

Date of Meeting	9 th August 2012
Application Number	E/2012/0408/FUL
Site Address	Darrells Farm, Ramsbury, SN8 2HL
Proposal	The demolition of existing farm units and subsequent erection of two steel portal framed buildings for use as microbrewery and distillery. Proposal includes retention and renovation of dutch barn, and also making good of existing concrete as required.
Applicant	Ramsbury Estates Ltd.
Town/Parish Council	Froxfield
Grid Ref	427249 169970
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Rachel Yeomans

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application has been called to Committee at the request of the Division Member, Cllr Humphries.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the recommendation that the application be approved with planning conditions.

2. Report Summary

The key issues for consideration are:

- The principle of the proposal;
- Impact of the proposal upon visual amenity, including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape;
- Impact upon residential amenity;
- Impact upon highway safety; and
- Impact upon ecology, and in particular the potential of the site as a habitat for bats.

3. Site Description

The application site is a former pig farm set on an historic airfield on an elevated plain. The existing buildings are utilitarian and dilapidated in appearance with two bunded lagoons adjacent and large expanses of concrete which are also in a poor state of repair. The site is visible from the road which runs between the A4 and the village of Ramsbury and although the main buildings are set back from the roadside, they are visible from both from the road and a public footpath which runs to the western boundary which affords closer public views of the site.

The site can be accessed by proceeding from Marlborough along the A4 towards Hungerford for approximately 3½ miles. At Harrow Farm crossroads, take the left hand turning towards Ramsbury (left is signed for Chisbury). Proceed along this road for just over a mile and at the junction continue to follow the road left. The access to Darrell's Farm is on the left on the second sharp bend. The four tenanted farm cottages are a little further along this road on the left hand side.



