

MC/16/4356

Date Received: 24 October, 2016

Location: Eastcroft, Town Road, Cliffe Woods, Rochester, ME3 7RL

Proposal: Change of use of agricultural buildings to form five separate units comprising of Class B1/B8 use (office/industrial) with associated internal and external alterations

Applicant: Mr Lane

Agent: Mr G Simpkin Graham Simpkin Planning 2 The Parade Ash Road Hartley Longfield DA3 8BG

Ward Strood Rural

Case Officer Paul Ives

Contact Number 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 18 January 2017.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Drawings 09B,10B;11A;12;13B received 24 October 2016

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

- 3 No development shall take place until details and samples of all materials to be used externally have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in

accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 4 The use shall not be commenced, nor the premises occupied, until the area shown on the submitted layout as vehicle parking, loading and off-loading and turning space has been provided, surfaced and drained in accordance with full details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with any details subsequently approved prior to first occupation of any of the buildings for the approved uses and thereafter it shall be kept available for such use and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order amending, revoking or re-enacting that Order) shall be carried out on that area of land or in such a position as to preclude its use.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate accommodation for the parking, loading, off-loading and turning of vehicles is likely to lead to hazardous conditions in the public highway and adverse impact on amenity and to accord with Policies T13 and BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 Notwithstanding the submitted details, prior to first occupation of the buildings for the use as set out , full details of the location of the following ecological enhancement measures shall be submitted to, and be approved by, the local planning authority:

- a) 1 x Schwegler Bat Box: Type 1FF
- b) 2 x Schwegler Bird Box: Type 1B;
- c) 1 x Schwegler Sparrow Terrace: Type 1SP;

The approved scheme shall be fully implemented prior to first occupation of the buildings for the proposed uses and thereafter maintained.

Reason: In the interests of ecology enhancements for the site in accordance with Policy BNE 37 of the Medway Local Plan 2003

- 6 Prior to first occupation of any of the approved units, details of work to improve visibility to the junction including clearance of vegetation and advance notice signage, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The vegetation shall be cleared in accordance with the approved details and the signs installed prior to the uses first commencing and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety

- 7 The use hereby permitted shall only operate between the hours of 07:00 to 18:00 Mondays to Saturdays inclusive only and no opening on Sundays or Public Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and no deliveries shall take place outside these specified opening hours.

Reason: To regulate and control the permitted development in the interests of

amenity in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This application proposes the change of use of agricultural buildings to form five separate units comprising of Class B1/B8 usage with associated internal and external alterations. The development would provide 362m² of light industrial Class B1 (c) floorspace and 756.3m² of Storage or distribution use Class B8 use. The applicant has identified three buildings in plan form and called them buildings A, B, and C. The buildings would be divided up into 5 units of accommodation for small business at the site. The applicant advises that the buildings are in sound condition and could be adapted to provide low cost accommodation with limited adaptations.

Building A

It is proposed to convert this building to provide a Class B8 unit served by an existing sliding entrance door incorporating a personal door with 4 existing windows on one elevation providing light into the building and these will be retained. In addition, the roof will be recovered in a steel with rooflights incorporated into the design as existing. The roof will be insulated at the same time integral to the roof finish.

Building B

This building is proposed to be upgraded to provide a single business unit (Class B1) by use of existing openings, an element of enclosure to the existing open frontage and recovering of the roof in artificial slate. Existing windows will be retained and any infill brickwork is proposed to match the existing on the building.

Building C

The applicant proposes to divide this building into 3 small business units (Class B1) with internal walling and shuttering doors (rollers) externally. Translucent panels are proposed within the roof to allow for natural light into the building.

Each unit will be provided with W/C and tea making facilities. The site application submission identifies 17 car parking spaces for staff and visitors with two spaces for light goods vehicles. Parking will be partly provided within the existing yard and partly within an area to the south of building A. The applicants propose to improve visibility at the entrance to the farm by clearing back vegetation to the south side of the existing access for vision splay purposes to meet that required for a 40mph speed limit. The site overall covers an area of 0.25 hectares (approx.)

Relevant Planning History

MC/14/3501

Details pursuant to condition 2 on planning permission MC/11/2476 - Listed building consent for the construction of part two storey, part single side extension facilitating

living accommodation in the roofspace; detached barn and porch to front; blocking up of existing side entrance and relocation of door together with internal alterations (demolition of porches to front and side)

Decision Discharge of Conditions

Decided 05/06/2015

MC/14/3500

Details pursuant to condition 4 on planning permission MC/11/2474 - Construction of part two storey, part single storey side extension facilitating living accommodation in the roofspace; new front porch, blocking up of existing side entrance and relocation of door together with internal alterations (demolition of porches to front and side) and detached barn for use as garage to rear (demolish existing barn).

