both flood resilience/resistance measures and setting out an initial flood response plan have been provided. As such it is considered that the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of the site, without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 5.20 As such the proposal is considered to meet the sequential and exceptions test set out in the NPPF for development within an area of flood risk and also meets with the criteria of policy DM5 (Development and Flood Risk) of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Amenity of Residential Properties

- 5.21 The site is located to the north of a number of residential properties running along the B1062 - Beccles Road. Whilst some of these properties house agricultural workers associated with the application site, the majority of the dwellings are in private residential occupation. The current dairy and milking parlour is located in close proximity to the rear boundaries of these properties. Due to the nature of the early morning milking and other processes associated with the livestock, this causes a degree of disturbance to the residents. The proposed siting of the new dairy and milking parlour is further away from the residential properties, and as such would reduce this impact when the dairy is moved from its current location.
- 5.22 The proposed building is approximately 90m from the nearest neighbouring residential dwelling and as such this scheme is considered to have an acceptable impact as the separation distance is sufficient. Overall the development would enable an improvement in the general amenity in terms of noise and odour of neighbouring residents as the more intense functions of the farm would move to the new building away from residents. Additionally, during the summer at least, the use of the existing cattle barns will change to storage of machinery. Due to the distance, and screening of existing buildings the development would not result in loss of outlook or light of any neighbouring residential property. No objections were received from neighbouring residents to this application. As such the development is considered to comply with policy DM21 (Amenity) of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Other Issues

- 5.23 The proposed development is associated with an existing farm business, and whilst it may allow for organic growth of the existing business, the key driver set out by the applicant in applying for this building is to improve the current operations. Suffolk County Council has not objected to the proposal in terms of highway impact or safety. Natural England have not objected in terms of impacts upon biodiversity or habitats. As part of the reserved matters application details will be required of biodiversity enhancements.
- 5.24 As this is an outline application the exact appearance including design, materials and also landscaping details would be dealt with at the later reserved matters application stage.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 In conclusion, based on the information submitted to support this outline application for the proposed milking parlour and dairy building the principle of development is in accordance with all relevant planning policy, in particular SP1, SP6, SP10, DM5, DM21, DM23 & DM46. Whilst this application does not consider the appearance or landscaping, it is acknowledged that the development would have an impact upon the landscape. However, on balance, subject to conditions requiring a planning application for the approval of the reserved matters of appearance (design and materials) and landscaping to be approved, the proposed scale is considered to be acceptable. The visual impact in the context of the existing agricultural buildings on site is limited, and would be mitigated through landscaping. Alternative sites for this development are not available which would allow for either a lesser visual impact, or lesser flood risk and therefore it is recommended that planning permission is approved subject to conditions.

7 Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions:

- (i) Reserved matters submission time limit, and time limit on commencement following approval of reserved matters;
- (ii) Reserved matters - landscape, design details, materials, boundary treatments, trees, hedge to street boundary, native hedgerow planting/gap filling, hardstanding surfacing;
- (iii) Timing of works;
- (iv) Submission of a Surface water drainage scheme at reserved matters application stage as per LLFA;
- (v) Prior to occupation surface water drainage to be approved and installed
- (vi) Ecology – Details of biodiversity improvements to be submitted and approved;
- (vii) Details of type and siting of foul sewage treatment plant
- (viii) Demonstration of flood resilient construction in accordance with FRA

- (ix) Flood evacuation plan
- (x) Sign up to flood warnings
- (xi) Remove permitted development rights

8 Reason for Recommendation

Subject to the conditions outlined above, the application is considered to be in accordance with Policies SP1, SP6, SP10, DM5, DM21, DM23 & DM46 of the adopted Broads Local Plan 2019.

Background papers: BA/2019/0105/OUT

Author: Jack Ibbotson

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Location Map