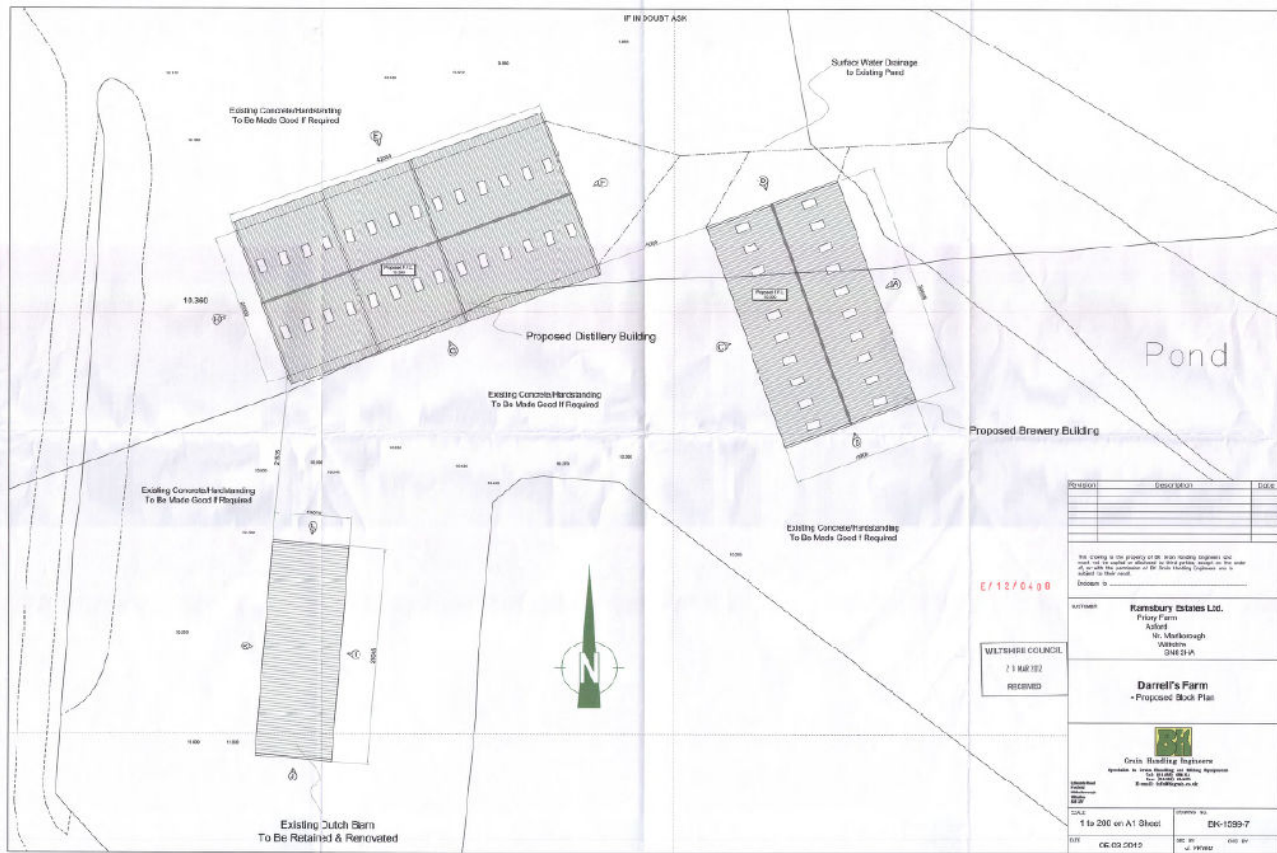
4. Planning History

There is no planning history relating to this site which is of particular relevance. However, it may be of note that the applicants have received a recent grant of planning permission at Stock Close Farm, Aldbourne, under planning reference E/2011/1164/FUL for the expansion of the enterprise in that location. This included the construction of a new building and conversion of existing buildings to provide similar facilities. No objection was raised to the principle of this proposal which was seen as an extension of a previous farm diversification proposal which made a valuable contribution to the rural economy. Since that previous application (which has not yet been implemented but remains extant), it is understood that Ramsbury Estates acquired Darrell's Farm and saw the benefits of bringing this farm back into use to provide their expanded brewery facilities because of the unsightly

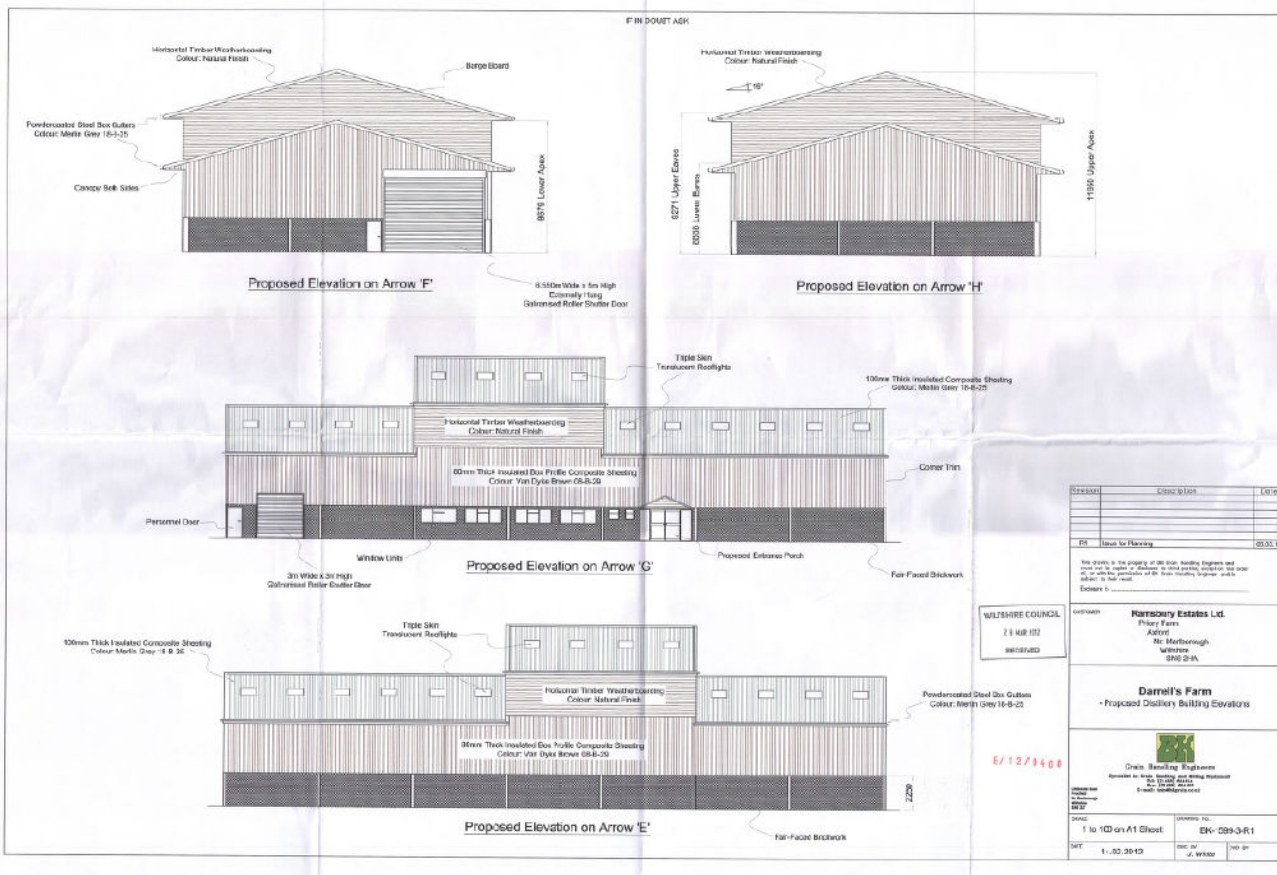
state of the site and the level of investment needed to address this. Darrell's Farm is also closer to Bridge Farm which is a main grain handling facility for Ramsbury Estates and is from where the grain is sourced for processing. The agent has confirmed that this is the applicant's preferred option as an alternative proposal to the previous consent.

