

Agenda Item A8	Committee Date 5 February 2018	Application Number 17/01307/FUL
Application Site Hillside Farm Lancaster Road Heaton With Oxcliffe Morecambe		Proposal Demolition of existing agricultural buildings/farm, erection of food production facility with associated landscaping, alterations to existing access, construction of a new internal road, erection of a detached farm building and creation of a pond
Name of Applicant Mrs J C Altham & Sons (Morecambe)		Name of Agent Harrison Pitt Architects
Decision Target Date 26 January 2018		Reason For Delay Committee Cycle
Case Officer		Mr Mark Potts
Departure		No
Summary of Recommendation		Approval (Subject to the applicant entering into a legal agreement concerning the provision of a shuttle bus)

1.0 The Site and its Surroundings

- 1.1 The application site is located 3.6km to the east of Heysham Power Station just to the south of the A683. The site is made up of a former farm house (which is currently being lived in) and a series of agricultural outbuildings (a total of 7). To the north west of the site lies some existing screening in the form of trees and hedgerows and then the A683 and to the east, south and west lie open agricultural fields. There are hedgerows that run through the western part of the site. The site is relatively level though there is a shallow fall to the east and west of the existing farmhouse. Access to the site is taken from the A683 via the existing access to Hillside Farm.
- 1.2 The site is relatively unconstrained but does fall within the District's Countryside Area. The site does not lie within a protected landscape or a designated ecological designation although the site is located 720m to the east of the Morecambe Bay Ramsar, Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

2.0 The Proposal

- 2.1 The applicant proposes the demolition of the existing farmhouse and associated redundant farm buildings to create a new purpose built building to be used as a meat production facility, with associated amended access provision, internal access arrangement, new drainage system and a new barn. The maximum ridge height of the food production facility would be 14.5 metres above existing ground levels and would measure 76m in length and 50 metres in depth. The building would be mostly Yorkshire boarding (larch) with a kingspan trapezoidal roof panel in goosewing grey. The building would be over two floors. The ground floor would comprise predominately of chillers and freezers, but would also accommodate a butchery room and associated smaller rooms, such as gammon, sausage and burger rooms. On the first floor there would be a packaging store, offices, meeting rooms and a canteen. In total the scheme provides for 5,107m² of new commercial floorspace and the total proposed developed area is in the region of 1 hectare.

- 2.2 A new barn measuring 22 metres x 25 metres x 7.8 metres to the ridge is also proposed. As with the main building it is proposed to be constructed in Yorkshire boarding and a steel trapezoidal roof in goosewing grey. The barn would be utilised in connection with livestock production, and be located to the west of the applicant's proposed drainage pond. The drainage pond would connect into the existing culvert that crosses the site.
- 2.3 The scheme proposes a car park providing 34 car parking spaces, 5 visitor spaces, 2 disabled spaces and 7 HGV spaces is also proposed. The existing access onto the A683 would be upgraded to facilitate the development and the only means of access would be via the A683.

3.0 Site History

- 3.1 The site history is set out below:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
16/00169/FUL	Demolition of existing agricultural buildings/farm house, erection of a food production facility with associated landscaping, alterations to existing access, construction of a new internal road, erection of a detached agricultural building and creation of a pond	Refused
15/00992/PRETWO	Demolition of existing farm buildings and conversion of existing farmhouse and construction of new building	Advice Provided
16/00184/EIR	Screening request for the erection of a food production facility	EIA not required

4.0 Consultation Responses

- 4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and non-statutory consultees:

Consultee	Response
County Highways	No objection subject to conditions: Construction Management Plan; Details of the access to be agreed; Off-site highway improvements (Visibility splays of 4.5m x 295m, upgrading and review of street lighting requirements, and new road markings on the A683); Travel Plan submission; and Running of the employee service bus.
Dynamo	Object to the development given the unsustainable location of the development.
Parish Council	No observations received within the statutory timescales
Environmental Health	No observations received within the statutory timescales
Engineering Team	No observations received within the statutory timescales
Lead Local Flood Authority	No observations received within the statutory timescales
Planning Policy	No objection recommends that the principle of the development can be found acceptable based on the proposed use and the specific business requirements of the proposal.
Natural England	No objection.
RSPB	No observations received within the statutory timescales
Tree Protection Officer	No objection assuming the approved planting scheme is implemented in the first planting season following completion of the development and that the development is undertaken in accordance with the submitted AIA.
United Utilities	No objection - Recommends a condition ensuring that the site is drained in accordance with the Surface Water Drainage Design Drawing.
Lancashire Archaeological Advisory Service	No objection. Recommends that a building recording condition is imposed on any consent.

