

REPORT of DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE

to SOUTH EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE 10 September 2018

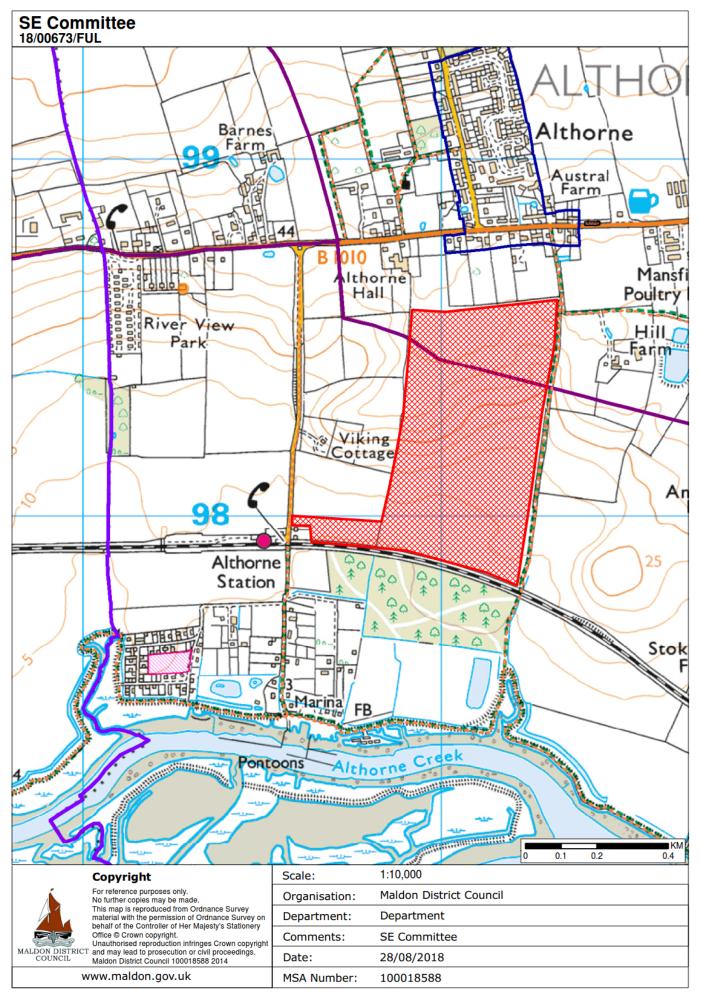
Application Number	FUL/MAL/18/00673
Location	Land Adjacent Althorne House, Station Road, Althorne, Essex
Proposal	Section 73A application for the creation of a farm track from the proposed barn to the adjacent highway and the proposed erection of agricultural barn with associated hard surfaced yard
Applicant	Mr & Mrs John & Susan Wilsdon
Agent	Mr Mark Morgan - Petro Designs Ltd
Target Decision Date	03.09.2018 E.o.T. requested for 07.09.2018
Case Officer	Spyros Mouratidis
Parish	ALTHORNE
Reason for Referral to the Committee / Council	Major Application

1. <u>RECOMMENDATION</u>

APPROVE subject to conditions as detailed in Section 8 of this report.

2. SITE MAP

Please see overleaf.



3. **SUMMARY**

3.1. Proposal / brief overview, including any relevant background information

- 3.1.1. The application site lies to the east of Station Road, outside of any defined development boundary, to the south of the village of Althorne. To the west of the site is Althorne train station and a small cluster of residential properties. Abutting the site to the south is the rail track connecting South Woodham Ferrers to Burnham-on-Crouch and Southminster. The surrounding area is rural in nature consisting mainly of open arable fields. The application site is an open field crossed by a farm track which at the time of site inspection was under construction. Looking at aerial photographs from April 2017, it is evident that the farm track is a recent addition to the site.
- 3.1.2. Planning permission is sought for the creation of a farm track and the erection of an agricultural barn with associated hard surfaced yard to be used for grain storage, storage of machinery, general storage and as a workshop. It has been noted that the construction of the farm track has already commenced on site and as such the application has been submitted under the provisions of Section 73A of the 1990 Act, namely it is partially retrospective in nature.
- 3.1.3. The barn would be of rectangular shape with a projecting gable to the front and is proposed to measure 43.3m wide by 12.2m deep. The main roof over the barn would be dual-pitched with the slopes facing east and west. The building is proposed to be constructed with black weatherboarding to the walls, sheeting to the roof, cast iron guttering, and timber windows and doors. It is also proposed to have a door to the front elevation of the gable element and an opening to the southern part. Three windows are proposed to the front elevation of the building and one window is proposed to be located on the south elevation of the gable. The hard surfaced area would measure 12m by 43.5m and would be located to the front of the proposed building. The farm track will connect Station Road, the adjacent highway, to the proposed barn and its average width would be 3m.