5. The Proposal

The application proposes the demolition of the low rise piggery units, the existing large building and silos on site. It also proposes renovation of the existing dutch barn building, together with associated repair and improvements to the access and a comprehensive landscaping of the site. In place of the existing structures, in addition to the renovation of the existing dutch barn building, two new buildings are proposed. One of these is proposed to be the distillery building, which would be c.8.7 metres to the ridge, 6 metres to eaves for the main part of the building over a total footprint of c.42 metres x 20 metres. This is similar in scale and position to the existing barn structure and silos, save for a taller tower section for the distilling process which would extend to almost 12 metres at the ridge over a 12.5 metre section of this building only. A second building is proposed perpendicular to this building further east for the brewery, where the existing low rise piggery units are located. This would measure some 31 metres x 18 metres to a ridge height c. 8.6 metres. This building would be located to the west of existing bunding serving the lagoon. The application also includes a car parking area and extensive landscaping, some of which would be undertaken as direct improvement and mitigation for the development and other elements as part of the Estate's wider landscape restoration works.



Site Layout Plan



Elevations of proposed distillery building

6. Planning Policy

Policies PD1 (Development and Design), NR6 (Sustainability and Protection of the Landscape) and NR7 (Protection of the Landscape) of the adopted Kennet Local Plan 2011 are relevant.

Government policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework is also a material consideration, in particular, Chapter 3 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy' and Chapter 9 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.

7. Consultations

Wiltshire Council Environmental Protection Team – No objection to the principle of the proposal subject to final control over the attenuation of noise and odour emissions.

AONB Officer – Following the submission of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, raises no objections subject to control over final details including spoil disposal, open storage, materials, landscaping and management, external lighting. The proposals amount to a rural diversification proposal and the benefits of this need to be considered. The taller section of building appears will be more prominent than the existing buildings, however, the general agricultural appearance of the site will be preserved and the landscaping will help to mitigate in the longer term. The erosion of the rural highway network is something to be avoided and additional clarification as to vehicle movements should be provided.

Wiltshire Council Highways Officer - Initially, highways recommended refusal on the basis that the submitted details were insufficient to fully assess the impact of the proposals upon highway safety. However, based on the very limited information provided at this time, it was assumed the use would likely lead to an increase in traffic over the previous agricultural use and concerns were raised about the impact of the proposals upon highway safety.

A Transport Statement was then submitted by the agent to set out the previous and proposed vehicle movements. This attracted criticism from Highways Officer who considered the submitted information to be lacking and inaccurate in places, sufficient that an objection on highways grounds was sustained.