5.0 Neighbour Representations

5.1 The application has generated a single letter of objection concerned with drainage and also access concerns.

6.0 Principal National and Development Plan Policies

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraphs 7, 12, 14 and 17 – Sustainable Development and Core Principles
Paragraph 32, 34, 35 and 38 – Access and Transport
Paragraphs 47, 49, 50 and 55 – Delivering Housing
Paragraphs 56, 58, 60, 61 and 64 – Requiring Good Design
Paragraphs 69,70, 72 and 73 – Promoting Healthy Communities
Paragraph 103 – Flooding
Paragraphs 109, 115,116, 117,118 – Conserving the Natural Environment
Paragraph 120 – Risks from Pollution (Contamination)
Paragraph 123 – Public health and noise considerations
Paragraphs 128-134 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
Paragraphs 186, 187, 196, 197, 203-206 – Decision-taking

6.2 Local Planning Policy Overview – Current Position

At the 20 December 2017 meeting of its Full Council, the local authority resolved to publish the following 2 Development Plan Documents (DPD) for submission to the Planning Inspectorate:

- (i) The Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD; and,
- (ii) A Review of the Development Management DPD.

This enables progress to be made on the preparation of a Local Plan for the Lancaster District. The DPDs will be published in February, after which there will be a 6 week period for representations prior to the submission of the documents to the Planning Inspectorate for independent Examination. If an Inspector finds that the submitted DPDs have been soundly prepared they may be adopted by the Council, potentially in late 2018.

The **Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD** will replace the remaining policies of the Lancaster District Core Strategy (2008) and the residual 'saved' land allocation policies from the 2004 District Local Plan. Following the Council resolution in December 2017, it is considered that the Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD is a material consideration in decision-making, although with limited weight. The weight attributed to this DPD will increase as the plan's preparation progresses through the stages described above.

The **Review of the Development Management DPD** updates the policies that are contained within the current document, which was adopted in December 2014. As it is part of the development plan the current document is already material in terms of decision-making. Where any policies in the draft 'Review' document are different from those adopted in 2014, and those policies materially affect the consideration of the planning application, then these will be taken into account during decision-making, although again with limited weight. The weight attributed to the revised policies in the 'Review' will increase as the plan's preparation progresses through the stages described above.

6.3 Lancaster District Core Strategy

SC1 – Sustainable Development
SC5 – Achieving Quality in Design

6.4 Lancaster District Local Plan (Saved policy)

E4 – Countryside Area

6.5 Development Management DPD

DM7 – Economic Development in Rural Areas

DM8 – The re-use and conversion of Rural Buildings
DM15 – Proposals Involving Employment Land and Premises
DM20 – Enhancing Accessibility and Transport Linkages
DM21 – Walking and Cycling (including Appendix B Car Parking Standards)
DM22 – Vehicle Parking Provision
DM27 – Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity
DM28 – Development and Landscape Impact
DM29 – Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
DM32 – The Setting of Designated Heritage Assets
DM34 – Archaeology
DM35 – Key Design Principles
DM38 – Development and Flood Risk
DM39 – Surface Water Run-off and Sustainable Drainage

7.0 Comment and Analysis

7.0.1 The main considerations with the application relate to the following;

- Principle of re-development to an industrial use;
- Drainage;
- Design;
- Highways;
- Ecology;
- Trees; and
- Landscape Impacts.

7.1 Principle of re-development to an industrial use

7.1.1 A very similar planning application was recommended for approval by officers. However this was refused by Planning Committee in July 2017 (application reference 16/00169/FUL). The reason for refusal is noted below;

'Due to the increased scale of the development within the site and the intensification of the site's use, the proposed development would generate a significant level of employment and associated vehicle movements. The site is located within the open countryside, removed from the built environment where sustainable travel patterns to minimise the need to travel, particularly by private car, are more difficult to achieve. Furthermore the proposal does not seek to contribute towards improvements of services and facilities which promote sustainable transport patterns and improve accessibility. Given the inaccessibility of the location by users other than drivers of motorised vehicles it is deemed that the site cannot be safely accessed by a range of transport modes. Therefore the site is considered to represent an unsustainable location for this form and scale of development, contrary to Policies DM8, DM15 and DM20 of the Development Management DPD'.

