

2.3 REFERENCE NO - 16/501136/FULL			
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Erection of new grain store As amended by drawings and information received on 6 TH 19 TH and 21 ST April 2016			
ADDRESS Parsonage Farm Parsonage Lane Bredgar Kent ME9 8HA			
RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE SUBJECT TO RECEIPT OF SATISFACTORY DETAILS TO ADDRESS HIGHWAY ISSUES AND COMMENTS FROM KENT HIGHWAY SERVICES.			
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION Amendments and additional information have overcome initial concerns			
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Parish Council Objection			
WARD West Downs	PARISH/TOWN Bredgar	COUNCIL	APPLICANT S W Attwood And Partners AGENT
DECISION DUE DATE 2/06/16	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 12/05/16	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE	
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites):			
App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
SW/13/0945	Retro demolition of granary building	GRANT	
SW/12/0567 & SW/12/0734	Extend permissions SW/09/0323 & SW/09/0344	GRANT	
SW/09/0344 & SW/09/0323	Works to farmhouse	GRANT	
SW/08/1208	Demolition of barn and construction of replacement	GRANT	

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

1.01 Parsonage Farm lies to the South of the village of Bredgar with the land rising gently to the south from the farmstead and is surrounded to the north, south and east by arable land.

1.02 The whole site lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and whilst the farmstead is within the Bredgar Conservation area the land for the siting of the barn lies outside it and is also outside the curtilage of the Listed Buildings These are the farmhouse which is Listed Grade II, and a Grade II listed Cart shed is adjacent, together with range of traditional buildings and more modern farm buildings which date from around the 1970s. These consist of:

1. A steel portal framed building used as a temporary grain store
2. A grain silo

3. Concrete portal framed building with lean to workshop
4. Modern traditional style Kent Barn
5. Steel portal framed stable building
6. Steel portal framed stable building

- 1.03 The total existing floor-space is, according to the Design and Access Statement, 1514 square metres.
- 1.04 The farmstead is enclosed to the west and south by paddocks used by the established existing livery enterprise and is screened from the east and west by existing trees and to the north is a hedge with scattered trees.
- 1.05 The Design and Access Statement explains that the applicants farm 390 acres (or 158 hectares) of land at Parsonage Farm, and that their total land holding in Swale Borough is 3500 acres (or 1416 hectares).

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 This application involves the construction of a new grain store at Parsonage Farm, Bredgar
- 2.02 The proposed building would measure 40.5m in width by 36.6m in length; the eaves heights would range from 5.8m (on the eastern elevation) to eight metres; and the ridge height would be 11.5m.
- 2.03 The gross floor-space to be provided would be 1482 square metres.
- 2.04 The site would be excavated such that the finished ground floor level would be 95.9 metres AOD (above Ordnance datum), while land in the immediate vicinity sits at approximate 96 to 99 metres AOD.
- 2.05 A bund – to a height of approximately 2.5 metres - is proposed to the east, south and west of the building.
- 2.06 The roof will be covered with a Juniper Green (a dark green) fibre cement cladding and the walls with a Merlin Grey plastisol cladding above the concrete panels on the elevations.

3.0 PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

- 3.1 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty KENT DOWNS
- 3.2 Conservation Area Bredgar

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): including Paragraphs 28 and 116, which I refer to below.
- 4.2 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- 4.3 Development Plan: E1, E6, E9 and E19 of the adopted Swale Borough Local Plan.

4.4 Supplementary Planning Documents: Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (2011). The site is located within the Tunstall Farmlands character area, which are considered to be in moderate condition and with a high sensitivity.

5.0 CONSULTATIONS

5.01 **Bredgar Parish Council** object to the proposal for the following reasons:

1. The presence of the proposed very large store, with a height of over 12 metres and a footprint of more than 1,000 square metres, of modern construction is out of place in the AONB and close to the centre of a small historic village.
2. The proposed structure is of disproportionate size, as compared with the surrounding listed buildings and buildings in the neighbouring Conservation Area, and will impact negatively on the intrinsic character of the village.
3. In relation to section 8 of the Heritage Statement, it is disputed that the construction will have no impact on the rural nature of the AONB. The design is industrial in nature, as compared, for example, with the black barn shown in figure 2 of the Design and Access Statement.
4. The applicants suggest that, because production will not be increased, the impact on traffic will be neutral. If this were not to be the case in the future, for example, if the facility were to be used for storage of grain not produced on the farm, or if the farm were to expand, the resultant increase in heavy goods traffic in the surrounding rural lanes would be a serious concern.
5. The applicants make reference to new EU rules, and if these are a key driver for the project, perhaps the application should be held, pending the referendum on EU membership.
6. In relation to the current draft Local Plan, regard should be had to policy DM23.

