

## REPORT TO THE EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	19 July 2012
<b>Application Number</b>	E/2012/0613/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	Lower Upham Farm Airfield Ogbourne St George Marlborough Wilts SN8 1SZ
<b>Proposal</b>	Erection of dual purpose hangar / agricultural store to replace the polytunnel hangar currently in use (granted permission under application (E/11/0135/FUL)
<b>Applicant</b>	JHP Farming Ltd
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	ALDBOURNE
<b>Grid Ref</b>	420648 177644
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Peter Horton

### Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called to committee by the Division member, Cllr. Humphries.

### 1. Purpose of Report

To consider the recommendation that planning permission be granted for the proposed building.

### 2. Report Summary

Since no increase in overall aircraft numbers is proposed for the site, the application raises no noise implications. The key issue is therefore whether the proposed building would adversely affect the scenic quality of the AONB. The design and materials of the proposed building are considered acceptable. Indeed, the building represents a visual improvement compared to the existing polytunnel and hence there will be no harm to the scenic quality of the AONB.

### 3. Site Description

The application site comprises part of Lower Upham Farm, which lies in a remote part of the North Wessex Downs AONB approximately 1km to the east of the A346 Marlborough to Swindon Road. The farm is approached via a narrow lane situated 3.5 km north of Ogbourne St George.

Four buildings (one in two distinct sections) at Lower Upham Farm are used for the storage of aircraft, with the adjacent field being used as an airstrip. Three of the four buildings are permanent structures, with two of these three being used for part hangar and part agricultural purposes. The smallest of the four buildings is a temporary structure which can be described as a "polytunnel hangar" and it accommodates two of the 22 aircraft permitted to operate from the site. It measures 12.5m by 10.0m by 3.9m high. It is well screened from the access track by a line of mature trees.

No repair of aircraft takes place at the site. Maintenance does take place but not on a commercial basis. Any major work which needs specialist attention is done off-site at commercially owned and run airfields.

#### 4. Planning History

K/34326 - Part time use of grain store as hangarage for aircraft. Part time use of adjacent agricultural land for take off and landing strip – approved 1997

K/55086/F - Use of grain store and associated buildings as hangarage for aircraft – approved 2006

K/55353/F - Retention of polytunnel hangar for light aircraft – approved 2006 (5 year temporary permission)

K/58740/F - Demolition of derelict farm building and erection of dual purpose hangar/fertiliser store – approved 2008

K/59352/VAR - Removal of condition no. 1 of K/55353/F (temporary planning permission) to allow permanent retention of polytunnel hangar for light aircraft – refused 2008

K/59353/VAR - Removal of condition no. 2 of K/58740/F (temporary planning permission) to allow permanent use of approved fertiliser store as an aircraft hangar – approved 2008

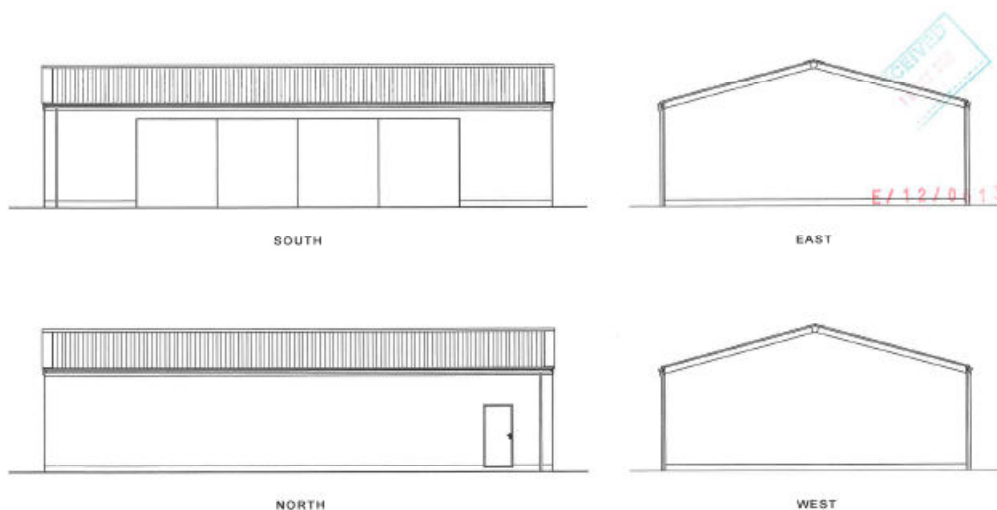
K/59355/VAR - Removal of condition no. 1 of K/55086/F (temporary planning permission) to allow permanent use of grain store and associated buildings as aircraft hangars – approved 2008

E/09/0111/S73 - Removal of conditions 2 and 3 of K/59355/VAR to allow operation of a training school for microlight pilots using three of the existing aircraft on site – refused in 2009 and appeal dismissed in 2010.