The agents have subsequently submitted information direct from a former employee at the farm who has verified both the vehicle numbers and types of vehicles visiting the site during the previous agricultural operations. Consequently, the Highways Officer has reconsidered the latest submission and has provided the following table of comparison of vehicle movements and the comments below:

	PIGGERY			BREWERY	
	Per annum (trips)	Per day (trips)		Per annum (trips)	Per day (trips)
Light vehicles	1008 Note 1	2.8		4972 Note 2	13.6
Tractors + trailers	660 Note 3	1.8		92 Note 4	0.3
Small HGV's	320 Note 5	0.9		500 Note 6	1.4
Articulated HGV's	968 Note 7	2.7		12 Note 8	0.03
Total	2956	8.2		5576	15.33

Total HGV's	1288	3.5		512	1.43	60 % less
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Note 1. Piggery light vehicles are the annual totals of the regular visitors and the manager as set out in the Gordon Buckingham letter.

Note 2. Brewery light vehicles are the staff movements based on 7 staff 5 days per week and half staffing at weekends, plus transit delivery movements - see table page 3, of the letter dated 12th July by Michael Wheat.

Note 3. Piggery tractors and trailers are the 330 loads of slurry removal in the Gordon Buckingham letter.

Note 4. Brewery tractors and trailers are the 32 + 60, wheat from Bridge Farm and waste removal, in the table page 3, of the letter dated 12th July by Michael Wheat.

Note 5. Piggery small HGV's are the rigid lorry movements (minerals, cereal, creep feed and breeding stock)

as set out in the Gordon Buckingham letter.

Note 6. Brewery small HGV's are the 6.6 – 7.5 tonne lorry distribution movements as in the table page 3, of the letter dated 12th July by Michael Wheat.

Note 7. Piggery articulated HGV's are the feed stuff movements and the livestock movements as set out in the Gordon Buckingham letter.

Note 8. Brewery articulated HGV's are the 6 No. deliveries of barley malt p.a. in the table page 3, of the letter dated 12th July by Michael Wheat.

Highway Officer's Comments:

“As you are aware I have received a letter dated 12th July 2012 from the transport agent Michael Wheat, and a copy letter from the former manager at the piggery detailing the traffic movements which the piggery generated. The information provided on the piggery traffic movements has corrected a number of the assumptions made in the earlier Transport Statement and in turn these have been accepted by Michael Wheat and summarised in the revised table in his recent letter. For example it is now accepted by the agent that the staff lived on site, and that two thirds of the 3 million gallons of slurry removal did not involve public roads. I consider the revised information on piggery movements to be now generally correct, and the letter provided by the former manager provides verification.

“To assist in comparing the previous and proposed uses with greater clarity, I have produced a comparison table (above). While the brewery will generate an increase in overall traffic movements, the numbers of small heavy goods vehicles will be similar to the previous use, and the numbers of large (articulated) vehicles less. The number of vehicles generated by the brewery overall will be around 15 trips per day which is about 1 trip every 50 minutes on the network, on average.

“I withdraw my previous recommendation of refusal. There should be a planning condition that prior to the development being brought into use the passing bays on the roads leading to the site shall have been improved in accordance with details to be first submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

“There should also be a planning condition to require the provision of the vehicle parking and turning areas as detailed on the submitted plans, with the areas so provided being thereafter maintained and kept available for the parking and turning of vehicles.

“The applicants should be advised that the works within the public highway will need to be secured by a Section 278 Agreement prior to commencement of the works.”

Wiltshire Council Ecologist – The submitted report is adequate and no objection is raised to the impact on protected species subject to works being carried out in accordance with the report's recommendations.

Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council – No objection.

Froxfield Parish Council – Whilst the parish would like to support the application, villagers (over 100) are alarmed by the potential for damage, disruption and compromise resulting from an increase in traffic and large traffic through Froxfield village and the parish council and residents would object to any proposal which increases such traffic. The local road network is considered completely unsuitable, passing close to many listed buildings and adjacent an unfenced children's

recreation area. The only compromise residents would accept is for Ramsbury Estates which owns land adjacent to Darrell's farm to use their own private roads / airfield coming from Park Road off the A4 which is far safer and direct. (It is understood in relation to this latter point that Ramsbury Estates do not currently have a clear right of access over the entire route and in any case, the Highways Officer was not satisfied that this would address highway safety concerns) Please see website for full details of comments. The letters appended to the parish council's representation have been included in the 'letters of representation' below.