7.1.2 The scheme is in essence the same as that refused in so far as the built form of development goes. However, in order to address the reasons for refusal, this scheme has reduced the car parking provision from 54 car parking spaces down to 34, and the applicant has proposed a shuttle bus for staff working the daytime period (collecting staff in the morning and transporting them back during the afternoon/evening). The applicant has supplied a proposed shuttle bus route (Heysham via Morecambe) and it is expected that the shuttle bus could accommodate 14 employees and would be a permanent arrangement.

7.1.3 The application site is located with the Countryside Area (as allocated in the Lancaster District Local Plan), and the scheme proposes to demolish the existing farmhouse and redundant farm buildings which have a total floor area of 1670m² and replace this with a new building (to be used as a meat production facility) with a floor area of 5,107m² across two levels. The vast majority of the building would be used as a chiller and freezer with the main butchery room being in the region of 443m³. The main building would be over two floors with the majority of the second floor featuring a packaging store and offices.

- 7.1.4 Given the land allocation any scheme has to be sensitively designed and reflect the countryside setting. The new building would essentially utilise the footprint of the existing buildings on the site and the car park would be sited near to the location of the current farmhouse and then continue into the existing fields. A drainage pond and a further new barn would be constructed to south east of the car park on land that is currently fields.
- 7.1.5 Policy DM15 is relevant in the consideration of this application which does support the principle of land and buildings being brought back into use for economic purposes provided that access, landscape and visual amenity can be satisfactorily addressed, and that the proposal conforms to the general design requirements outlined in Policy DM35 of the Development Management DPD. Policy DM7 and DM8 of the Development Management DPD which concern economic development in rural areas and the re-use and conversion of rural buildings also have some relevance in the consideration of this planning application.
- 7.1.6 The application does seek to utilise an existing farm complex and therefore there is an element of the re-use of previously developed land, and this is to be supported. The car park would extend into what is currently agricultural land, and therefore there is some encroachment into the undeveloped open countryside. A meat production facility is an industrial use, and the applicant currently operates out of White Lund Industrial Estate. The intention is to relocate their facility to this proposed site. The applicants have considered potentially expanding operations at their current premises however this is not possible due to land adjacent to the existing facility not allowing for an efficient factory layout to be developed and the land was not available at a commercially attractive price.
- 7.1.7 Officers did have concerns regarding an industrial use located within the open countryside given there are a number of industrial estates within a few miles of the application site. The applicant was asked to demonstrate that the use of a farm could no longer be accommodated, and that they had considered other sites within the locale. The applicant submitted a sequential assessment in support of the scheme and examined available sites on White Lund Industrial Estate and also at the Heysham Business Park. A more detailed Sequential Assessment supports this planning application compared to what was previously submitted. The assessment highlights alternative sites within the urban area of the district and other allocated employment sites. It has been concluded by the applicant that the available sites are not of sufficient size, are leasehold rather than freehold or do not meet with the business requirements of the proposal, notably the farm to fork process which requires areas of open land to rear livestock. Officers consider the scope of the sequential test appear realistic and the reasons for discounting sites also appear reasonable, this is a view shared by the Councils Planning and Housing Policy Team. Through discussions with the agent it has transpired that the former farmer opted to retire, and the applicant has submitted a very brief marketing history document to demonstrate that the site received little interest when marketed and subsequently the fields associated with the original farm complex were sold. As a result the majority of the surrounding land was sold to the adjoining farmer in 2012 and remains in agricultural use.
- 7.1.8 Althams are a key local employer with many of their staff having worked for the company for a number of years. Officers are mindful of the encroachment of the parking into the Countryside Area however the applicant has since the last application, limited the extent of car parking and consider that the principle of the re-use of the site for the use as proposed can be found acceptable. It is considered that the development conforms to the aims of DM DPD Policies DM7 and DM15.

7.2 Drainage

- 7.2.1 The site lies within Flood Zone 1, and in accordance with the sustainable drainage hierarchy the applicant considered whether it was feasible to discharge surface water from the site to soakaways (by infiltration). Given ground conditions this indicated low infiltration rates and therefore the use of soakaways is not appropriate. It is now proposed that surface water would be collected and discharged to a retention pond to be constructed in the field forming the eastern portion of the site. It is proposed that there would be an attenuated discharge from the pond to the existing culverted watercourse running to the east of the site.
- 7.2.2 There is no mains drainage in the area, and therefore foul drainage would need to pass through a package treatment plant (details of which could be secured by planning condition) before discharging to the retention pond which would incorporate a planting/reed bed to provide the secondary level of treatment that is required.