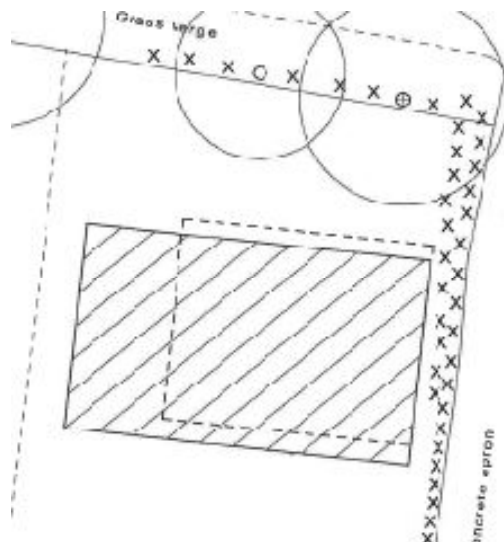
E/11/0135/FUL - Retention of polytunnel hangar for light aircraft – approved 2011 (3 year temporary permission)

#### 5. The Proposal

The proposal is to demolish the polytunnel hangar and to replace it with a permanent hangar measuring 17.3m by 10.25m by 4.9m high. It would be of steel framed construction clad in juniper green profiled steel sheeting with a grey fibre cement sheet roof. It would accommodate three aircraft, but would serve the dual purpose of being capable of providing agricultural storage, in case there is either a downturn in aviation or an upturn in farming activity.



*Elevations of proposed building*



*Existing building show dotted – new one hatched*

## 6. Planning Policy

Kennet Local Plan policies PD1 (Development and Design) and NR7 (Protection of the Landscape) are relevant. Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan policies C8 (AONB) and RLT7 (Airfields) are relevant. Central government planning policy is set out in the NPPF. Other material considerations are the Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy 2005 and the North Wessex Downs Management Plan 2009.

## 7. Consultations

**Aldbourn Parish Council:** Objects as any permanent building replacing the existing polytunnel should not be any larger by area or volume. The proposed building is more than 40% larger than the polytunnel and this will lead to more aircraft being stored on site and a consequent expansion of flying, to the detriment of the AONB.

**Ogbourne St George Parish Council:** No objection provided that all existing planning conditions are strictly maintained relating to the ownership of the airfield and the use of land for flying purposes.

**North Wessex Downs AONB Unit:** Would not want to see any expansion of the use of this site for the reasons that led to the 2010 appeal being dismissed. The Council should be satisfied that the need for this larger building has been fully justified and will not in itself provide an opportunity to expand the use. However no objection when taking the application at face value: the size, location and design of the proposed building is acceptable and it will be seen in the context of the existing buildings. Conditions should be applied controlling the external colours of the building and to ensure the removal of the polytunnel.

**CPRE:** No objection to the principle of replacing the polytunnel with a more permanent structure. However the proposed building has a footprint 42% larger than the existing and would be 26% taller. Concerned that the proposed enlargement may lead to an increase in aircraft numbers and flying operations. A smaller building should be proposed.

## 8. Publicity

24 letters of support has been received. Many of them suggest that the noise nuisance referred to by the objectors does not emanate from Lower Upham airfield but from the parachute drop plane that operates out of Redlands Farm, Wanborough. This is a larger, more powerful commercial aircraft which climbs sharply with a heavy load and operates every 30 minutes at weekends from early spring to late autumn.