3.2. Conclusion

3.2.1. It is not considered that the harm identified from some aspects of the development is detrimental to such a degree as to warrant the refusal of the application. The development is associated with an existing agricultural use and, subject to conditions, would not be materially harmful to the locality, the adjoining properties or highway safety. As such, the development is in line with the stipulations of policies S1, S8, D1, D2, E1, E4, N2, T1 and T2 of the approved Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP) and the national policy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

4. MAIN RELEVANT POLICIES

Members' attention is drawn to the list of background papers attached to the agenda.

4.1. Revised National Planning Policy Framework including paragraphs:

- 2-14 Achieving sustainable development
- 11 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- 38 Decision-making
- 47-50 Determining applications
- 54 57 Planning conditions and obligations
- 80 84 Building a strong, competitive economy
- 128 132 Achieving well-designed places
- 170 183 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.2. Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP) approved by the Secretary of State:

- S1 Sustainable Development
- S7 Prosperous Rural Communities
- S8 Settlement boundaries and the Countryside
- D1 Design quality and built environment
- D2 Climate change and environmental impact of new development
- E1 Employment
- E4 Agricultural and Rural Diversification
- N2 Natural Environment and Biodiversity
- T1 Sustainable Transport
- T2 Accessibility

4.3. Relevant Planning Guidance / Documents:

- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Maldon District Design Guide SPD (MDDG)
- Maldon District Vehicle Parking Standards SPD (MDVPS)
- Althorne Village Design Statement (VDS)
- The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO 2015)

5. MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. Preliminary matters

5.1.1. The application was submitted following the refusal of a prior approval request. This prior approval was refused because an aspect of the development (the farm track) had already commenced and as such it had to be calculated as part of the area covered by development. This resulted in the overall area exceeding the threshold allowed within the GPDO 2015 as amended.

5.2. Principle of Development

5.2.1. The application site lies outside of any defined development boundary where policies of restriction apply. However, the building is proposed to be used for agricultural

purposes. The NPPF encourages Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to promote a strong rural economy through, among others, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. Furthermore, the NPPF urges LPAs to support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and welldesigned new buildings. Similar principles are set out in the local plan including policies S1, S8 and E4 of the LDP.

- 5.2.2. Policy S8 of the LDP seeks to protect the countryside for its landscape, natural resources and ecological value as well as its intrinsic character and beauty. Outside of the allocated sites and the development boundaries, policy S8 of the LDP states that planning permission for development will only be granted where the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside is not adversely impacted upon and provided it is for agriculture development in accordance with policy E4 of the LDP.
- 5.2.3. Through policy E4 of the LDP the Council supports the development of new buildings or activities associated with agriculture and other land based rural businesses. The policy sets three criteria for the development of new buildings. These criteria are:
 - "1) There is a justifiable and functional need for the building/activity;
 - 2) The function of the proposed building/activity is directly linked, and ancillary to, the existing use; and
 - 3) The building / activity could not reasonably be located in existing towns, villages or allocated employment areas."
- 5.2.4. With regard to criterion (1), the applicant contends that the building will be used for storage of grain coming from the agricultural unit. It is now standard practice to store grain within buildings like this in order to have smaller depth of the stored grain and so to achieve better control of the humidity and temperature. The calculations provided show that the barn will accommodate the storage of the grain grown within the farm. Although it has not been demonstrated why there is a need to erect the building on site, it is normal practice and a reasonable expectation to have a storage building for an agricultural unit. Therefore it is considered that there is a justifiable and functional need for the building.
- 5.2.5. Criterion (2) is met as the building is directly linked to the use of the adjoining farm. The building is designed to have adequate capacity accommodate the produce of the agricultural unit.
- 5.2.6. In relation to criterion (3), the building could not reasonably be located in existing towns, villages or other allocated land. By nature, agricultural buildings are located outside of formal and designated development boundaries.
- 5.2.7. Bearing in mind the above analysis, the development would meet all the criteria of policy E4 of the LDP. The support towards agricultural enterprises is prominent within the LDP and the NPPF. Thus, the principle of the development is acceptable. Other material planning considerations are discussed in the following sections of the report.

5.3. Design and Impact on the Character of the Area

- 5.3.1. The planning system promotes high quality development through good inclusive design and layout, and the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities. Good design should be indivisible from good planning. Recognised principles of good design seek to create a high quality built environment for all types of development.
- 5.3.2. It should be noted that good design is fundamental to high quality new development and its importance is reflected in the NPPF. The NPPF states that:

"The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities."

"Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development."

- 5.3.3. This principle is also set out in the approved LDP. The basis of policy D1 of the approved LDP seeks to ensure that all development will respect and enhance the character and local context and make a positive contribution in terms of:
 - a. Architectural style, use of materials, detailed design features and construction methods. Innovative design and construction solutions will be considered where appropriate;
 - b. Height, size, scale, form, massing and proportion;
 - c. Landscape setting, townscape setting and skylines;
 - d. Layout, orientation, and density;
 - e. Historic environment particularly in relation to designated and nondesignated heritage assets;
 - f. Natural environment particularly in relation to designated and nondesignated sites of biodiversity / geodiversity value; and
 - g. Energy and resource efficiency.
- 5.3.4. Similar support for high quality design and the appropriate layout, scale and detailing of development is found within the MDDG (2017).
- 5.3.5. The application site lies outside of any defined development boundary. According to policies S1 and S8 of the LDP, the countryside will be protected for its landscape, natural resources and ecological value as well as its intrinsic character and beauty. The policies stipulate that outside of the defined settlement boundaries, the Garden Suburbs and the Strategic Allocations, planning permission for development will only be granted where the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside is not adversely impacted upon and provided the development is for proposals that are in compliance with policies within the LDP, neighbourhood plans and other local planning guidance.

- 5.3.6. The building is of typical design for an agricultural use. The layout of the development, located away from entrance to the farm, minimises any prominent views of the building from the highway. However, this positioning, in very close proximity to the train line where public views will be available, coupled with the scale of the development are grounds for some concern. Moreover, the location of the building away from the existing cluster of development would result in the development appearing an isolated addition to the countryside.
- 5.3.7. On the other hand, the layout of the barn where its longer side is perpendicular to the train line, allows more views to be retained when compared to a different layout which reduces the conflict with the Althorne VDS. Moreover, the traditional barn appearance mitigates the harm from the addition of a new building into the rural countryside. It should also be noted that it is not uncharacteristic for agricultural buildings of this nature to have comparable scale. Furthermore, the height of the building is justified with the need for a truck to tilt its bed in order to deposit the grains within the barn.
- 5.3.8. The projecting gable and the windows and doors proposed to the front elevation of the building break the mass of the building and adding some interest. It has been raised as a comment that windows will have a domesticating effect. While this may be true to a limited extent, the overall appearance of the building is of an agricultural barn. This type of building is normally located within the countryside. The addition of three windows to the front elevation, on its own is not considered to be harmful to the character and appearance of the rural locality. Moreover, as the building will be used not only as a store but also as a workshop for the farm's machinery, the windows serve a functional purpose. Planning conditions to control the use of the building and to remove permitted development rights in order to avoid any further erosion of the countryside would meet the six tests of the NPPF.
- 5.3.9. The materials proposed to be used include black weatherboarding above brickwork plinths for the walls, tin sheeting for the roof, cast iron guttering and rainwater pipes, and timber for the windows and the main door. The use of the proposed materials would be acceptable and traditional for a barn in Essex.
- 5.3.10. Overall, subject to the above mentioned conditions, while there is some harm identified to arise from the development, it is not considered that the development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the rural locality and the countryside to such a degree as to warrant the refusal of the application on these grounds.

5.4. Impact on Residential Amenity

- 5.4.1. The basis of policy D1 of the approved LDP seeks to ensure that development will protect the amenity of its surrounding areas taking into account privacy, overlooking, outlook, noise, smell, light, visual impact, pollution, daylight and sunlight. This is supported by section C07 of the MDDG (2017).
- 5.4.2. The nearest dwellings to the application site are Station Cottages and Althorne House. These properties are located more than 170m to the east of the proposed building. Given the distance between the neighbouring properties and the proposed building, it is unlikely that the development would cause any detrimental harm upon the amenity

- of the neighbouring occupiers in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or overpowering.
- 5.4.3. The nature of an agricultural use could have an impact on the acoustic environment of the neighbouring occupiers. The Council's Environmental Health has raised objections to the approval of the application on these grounds. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the field was already in agricultural use and that agriculture is not controlled as other uses by the planning system. As such, any noise, light or dust pollution associated with the agricultural use of the site could have arisen irrespective of the proposed development.
- 5.4.4. It is considered that a condition to control the use of the site generally would not meet six tests of the NPPF. However, conditions to control specifically the use of the workshop on site will meet the six tests and will be sufficient to avoid any additional harm to the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers.