8. Publicity

This application has been publicised by means of a site notice erected at the entrance of the site, neighbour letters and an advertisement in the local press.

Eight letters of objection have been raised to the proposals, six representations expressing support in principle but express reservations on highway grounds and are subject to stipulations particularly regarding traffic routes and expansion and one letter of support have been received in respect of the above application. It should be noted that the principal concern of nearly all the objectors is the sizes, numbers and route taken by vehicles to and from Darrell's Farm resulting from the proposed use, and the issues that this would cause. Many are supportive of the proposed redevelopment of the existing farm buildings but only if private roads can be used. The comments can be briefly summarised as follows;

- Both accesses from the A4 opposite the turning for Chisbury or through Froxfield village, are unsuitable to take large vehicles being narrow with few passing places, twisty, steep and further restricted by parked cars. The 30mph speed limit is not adequate to address safety concerns.
- These access routes run close to people's houses, many of which are listed or within the conservation area. The roads are unsuitable for the traffic resulting from this commercial proposal and would lead to damage of property, including historic properties, attractive verges as well as causing noise and disturbance to local residents.
- The roads through Froxfield village are walked by many residents including many elderly residents of the Almshouses and children using the unfenced recreation park there are concerns about the safety of pedestrians from an increase in heavy vehicles using the network. Traffic would also pose a danger to cyclists using the Wiltshire County Cycleway, horse riders and farm animals.
- Ramsbury Estates may expand the business which would bring in additional traffic from elsewhere, similar to their large corn drier which serves land over near Hungerford. Further expansion should be restricted. There would also be concerns resulting from retail sales which may increase traffic.
- Ramsbury Estates already have permission for this up at Stock Close Farm which should be pursued given that the road is much straighter, wider and safer.
- This is a light industrial use which is not compatible with the area's designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The proposed harm will not likely be balanced by any particular benefits to Froxfield residents.
- The traffic implications must be considered cumulatively with the traffic for Bridge Farm, which is already heavy, particularly at harvest time.
- The traffic resulting from the proposal would not be seasonal but all year round.
- The planning application claims that one big advantage for the Brewery and Distillery being based at Darell's Farm is its proximity to Bridge Farm where the grain is stored. However, it is understood that the grain is **not** malted at The Brewery but in another county. It then

travels back to the brewery to be made into beer and ale. It then leaves the brewery and travels quite some distance to an external bottling plant. Does it then, as bottled beer travel back to the brewery, only to finally leave the brewery again for delivery to the customer? This would result in a significant amount of traffic especially if the process is similar for distilling.

- The buildings are large and tall and better suited to an industrial estate. Once granted, future expansion may be difficult to resist.
- The proposed brewery and distillery are an improvement on the piggery and the proposals are supported. Ramsbury Farm Brewery at their current location have done a good job of making their buildings attractive and well maintained. Whilst this location is suitable for the scale of the micro-brewery proposal, planners should take into account the growth of the business. The issues of increased traffic and noise would become a problem for a larger brewery and distillery in this quiet rural setting.
- The planning department should be able to impose conditions requiring the applicant to use their own road network.

9. Planning Considerations

The application site whilst set back from the road, is visually prominent on this high plain within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Being a former pig farm and constructed on a former airfield, the site contains many dilapidated low-rise pig houses, expanses of concrete which are in a poor state of repair, bunded lagoons and two separate large structures (a double barn with silos adjacent and a dutch barn). The site is rather an eye-sore in the landscape and the lack of maintenance at the farm in recent years, including wider field boundaries is apparent. The applicants recently acquired the site and having already gained planning permission for the expansion of the existing brewery, latterly considered that this site may offer a better opportunity for redevelopment of the farm to provide the brewery / distillery facilities as a preferred alternative to the existing site at Stock Close Farm, Aldbourne as outlined above. The key planning issues are addressed below.