Decision Discharge of Conditions

Decided 05/06/2015

MC/13/2352

Details pursuant to condition 2 (part) on planning permission MC/11/2476 for listed building consent for the construction of part two storey, part single side extension facilitating living accommodation in the roofspace; detached barn and porch to front; blocking up of existing side entrance and relocation of door together with internal alterations (demolition of porches to front and side)

Decision Discharge of Conditions

Decided 13/12/2013

MC/12/2089

Listed building consent for the construction of garage and outdoor living area

Decision Approval With Conditions

Decided 21/11/2012

MC/12/1913

Change of use of land from agricultural land to residential and construction of garage and outdoor living area

Decision Refusal

Decided 21/11/2012

MC/11/2476

Listed building consent for the construction of part two storey, part single side extension facilitating living accommodation in the roofspace; detached barn and porch to front; blocking up of existing side entrance and relocation of door together with internal alterations (demolition of porches to front and side)

Decision Approval With Conditions

Decided 09/03/2012

MC/11/2474

Construction of part two storey, part single storey side extension facilitating living accommodation in the roofspace; new front porch, blocking up of existing side

entrance and relocation of door together with internal alterations (demolition of porches to front and side) and detached barn for use as garage to rear (demolish existing barn).

Decision Approval With Conditions

Decided 09/03/2012

MC/00/0792

Application for prior approval under Part 24 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 for the installation of a 15 metre high telecommunications monopole mast with ancillary equipment.

Decision No Application Required

Decided 21 July, 2000

92/PNOT/0006

Steel Frame Building

Decision R/PD

Decided 8 July, 1992

87/0048

Outline Permission for new vehicular access, for joint use of Eastcroft and for agricultural purposes

Decision Approval with Conditions

Decided 14 April, 1987

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

No representations have been received.

Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council raise no objection, in principle, to a limited diversification of use at an agricultural site but have concern about the traffic implications at this site which does not appear to have been addressed in the application.

The B2000/Town Road is relatively narrow between Cliffe Woods and the site and with bends with high vegetation limiting the sight-lines for traffic. The council had similar concerns regarding a development across the road at Westfield, which was refused.

The junction with Town Road is likely to have slow speed or stationary vehicles turning right (from Cliffe Woods) and left (from Cliffe) and is a road safety concern. Although this is an existing concern, this could be exacerbated by increase of business units on the site.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing

of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background

The site is located east of Town Road just to the North of Merryboys Road, Cliffewoods. Vehicular access is derived by a private road just to the south of the buildings and yard the subject of this application. The yard and buildings comprise a blockwork finished detached pitched roof storage building of two storey in height on an east west axis (building A) and a single storey storage building of north south axis of brick construction with pitched roof over and openings on the eastern flank facing the yard area (building B). The southern most section of that building has 3 bays that are open fronted. Building C is on the eastern side of the access opposite building A and is a portal framed grain store building with lean to on the eastern side. Part of the building is enclosed with sliding doors on the northern most elevation. The yard area serves as turning space for vehicles and there is open access to workers caravans to the east of building C. The site is located adjacent to farm fields to the east,north and south of the farm buildings. The applicants home is to the south of the farm buildings and comprises a two storey detached house with curtilage garden and planting tree screen to the west and southern boundaries.

Principle

Paragraph 28 of the NPPF is relevant to this application due to the nature and location of the proposal in the context of development in the countryside and Business development / farm diversification. It seeks to support economic development in the countryside. It states: '*Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.*'

Policy BNE25 of the Local Plan and its accompanying preamble, whilst seeking to protect the Countryside also encourages re-use of redundant agricultural buildings to help support rural enterprises and employment. The objectives of this policy do allow for re use or adaptation of existing buildings in keeping with its surroundings subject to the criteria set out in Policy BNE27.

Policy BNE27 encourages the re-use or adaption of existing buildings in the countryside subject to certain criteria:

- (i) the building is of a permanent substantial construction and will not need major or complete re-construction
- (ii) the form, bulk and design of the building will be in keeping with its rural surroundings.
- (iii) the buildings character and any special features of architectural and historic value or its setting are not damaged

(iv) the nature, scale and intensity of the proposed use is not detrimental to residential and or rural amenity or the character of the area.

(v) the development does not lead to a dispersal of activity on a scale likely to prejudice a town or village

Policy BNE28 supports farm diversification provided it will not harm rural character and amenity; helps to maintain agriculture as the main use on the farm holding; the design and scale of the development is appropriate to the rural surroundings and the use is sustainable in terms of traffic generation and accessibility to a choice of modes of transport. The Policy also states that a farm strategy would be sought that demonstrates that agriculture will remain the principal land use.