In the event that permission for the application is granted it will be essential that the proposed screening be carried out at the earliest opportunity, using species sympathetic to the surrounding environment, and that the embankment work effectively reduces the height impact.

5.02 **Environment Agency:** raise no objection but provide advice regarding pollution prevention measures, and the soakaways.

5.03 **The Council's Agricultural Consultant:** commented that, the main section of the proposed building would have a nominal capacity for holding some 3200 tonnes of corn, although in practice, due to the separation of different crops, and access arrangements, the actual capacity is likely to be rather less. The main section would become the principal grain storage facility for an established farm business including some 690 acres (279 ha) of arable cropping in the local area, whilst the lean-to would be mainly utilised for secure storage of fertiliser and machinery.

The farm has limited grain storage at present, amounting to about 1050 tonnes, but the main store (800 tonnes) is an old in-bin facility now effectively at the end of its useful life, in terms of modern arable production, due to its condition and the slow speed of handling grain. The other store is a converted potato store and too low for tipping grain trailers.

Excess grain that cannot be stored on the farm currently has to be sold at harvest or placed elsewhere in rented stores.

Having regard to the above, and to applicant's submissions as to the needs of the farm, I consider the proposed building to be of an appropriate size and design for efficiently meeting the storage requirements of this relatively large and established arable farm.

- 5.04 **Southern Water:** offered no comment except in regard to the potential ownership of any sewers found on the site.
- 5.05 **Environmental Protection Team Leader:** recommends condition that construction/demolition activities takes place at restricted times.
- 5.06 **KCC Highways and Transportation:** comment that a condition restricting the origin of the grain to be stored on the site would be necessary and that they require further details on traffic and lorry movements at the current time and going forward need details of what is the anticipated movements to and from the new grain store. It is accepted that on the highway network as a whole the traffic impact could be neutral but locally it needs to be fully assessed.

6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PLANS

- 6.01 Application papers and correspondence relating to planning reference 16/501136

7.0 APPRAISAL

The application needs to be assessed to balance the needs and requirements of a farmer to develop his agricultural business against the sensitive location of that farming business adjacent to a Conservation Area and within the AONB.

Principle of Development

- 7.01 The applicant has explained in detail about the requirements on this farm for a new grain store given the requirements of his agricultural business. I therefore accept with the advice from our independent Agricultural Consultant that there is an agricultural need and the business case for the additional grain store.
- 7.02 Para 28 of the NPPF requires planning policies to promote and support the development of agricultural businesses but also gives great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. Para 116 advises that applications such as this should be considered in light of the need for the development, the scope for developing elsewhere and that any detrimental effects on the landscape be moderated.
- 7.03 Policy E9 of the Swale Borough Local Plan priorities the long-term conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty (including landscape, wildlife, and geological features) of the AONB as a national asset over other planning considerations and states that major developments will not be permitted unless there is a proven national interest and no suitable alternative sites.

Visual Impact

- 7.04 The grain store is sited to the south of the farm and its historic buildings and general activity. It is to be a large building at 40m in width and 36.5m in length, it will be 5.8m

to the eaves and 11.5m to the roof ridge and therefore will be visible from the nearby roads and public footpaths, to varying degrees.

- 7.05 However the store would be located at a reduced ground level, 2m lower than the existing ground level. Furthermore a 2.5m high bund is to be created around the store on top of the existing ground level and landscaped. These two factors would reduce the impact of the barn on the landscape by markedly reducing its visible height. In addition the existing established field boundary would be supplemented with indigenous planting to intensify the screening.
- 7.06 The materials to be used on the roof of the building will be Juniper Green (a dark green) fibre cement cladding and a Merlin Grey plastisol cladding above the concrete panels on the elevations (these would be largely hidden from view due to the above measures).
- 7.07 The location of the store would also ensure that the existing hardstanding at the farm can be utilised for the grain store rather than the need to provide any additional hardstanding areas. I further note the existing buildings on site are more modern and of varying design and quality and the grain store being close to these buildings is the best location for the store.
- 7.08 I consider that the combination of these measures and the chosen location will sufficiently moderate the impact the grain store would have on the AONB.

Residential Amenity

- 7.09 The site is to the south of the village of Bredgar and as such the positioning of the barn to the south of the farm yard and buildings ensures it is quite some considerable distance from any residential properties as arable fields intervene and surround the farm. I further consider that the measures outlined above will serve to mitigate and screen the store to an acceptable degree to not cause harm to the residential amenities of any nearby properties. Members will also have noted that Environmental Protection Team Leader raises no objection to the application.