5.5. Access, Parking and Highway Safety

- 5.5.1. Policy T1 of the approved LDP seeks to secure provision of sustainable transport in new development and policy T2 pursues to create and maintain an accessible environment, requiring development proposals to:
 - 1. Be located where there is physical and environmental capacity to accommodate the type and amount of traffic generated, or locations where the impact can be suitably mitigated;
 - 2. Provide safe and direct walking and cycling routes to nearby services, facilities and public transport where appropriate;
 - 3. Improve accessibility to the countryside and the natural environment and to enhance and protect the provision of Public Rights of Way;
 - 4. Improve accessibility to buildings, streets and public spaces, particularly for those with mobility impairments;
 - 5. Provide sufficient parking facilities having regard to the Council's adopted parking standards;
 - 6. Provide sufficient and safe access to service and emergency vehicles; and
 - 7. Give appropriate consideration to encourage a people-oriented space within the development.
- 5.5.2. Similarly, policy D1 of the approved LDP seeks to include safe and secure vehicle and cycle parking having regard to the Council's adopted parking standards and maximise connectivity within the development and to the surrounding areas including the provision of high quality and safe pedestrian, cycle and, where appropriate, horse riding routes. The Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards SPD contains the parking standards which are expressed as maximum standards. This takes into account Government guidance which encourages the reduction in the reliance on the car and promotes methods of sustainable transport.
- 5.5.3. The Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards are silent in relation to parking provision for agricultural related uses. In any case, it is considered that the proposed hardstanding to the front of the building will be sufficient to accommodate any parking needs. The access arrangements have been altered as a result of the development. However, the adjacent highway is a private road and given that

agriculture related traffic is widely present within the district, it is not consider that the development will have any detrimental impact upon the highway safety.

5.6. Flood Risk

5.6.1. A small part of the application site, approximately 0.17Ha of the site is within a Flood Zone 2. This part of the site is close to the southern boundary of the site and is not proposed to be developed. Therefore, flood risk is not a decisive consideration in this instance.

5.7. Sustainability

- 5.7.1. Within the NPPF, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is central to the policy approach in the NPPF, as it sets out the Government's changes to the planning system and emphasizes the need to plan positively for appropriate new development.
- 5.7.2. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF advises that for decision-taking this means, approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay, but where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so should significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the polices of the NPPF taken as a whole, or specific polices in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.
- 5.7.3. In this instance the proposed development is in line with the requirements of policy S8 and E4 of the approved LDP. The identified harm to the character and appearance of the countryside is not considered to be detrimental and is outweighed by the compliance of the proposal with the policies of the LDP and the NPPF. The economic, social and environmental benefits arising from the proposal including the support of an agricultural business and the minimising of the need to transfer the grain or the machinery away from the site outweigh the environmental harm associated with the harm to the countryside and the carbon footprint of the construction of the new building.

6. ANY RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

 AGR/MAL/18/00245 - Prior notification for an agricultural barn for grain storage, storage of machinery, general storage and workshop. - Refused 22.03.2018

7. CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

7.1. Representations received from Parish / Town Councils

Name of Parish / Town Council	Comment	Officer Response
Althorne	Object – Plans are too general and should have	- The application is a full planning application

Name of Parish / Town Council	Comment	Officer Response
	been submitted under Agricultural Planning. - The design is not suitable for grain storage. - Prior approval comments raised have not been addressed. - Concerns regarding flood zone 2 and - Visual impact.	seeking planning permission. This allows the Local Planning Authority to consider the matter fully. It is not clear what is meant with the term "Agricultural Planning"The design of the barn is suitable to accommodate the storage of the grain produced in the farmIt is not clear what prior approval comments have not been addressed. Please see section 5.1 of the report Please see section 5.6 of the report about flooding For any issues regarding the visual impact please see section 5.3 of the report.

7.2. Statutory Consultees and Other Organisations

Name of Statutory Consultee / Other Organisation	Comment	Officer Response
Highway Authority	No objection	Noted
Archaeology	Awaiting response	
Network Rail	Awaiting response	

7.3. Internal Consultees

Name of Internal Consultee	Comment	Officer Response
Environmental Health	Object – Increase of noise and disturbance from the development.	Noted – see section 5.4 of the report.
Tree officer	No objection	Noted

7.4. Representations received from Interested Parties

7.4.1. Letters were received **objecting** to the application. The reasons for objection are summarised as set out in the table below:

Objection Comment	Officer Response
Because of the size and appearance of the building there is harm to the open landscape.	See section 5.3 of the report
There is no justification for the building	See section 5.2 of the report
The site is within Flood Zone 2	See section 5.6 of the report
Other properties in the vicinity had to be built 2.9m above ground to minimize risk from flooding.	See previous comment and also each case is different.
The information about the sustainability of the location of the building indicates that there is an intention to convert the building to dwellinghouses.	This is just an assumption made by the interested party. The LPA has to determine the application that has been submitted to it. The application is for the erection of an agricultural building and no information suggests otherwise. In any case conditions will be imposed in line with the six tests of the NPPF.
The area is important for archaeological investigations	A response from the relevant consultee is expected in due course. If necessary conditions could be imposed to address this matter.
The track is already used by vans and lorries	The use of the building and the track is for agricultural purposes. A relevant condition will be imposed. However, this cannot prohibit the use of the track from other vehicles.
The proposed facilities will need to be supported by foul water drainage	The application does not propose anything like this. The workshop is not an employment space, it is an area to store tools associated with the farm and carry out occasional repairs. A condition will also be imposed. Any additional development, such as the installation of foul water drainage, will require planning permission.
Station Road is not a highway but a private road. The owner of the road should have been notified as he may not allow the change of use.	Station Road is indeed a private road which is giving access to the train station a facility accessible by all people and vehicles. Therefore, while not a public highway, Station Road is still a highway. There is no change of use of the highway. Whether the owner of the road is not willing to allow access to the applicant is a private matter between the parties. The application was advertised in the appropriate ways.

Objection Comment	Officer Response
Damage has been caused to the road and some fixtures of the road by lorries entering the site	The decorum of drivers cannot be controlled by the planning system. If there is damage to private property this is a matter between the parties.
The development will cause noise and disturbance	See section 5.4 of the report

8. PROPOSED CONDITIONS

- Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any Order amending, revoking or re-enacting that Order), premises shall only be used for purposes associated with the agriculture use of the agricultural unit, namely the application site and any other agricultural field under the same ownership, and for no other purpose. REASON In order to ensure the appropriate use of the site in the interests of protecting the amenities of adjacent occupiers, the natural environment and the highway safety in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1, D2, E4, T1 and T2 of the approved Maldon District LDP and guidance contained in the NPPF.
- The use of the agricultural workshop as shown in the approved plans within the building hereby permitted shall only operate between 08:00 hours and 18:00 hours Mondays to Saturdays and at no time on Sundays, Bank and Public Holidays.
 - <u>REASON</u> In order to ensure the protection of the amenities of adjacent occupiers and the natural environment in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1 and D2 of the approved Maldon District LDP and guidance contained in the NPPF.
- In association with the use of the agricultural workshop as marked in the approved plans, no machinery shall be operated or any process shall be carried out and no deliveries or collections undertaken at the site other than between 08:00 hours and 18:00 hours on weekdays and between 08:00 hours and 13:00 hours on Saturdays and not at any time on Sundays and Public Holidays.

 REASON In order to ensure the protection of the amenities of adjacent occupiers and the natural environment in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1and D2 of the approved Maldon District LDP and guidance contained in the NPPF.
- 4 No machinery associated with the use of the agricultural workshop as marked in the approved plans shall be used outside the building hereby approved.

 REASON In order to ensure the protection of the amenities of adjacent occupiers and the natural environment in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1 and D2 of the approved Maldon District Replacement Local Plan and guidance contained in the NPPF.
- No extraction or ventilation equipment, vents, air conditioning units or similar plant equipment shall be installed or fitted to any external part of the building except in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme as approved and installed shall be retained as such thereafter.
 - <u>REASON</u> In order to ensure the protection of the amenities of adjacent occupiers, the natural environment and the character and appearance of the area in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1 and D2 of the approved Maldon District LDP and guidance contained in the NPPF.

- 6 No external illumination shall be installed or fitted to any part of the site except in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme as approved and installed shall be retained as such thereafter.
 - <u>REASON</u> In order to ensure the protection of the amenities of adjacent occupiers, the natural environment and the character and appearance of the area in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1 and D2 of the approved Maldon District LDP and guidance contained in the NPPF.
- No goods, materials, plant, machinery, skips, containers, packaging or other similar items associated with the agricultural use of the application site shall be stored or kept outside of the building hereby approved.

 REASON In order to ensure the protection of the amenities of adjacent occupiers and the natural environment in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1 and D2 of the approved Maldon District LDP and guidance contained in the NPPF.
- Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 3 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and reenacting that Order with or without modification) the use of the building hereby approved shall only be for agricultural purposes.

 REASON In order to ensure the appropriate use of the site in the interests of protecting the amenities of adjacent occupiers, the natural environment and the highway safety in accordance with policies S1, S8, D1, D2, E4, T1 and T2 of the approved Maldon District LDP and guidance contained in the NPPF.