The principle of the proposal

The current application proposes similar facilities to those recently granted approval at Stock Close Farm, Aldbourne from the conversion of existing buildings and provision of a new building within the farm complex. This proposal was considered acceptable as an extension of a farm diversification enterprise. Consideration was given to the resulting traffic and the extent of the business in this rural location; however the applicants explained that the enterprise employs local people based in the surrounding villages, harvests grain from the local fields, utilises local spring supplies and mainly supplies public houses in the local area. Consequently, the proposal was considered acceptable in principle and the proposed scheme is not dissimilar with regard to the principle of the proposal, save for this site being closer to Bridge Farm which is a main grain handling facility for the Estate. Chapter 3 of the NPPF remains supportive of this view and states that economic growth should be supported in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development which includes both:

- 1) Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings; and
- 2) Promote the diversification of agriculture and other land-based rural businesses.

This is consistent with the approach in policy NR6 towards countryside enterprises which are of benefit to the rural economy.

Impact upon visual amenity and the AONB landscape

Policies NR6 and NR7 in addition to chapter 11 of the NPPF set out the need to preserve and enhance the natural environment, views and visual amenity. It is considered that the removal of existing buildings and comprehensive landscaping of the site has the potential to significantly benefit the appearance of the site and its impact on the wider landscape. The scale of the buildings is not significantly larger than existing development on the site, however the impact of the taller distillery tower proposed must be considered.

In terms of their design, the use of brick, with brown profile sheeting and merlin grey roofs, and natural timber weatherboarding (natural grey roof to the dutch barn to match existing) on these large buildings, will result in a utilitarian appearance as per many modern agricultural buildings. Their coloration will however, help to minimise their impact on the wider landscape. The use of different materials may give a slightly more commercial appearance, however the brick will likely only be visible from close to the site and may be screened by landscaping over time.

The taller section of building will undoubtedly be visible and is perhaps regrettable in this open landscape. However, this is a small section of the building and is of a height comparable to some large scale agricultural structures. It would be seen within the context of the existing farm complex and long term, would be mitigated to a degree by the landscaping proposals. The photomontages VP1- VP13 located at the end of the LVIA show the likely impact of the structure in the landscape. Officers are satisfied that the benefits the proposal would bring in terms of the enhancement of the site in landscape terms would outweigh the impact of this section of taller building.

It is noted that the proposed buildings contain rooflights. However, these are over a relatively small proportion of the roof only and the building is unlikely to be utilised at night, when lighting and light spill may be more of a concern.

Additional controls are recommended in the event Members are minded to approve planning permission to ensure the proposed landscaping is implemented and the buildings finished in accordance with the plans. Control is also recommended over open storage, spoil removal and external lighting.

Neighbour Impact

Environmental Protection have raised no concerns relating to the principle of the proposals subject to final controls of noise and odour mitigation and conditions are recommended to address these. The four nearest properties are understood to be tenanted farm estate cottages and the next nearest neighbours are a significant distance from the site. Concerns have been raised by local residents regarding the impact of noise and disturbance of vehicles on their amenity. The submitted transport assessment and additional information provides sufficient detail to be satisfied that the vehicle movements would not be significantly increased over and above the previous farm operations, which are a valid fallback situation as the farm could be brought back into use without any further grant of planning permission. Consequently, it is not considered that the impact on residential amenity would be significant so as to warrant refusal of planning permission on this basis.

Ecology

Due to the large number of buildings to be demolished, the ecologist required a protected species survey in order to assess the likely impact on protected species and their habitats. This was duly carried out and no evidence of bats were found. Recommendations have been made within the

report to avoid harm and this is recommended as a condition in the event Members are minded to grant planning permission.

Highway Safety

I am satisfied that the amended data received by the applicant represents a realistic comparison of existing and proposed traffic movements. Highways Officers have rigorously examined this information and do not consider that the proposals would result in significant harm over and above the former situation which would warrant refusal of planning permission on highway safety grounds. Please refer to highway officer comments under consultee section above. Consequently, it is not considered that the proposals would be detrimental to highway safety however a condition is recommended in order to improve passing bays within the highway on the local road network to help alleviate passing issues.