Highways

- 7.10 The submission states that there will be no impact on the local highway network as more grain would be able to be stored on site it will reduce the number of trips from the site, particularly during harvest season. As stated above at paragraph 5.06 the Highway Authority require further details from the applicant of traffic and lorry movements to and from the site before and after the proposed grain store and their subsequent views are then awaited on such details. I will update members further at the meeting on these issues.

Landscaping

- 7.11 The site currently has an established vegetation screening along the boundary to the south west and east. Additional information from the applicant confirms that the existing field boundary would be reinforced with native planting and also that a swathe of native whips to be planted from the south west corner of the field to the rear of the bund on the south east corner. I have included a condition to ensure the correct number and mix of planting is achieved.
- 7.12 Furthermore, the 2.5m bund will be landscaped with grass to ensure it blends in with the appearance of the existing field.

Other Matters

- 7.13 There is a Grade II listed farmhouse and a Grade II listed cart lodge at the farm and as such the impact of the proposed grainstore on these buildings needs to be assessed. The store is to be located to the south of the historic listed farm house and the existing buildings and a tree line to the south of the farmhouse will screen it from the historically sensitive area of the farm. It will however be visible once you leave this “historic domestic area” and move into the farmyard.
- 7.14 The design of the grain store as submitted is as one building however it was suggested to the applicant that two buildings rather than one large building would be more appropriate. In response due to the size of the machinery used on the farm and the capacity and efficiency issues this was not considered a viable option by the applicant. As such the building was mitigated to some degree by its reduction to 11.5m in height, the minimum given the machinery that is needed to operate within it. Also the 1m overhang serves as a better design detail.
- 7.15 I note the comments by the Parish Council, which were submitted prior to the amendments being made and I consider I have addressed them in this report ,additionally I have attached conditions to address their concerns. Although I do not consider delaying a decision until after the EU referendum to be appropriate or reasonable.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.01 There is a balance to be made between supporting agricultural businesses and the protection of sensitive landscapes, particularly given that the two are usually so interwoven. In this case a strong business case has been presented by Parsonage Farm for the need to modernise and be more efficient in their storage of grain they produce at the farm. New machinery and the capacity of storage the farm requires has dictated the size of the grain store however extensive modifications and mitigation measures are being employed to ensure the impact of the barn is minimised. The building is located to the south of the main farmstead and as such there will be no impact on the historic listed buildings at the farm and is furthest away from the village and any residential properties. It is to be set at a lower ground level, and a landscaped bund will screen it by a further 2.5m. The colouring of the materials on the building are to be dark, the long range views across the AONB will be mitigated by this and by supplementing the existing screening around the field.
- 8.02 On balance I consider that the measures proposed with the attached conditions, would sufficiently screen the grain store so it would not cause harm to the AONB and thus is acceptable and I recommend planning approval be granted.

- 9.0 RECOMMENDATION – GRANT** Subject to receipt of satisfactory details to address highway issues and comments from Kent Highway Services and the following conditions

CONDITIONS to include

- (1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved plans and specifications.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity

- (3) No development hereby permitted shall take place until a schedule of tree and shrub planting (comprising indigenous species which will improve biodiversity), with a plan giving species and planting densities, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The schedule shall include the timescale for implementation, and planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved timescale. Any trees or shrubs removed or dying within 5 years of planting shall be replaced with trees or shrubs of such size or species as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area.

- (4) The approved scheme of tree planting and landscaping - shown on the submitted plans - shall be carried out within 6 months of the completion of the development. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting shall be replaced with trees or shrubs of such size and species as may be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area

- (5) No construction work in connection with the development shall take place on any Sunday or Bank Holiday, nor on any other day except between the following times:

Monday to Friday 0730 – 1900 hours, Saturdays 0730 – 1300 hours unless in association with an emergency or with the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

- (6) The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: WM/476/500, WM///476/01, WM/476/02, 1610-04, and drawing 1610-2.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning

- (7) Only grain grown on farms within the County of Kent shall be stored in the hereby approved building.

Reason: In the interest of amenity.

INFORMATIVES

The Council's approach to this application:

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. We work with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

Offering pre-application advice.

Where possible, suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome.

As appropriate, updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.

In this instance:

The applicant/agent was provided formal pre-application advice.

The application was considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the Committee and promote the application.

Case Officer: Heather Murton

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.
The conditions set out in the report may be subject to such reasonable change as is necessary to ensure accuracy and enforceability.