7.2.3 With respect to the previous application no objection was received from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) however they recommended conditions requiring precise details as to how surface water will be managed on the site. It has to be assumed given there was no objection to the previous application from the LLFA and that the scheme does not propose any further impermeable surfaces, that from a drainage perspective the scheme is acceptable however conditions should be attached to any planning consent requiring detailed drainage designs and its on-going management and maintenance regime.

7.2.4 Concern from a third party has been raised with respect to potential damage to the main drain that crosses the site. There is a water main that crosses the access into the site and also an existing culverted watercourse and from plan it would not appear as though there would be any impact on current drainage arrangements.

7.3 Design

7.3.1 This is a new large building, with the south western elevation solely comprising of Yorkshire boarding and the south eastern aspect essentially the same but also containing some curtain walling and flat wall panelling. The north western elevation again is predominately made up of Yorkshire boarding but also incorporates elements of flat walled panelling. The principle elevation of the building would be the north eastern elevation and would feature flat wall panelling as the mainstay of the material choice. The building is functional for the needs of the business but it is not inspiring. As noted in the landscape section the south western elevation is a continuous mass of Yorkshire boarding at 76 metres in length and whilst elements are recessed it feels rather industrial, although not too dissimilar to large agricultural buildings (of which the building is proposing to replicate). It is the case that when travelling to Lancaster from Heysham you do have quite extensive views of the current main farm buildings, but it should be noted that the existing buildings are lower in height compared to the applicant's proposals. Design is subjective, however, it is considered that once weathered the timber boarding would soften and allow the development to harmonise into the landscape. Some landscaping is proposed along the south western boundary. Whilst this will not screen the development entirely it would help soften the appearance of the building over time and help reduce the impact. On balance it is considered that the development conforms to Policy DM35 of the Development Management DPD, though conditions should be attached to any grant of planning permission requesting that building materials are submitted for consideration together with landscaping details.

7.4 Highways

7.4.1 The site would have a single point of access from the A683 (Lancaster/Morecambe Bypass) and the application is supported by a detailed Transport Statement. The County Council as Highway Authority are supportive of the application on the basis that visibility splays of 4.5m x 295m in each direction are achieved, together with a review of the existing street lighting within the vicinity of the access together with the appropriate standard of highway carriageway marking. They also request the provision of a Travel Plan and to ensure that the shuttle bus is provided for by the applicant.

7.4.2 The scheme is in a relatively remote location just off the A683 and whilst the applicants are proposing cycle parking (24 spaces), in reality many of the employees will have no option but to travel to site by private transport (there is no bus service that passes the site and is removed from the nearest bus stop with no means of walking to the site). The scheme proposes 41 car parking spaces, 7 spaces for the Althams HGVs, 5 spaces for visitors and 2 disabled visitor spaces (included within the total 41 spaces). The level of parking is consistent to the standards as presented in Appendix B of the Development Management DPD (noting these are maximum standards). Subject to planning conditions being imposed controlling the necessary off-site highway works to allow for the access to be created it is considered that the development is acceptable from a highway safety perspective.

7.4.3 The fundamental difference between this application and the refused scheme is that the applicant is providing a shuttle bus for staff working during the daytime period, collecting staff in the morning and transporting them back home during the afternoon/evening. The shuttle bus will operate from Heysham towards White Lund Industrial Estate before looping back down the A683 towards the site, stopping at a number of fixed points along the way. The cost of providing this service will rest with the applicant and would assist in contributing towards a more sustainable means of transport given the site does not lend itself to walking or cycling. It is recommended that the provision of the shuttle bus is controlled by means of a legal agreement.

7.5 Ecology

7.5.1 The application is supported by an ecological appraisal that contained dusk emergence surveys to establish the presence or otherwise of bats during the summer of 2015. The overall conclusion is that the site is unlikely to support protected species. However, a condition should be attached to any consent with respect to precautionary mitigation measures. Officers are satisfied that the development will not adversely impact on protected species such as bats, barn owls and nesting birds. Natural England offered no objection to the refused application and they adopt the same position with this planning application. From an ecology perspective the scheme is acceptable.