10. Conclusion

The scheme represents a farm diversification proposal which is considered an acceptable form of sustainable development and would secure significant landscape improvements and the demolition of unsightly dilapidated buildings. The replacement buildings would not cause significant harm to visual amenity or the wider AONB landscape. The concerns of local residents, particularly with regard to vehicular movements and highway safety are understood and this aspect of the proposals has been subject to particular scrutiny. However, having regard to the previous vehicle movements, the proposals would not give rise to a significant increase in the traffic level / type so as to warrant refusal of planning permission on this basis. Approval of planning permission is therefore recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be GRANTED for the following reason:

The decision to grant planning permission has been taken on the grounds that the proposed development would not cause any significant harm to interests of acknowledged importance and having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and the following policies and proposals in the Kennet Local Plan 2011 namely: policies NR6, NR7 and PD1 of the adopted Kennet Local Plan.

Subject to the following conditions:

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

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 This permission shall enure for the benefit of the applicant only and shall not enure for the benefit of the land. Use of the land and premises shall revert to agricultural use on cessation of the use by the applicant.

REASON: The proposal has been granted permission having regard to the special circumstances and needs of the present applicant.

- 3 No development shall take place until details of the bricks to be used for the external walls (including samples) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. All other finishes shall be carried out in accordance with the approved elevations unless otherwise first approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To secure harmonious architectural treatment.

- 4 All soft landscaping comprised in the approved details of the landscaping set out in section 6.3 and figure 7 of the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, WH Landscaping Consulting Ltd, May 2012, shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first use of the buildings for the use hereby granted or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner. All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development.

- 5 All spoil shall be disposed of in accordance with disposal details which have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.

- 6 No raw materials, products of any description, skips, containers, scrap, or waste materials, whatsoever shall be stored on the site, except within the buildings unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: To enable the local planning authority to retain control over open storage to safeguard the visual amenities of the area and the character of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- 7 No part of the development shall be brought into use until the passing bays on the roads leading to the site shall have been improved in accordance with details to be first submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To enable vehicles to pass/stand clear of the highway in the interests of highway safety.

- 8 The development shall not be first brought into use until the vehicle parking and turning areas as detailed on the submitted plans have been provided. These areas shall thereafter be maintained and kept available for the parking and turning of vehicles

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

- 9 No development shall commence on site until a scheme for the insulation against noise emissions from grain handling, conveyors, extraction fans, compressors and any similar brewing/ distilling equipment, has been first submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Such scheme as approved shall be implemented to the satisfaction of the local planning authority before any part of the development is first brought into use.

REASON: In the interests of neighbour amenity.

- 10 No development shall commence on site until a scheme for the control of odours from brewing / distilling equipment has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not be brought into use until that scheme has been implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of neighbour amenity.

- 11 No external lighting shall be installed on site until plans showing the type of light appliance, the height and position of fitting, illumination levels and light spillage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The lighting approved shall be installed and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To safeguard the visual amenity of this rural area and the character of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- 12 All development shall be carried out in full accordance with the agreed precautionary measures, as set out in Section 6 of the submitted ecological survey report (Chalkhill Environmental Consultants, 2012), unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of the preservation of protected species and their habitats.

- 13 This decision relates to documents/plans submitted with the application, listed below. No variation from the approved documents should be made without the prior approval of this Council. Amendments may require the submission of a further application. Failure to comply with this advice may lead to enforcement action which may require alterations and/or demolition of any unauthorised buildings or structures and may also lead to prosecution.

Plan Ref: BK-1599-4-R1, BK-1599-8, BK-1599-5-R1, BK-1599-6, BK-1599-7, BK-1599-2-R1, BK-1599-3-R1, BK-1599-9, BK1599-1-R1 all received on the 29th March 2012, Protected Species Survey received on the 11th June 2012, LVIA dated May 2012 and Transport Assessment and additional information received on the 15th May 2012, 1st June 2012, 11th June 2012 and 12th July 2012 respectively.

- 14 **INFORMATIVE TO APPLICANT:** The applicants should be advised that the works within the public highway will need to be secured by a Section 278 Agreement prior to commencement of the works and there will be a cost implication for the applicant.

- 15 **INFORMATIVE TO APPLICANT:** In respect of condition number 11 above, the applicant should note that it is the Council's preference that no external lighting is installed on the site. Should this be considered necessary, the applicant will need to demonstrate that this will not cause any particular harm to the visual amenities of the area.