This proposal would result in the loss of the existing buildings to agriculture. Although the site is understood to form part of an agricultural unit that includes a specialist rose nursery, the initial submitted application documents provided no clear details of exactly what the current agricultural uses comprise, what areas of land are involved, or what functions the three buildings serve at present. In particular, there was nothing to explain how the current farming/nursery operations would manage without the buildings. The prospect of the applicant requiring replacement agricultural buildings, in the event of the development going ahead, could be an important material consideration. Both the applicant and the agent were advised to submit further information to help the local authority understand fully the implications of the development on the long term future of the farm. The applicant's agents have now provided a revised statement, explaining that the majority of land on this 19.4 ha farm is now to be let out to a larger neighbouring farm where there are already suitable buildings to manage the land, leaving only a small area of land under the applicant's control for the production of ornamental rose plants, for which the three buildings concerned are not required. Consequently the proposed change to B1/B8 use would not generate any requirement for replacement agricultural buildings. The proposal is relatively small scale and could be absorbed into the settlement in visual; functional and employment terms without detriment to amenity, character or the setting. In this circumstance the development in the countryside is consistent with national and local policy as the development promotes economic development in the rural area and is the sensitive adaption of existing buildings.

The principle of the development and diversification is acceptable and would meet the objectives of paragraph 28 of the NPPF and Policies BNE25, BNE27, BNE28 of the Local Plan subject to consideration of matters of detail relating to design, amenity and highway impacts.

Design

The proposed development would involve the upgrade and enhancement of existing buildings whilst retaining the main fabric of the buildings. No objection is raised to the proposed works or materials used and the development would comply with the objectives of Policies BNE27, BNE28 and BNE1 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Amenity

The existing buildings form part of the farm holding with a retained household and a neighbouring household to the north of the site. Activities associated with the existing use can be noise intensive however the frequency of vehicles to the site and deliveries will potentially increase as a consequence of the change in use. In consideration of the distance from the residential properties, no objection would be raised to the proposal on amenity grounds provided management of hours is controlled by planning condition. With such a condition in place, the development would not conflict with the objectives of Policies BNE27, BNE28 and BNE2 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Ecology

No ecological information has been submitted with this application but the proposed development has limited potential to result in ecological impacts. The buildings in question have negligible potential to support roosting bats and the site is predominantly hard standing. The buildings will not be demolished, but modified to provide separate units. One of the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework is that "opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged". Ecological enhancements could be introduced alongside the development. These can include the installation of bird and bat boxes nearby any areas of native planting and away from any artificial lighting. These measures could have been secured as a condition to provide a Bat Box, Bird Box and Sparrow Terrace and the applicants have agreed to this. Accordingly, the development would comply with the objectives of Policy BNE37 of the Local Plan.

Highways

The TRICS trip generation database indicates that the proposed development is likely to generate in the region of 37 trips per day (19 arrivals and 18 departures). This number of vehicle movements would not have a significant impact on highway capacity or the flow of traffic on the local network, and the development is unlikely to generate a significant number of additional large vehicle movements taking into account the existing uses as farm buildings. The development would utilise the existing access on to Town Road, and the application acknowledges there is scope to improve sightlines along the B2000 by clearing back vegetation. Whilst forward visibility along this section of Town Road is reasonable, a junction warning sign to the south may be considered appropriate. It is recommended that details of improvements to the site access and proposals for the installation of a highway sign in advance of the access junction be secured by planning condition. Subject to this, no objection is raised in respect of policies BNE28, T1 and T2 of the Local Plan.

The proposed development would generate the need for 25 parking spaces in accordance with the vehicle parking standards. Whilst the development proposes 17 spaces, the standards are a maximum and it is likely that they will be sufficient to serve the uses proposed. No objection is therefore raised with respect to Policy T13.

Local Finance Considerations

There are no local finance implications

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

The proposal will make good use of existing buildings in the countryside which are redundant to their former agricultural use. The diversification proposed is sensitive to the character of the existing buildings and area and promotes businesses within the rural area that will potentially provide employment for local people and will therefore be sustainable. Subject to conditions the uses will not harm adjacent residential amenity and the existing access can be improved to provide the necessary visibility. As a consequence the proposed development would comply with the objectives of paragraph of the NPPF and Policies BNE1, BNE2, BNE25, BNE27, BNE28, BNE27, T1, T2 and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and is recommended for approval.

This application would normally fall for determination at officer level under powers delegated by Planning Committee but is reported due to the Parish Council representation received against officer recommendation.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>