7.6 Trees

7.6.1 A total of two individual trees (T1-T2), three groups (G1-G3) and five hedges (H1-H5) have been identified in relation to the proposed development. Species include sycamore, birch, hawthorn, holly, elder and cypress. H1 (Sycamore, hawthorn and holly), T1 (Silver Birch), H3 (Hawthorn) and H4 (Hawthorn) will be required to be removed in order to accommodate the proposed development. To accommodate the increased visibility splays the majority of the landscaping along the highway would remain with the exception of the proposed removal of a section of mature Broom. A soft landscaping scheme has been submitted in support of the scheme to which the Tree Protection Officer raises no objection to subject to its implementation.

7.7 Landscape Impacts

7.7.1 The visual impact of the development would be mostly confined to passing vehicles on the A683. Views of the north eastern elevation will have a number of window openings and will be finished in a colour similar to the existing structures on site. However, the proposed increase in mass and ridge height of the development over the existing building will inevitably lead to a greater landscape impact. It is considered that the proposed new built form would be fully visible along its southern elevation for drivers travelling to Lancaster.

7.7.2 Whilst the site is within the Countryside Area there are a number of modern interventions to the landscape, such as the A683, pylons and wind turbines, and the built form of the development site. In the opinion of Officers it is considered that there would be some adverse impacts upon highway users travelling along the A683 mostly notably from the direction of Heysham. However, the applicant has chosen to soften the impact by using the proposed timber cladding which over time will weather and become softer in the landscape, and be more in keeping with an agricultural building. This was also suggested to them by Officers at the pre-application stage. It is considered that from a landscape character perspective given the site is already developed that the development is acceptable and whilst there would be some local harm this would not amount to a significant impact on the landscape character as a whole.

7.8 Other Considerations

7.8.1 Lancashire Archaeological Advisory Service have noted that one of the barns to be lost to facilitate development is shown on the 1838 Heaton with Oxcliffe Tithe Map, as well as the 1848 OD 1:10,560 and 1891 1:2,500 mapping. Whilst no objection has been raised and they advise that heritage assets should not be lost without reason, given the presence of two similar barns in the area it is not considered necessary to preserve these buildings at the expense of the development. A condition is recommended requiring the building is recorded before demolition.

7.8.2 Given the previous use of the site a condition controlling contaminated land is required.

7.8.3 It came to light via the representations received on the refused application that there are historic rights of access that currently benefit third parties. The concerns of these owners was relayed to the applicant's agent though please note that this is a legal, not planning matter.

8.0 Planning Obligations

8.1 A legal agreement is recommended to secure the provision of the Altham's shuttle bus.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 The scheme proposes the redevelopment of previously developed land, and whilst the car parking associated with the scheme would encroach into pastureland the main operational development would be confined to previously developed site. In comparison to the refused scheme the applicant has sought to address the Council's concerns by utilising a shuttle bus and reducing the amount of car parking on the site, this assists with the sustainable credentials of the site. It is considered that whilst there would be a visual impact associated with the scale of the building, over time the palette of materials would weather and help soften the impact, but inevitably there would be some limited visual and landscape impacts especially in the short term.
- 9.2 The scheme has the support of the County Council as Highway Authority and the scheme does include sufficient cycle and parking provision, together with suitable access arrangements to allow for access and egress to the A683. There is some impact on the natural environment, namely in the loss of hedgerow, to facilitate the car parking spaces and this is a weakness of the scheme. However, it is considered that suitable mitigation can help accommodate this loss and a planning condition is recommended ensuring the landscaping scheme is implemented. It is recommended to Members that the proposal is supported.

Recommendation

That subject to the applicant signing and completing a legal agreement to secure the provision of the shuttle bus service, that Planning Permission **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard 3 year timescale
2. Development in accordance with plans
3. Contaminated land
4. Development in accordance with the AIA
5. Landscaping scheme
6. Protection of visibility splays
7. Access arrangements
8. Off-site highway scheme
9. Cycle parking provision
10. Travel Plan
11. Building materials
12. Foul Water Arrangements
13. Surface water drainage scheme
14. Surface water drainage management scheme
15. Car parking to be provided
16. Development in accordance with the submitted ecological assessment
17. Building recording
18. Finished floor levels
19. Provision of electric vehicle charging points

Article 35, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

In accordance with the above legislation, the City Council can confirm that it has made the recommendation in a positive and proactive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development, working proactively with the agent to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The recommendation has been made having had regard to the impact of development, and in particular to the relevant policies contained in the Development Plan, as presented in full in the officer report, and to all relevant material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance.

Background Papers

None