15 letters of objection have been received, one of which has been submitted on behalf of 21 persons. The main points raised can be summarised as follows:

- The proposed building would harm the landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB.
- The proposed building is larger than the existing (42% more floor area and 80% more volume), leading to more aircraft being stored at the site.
- This application for a permanent building implies an expansion in flying activities from the airfield. It is clear the owners want to develop the site commercially and the application is an attempt to surreptitiously expand the existing business. It is yet another slow development of the site away from agriculture in an AONB.
- Noise from the aircraft operating from the site is harmful to the amenity of local residents and is detrimental to the tranquillity of the AONB. Increased aircraft numbers would be unacceptable.
- The application is premature because the existing temporary consent for the polytunnel still has over 2 years to run. A carefully considered and proper assessment of the airfield's operation should be made after 31/10/14, now is too early.
- The agent suggests that planning officers have recommended that the application be made before the existing permission expires, giving the impression of collusion.
- The larger building could be used as a workshop, attracting more commercial business.
- In terms of the NPPF, the application does not constitute sustainable development.
- The existing hangars are adequate to hold all aircraft, whether there is a need to store grain or not. So the proposed enlarged building is not necessary.
- Contrary to what the agent says, the size is not dictated by the use of steel frames: smaller steel framed buildings can readily be supplied by manufacturers.

## 9. Planning Considerations

Lower Upham airfield has an involved planning history. However in essence it has the benefit of planning permissions allowing the storage of up to 10 aircraft and 12 microlights on the site, to be stored inside three agricultural buildings on the site plus the polytunnel hangar the subject of this application. It is operated as a private (non-commercial) airfield.

The applicant has made it clear that the current proposal is not seeking to increase the number of aircraft stored at the site. It is purely seeking the provision of a permanent structure to replace the polytunnel hangar. Although the capacity of the new building would be 3 aircraft compared to the polytunnel hangar's 2, there are in fact 2 aircraft stored hanging from the beams of the roof of one of the other buildings, so the new building would merely help ease congestion.

The polytunnel hangar was granted a 5 year temporary permission in 2006 (ref. K/55353/F), with a further 3 year extension granted in 2011 (ref. E/11/0135/FUL). It is an established planning principle that structures of permanent construction are visually preferable to temporary structures such as polytunnels and portacabins. Hence the reason why a 2008 application was refused which sought the permanent retention of the polytunnel (ref. K/59352/VAR). Officers have consistently advised the applicant of their preference for a permanent building to replace the polytunnel. This is not evidence of collusion with the applicant, but merely the application of the established planning principle that permanent structures are visually preferable to temporary ones. The fact that the current temporary permission has over 2 years to run is beside the point: the current application is appropriate, and now has the chance to be assessed by committee on its planning merits.

Given that there is no intention to increase aircraft numbers at the site, noise is not a relevant issue: the sole planning issue relating to the current application is whether or not the proposed building has an acceptable visual impact within the AONB.

Many objectors have highlighted the increased dimensions of the proposed building compared to the polytunnel. However at just 17.3m long and just 4.9m high, the building is comparatively modest in size. It's design as a small scale steel framed agricultural building is entirely in keeping with the surrounding agricultural landscape, being read against a backdrop of bigger agricultural

buildings on the farm. It is well screened from the access track by a line of mature trees. Furthermore its dark green colouration will also mitigate its landscape impact. The building cannot therefore be held as having a materially adverse impact on the scenic quality of the AONB. Hence there are considered to be no sound planning grounds to refuse the application.

## **10. Conclusion**

Since no increase in overall aircraft numbers is proposed for the site, the application raises no noise implications. The key issue is therefore whether the proposed building would adversely affect the scenic quality of the AONB. The design and materials of the proposed building are considered acceptable. Indeed, the building represents a visual improvement compared to the existing polytunnel and hence there will be no harm to the scenic quality of the AONB. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That planning permission be granted 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 only whilst the applicant is in ownership and occupation of Lower Upham Farm, and shall not enure for the benefit of the land. Use of the land or premises shall revert to agricultural use on cessation of the hangar use by the applicant.

REASON: To ensure that the scale and nature of the hangar use remains as described in the application and is not separated from the agricultural operations of the farm, to safeguard the character and appearance of this part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- 3 No more than 10 aircraft and 12 microlights shall be stored at the site at Lower Upham Farm Airfield any one time, and with all storage to be inside the approved buildings.

REASON: To ensure that the scale of the aviation use does not detract from the character of this sensitive area within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or create any unacceptable level of noise and disturbance.

4. Notwithstanding the submitted details, the roof of the building shall be anthracite in colour, or similar dark coloured material to be approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences. Development shall be carried out in accordance with these approved details.

REASON: To protect the character and appearance of the area.

- 5 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.

Drawings nos. 383A, 383B and 383C received 10 May 2012.

**Appendices:** None

**Background Documents Used in the  
Preparation of this Report:** None