

Shaun Greaves
Development and Conservation Manager
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3FJ

12th February 2025

Dear Shaun

Planning Application - New Livestock Building at Ramridge Farm, Kimpton Road

This letter has been prepared by Ceres Property on behalf of F C and D Manning (The Applicant) in relation to a planning application for a new livestock building at Ramridge Farm, Kimpton Road, Kimpton.

This application is accompanied by the following documents and information:

- Site Location Plan. 15063. 01.
- Block Plan. 15063. 02.
- Proposed Floor Plan. 15063. 03/B.
- Proposed Roof Plan. 15063. 04/B.
- Proposed Elevations (1 of 2). 15063. 05/B.
- Proposed Elevations (2 of 2). 15063. 06/B.
- Preliminary Ecological Habitat and Protected Species Assessment and Report.
- Biodiversity Assessment and Report.
- Biodiversity Net Gain Metric.

Background and Overview

The Applicant currently has a successful and fully established agricultural and livestock business at the farm. The new livestock building is required to provide substantially improved facilities for younger cattle within the holding and also to enable the applicant to expand the numbers of livestock at the farm.

The Applicant has applied for funding via the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) for the erection of the livestock building. To approve the funding, the RPA requires evidence of planning permission for the new building from North Hertfordshire District Council by April 2025. This cover letter has been prepared to provide an overview of the strong agricultural need for the proposed building. It also

demonstrates that the proposals fully comply with local and national planning policy, so that planning permission can be granted without delay.

Due to the proximity of the site being approximately 330 meters from a listed building, the livestock building cannot be constructed under Schedule 2, Part 6, Class B, of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Development is not permitted if it would consist of the carrying out of any works to a building or structure used or to be used for the accommodation of livestock, where the building or structure is within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building. Therefore, planning permission is required to lawfully construct the livestock shed in this location, the subject of this Application. It is worth noting, however that if the building was situated more than 400 metres from a protected building it could be constructed under prior notification permitted development.

The Site and Proposed Development

Ramridge Farm is located to the west of Kimpton and east of Luton. The farm lies within the green belt. Ramridge farm is currently owned and operated by F C and D Manning. The main farmyard comprises a group of modern farm buildings and a farmhouse.

The application site comprises a small area of approximately 0.4 hectares, located to the east of the main farmyard, as shown on the accompanying site location plan. The site is accessed via an existing farm track and comprises agricultural land with hedgerow and trees. The location of the proposed livestock barn is shown on the accompanying block plan. The site is wholly situated in Flood Zone 1, where there is a low risk of fluvial or tidal flooding. The site is also at very low risk of surface water flooding.

35 cattle are currently housed at Ramridge Farm, which are a mix of ages. The cattle are housed in two barns, as shown in Appendix A. However, with calving in the incoming weeks, it is expected that the number of cattle will increase to 55. To improve cattle health and welfare, the RPA have specific requirements for livestock sheds that house young cattle. The existing barns are not fit for purpose and do not meet these requirements. Due to a lack of available buildings within the holding young cattle are housed with older cattle. For health and safety reasons for the younger calves, it is preferable for them to be housed away from adult cows. In this regard, it is usual for mother cows to be returned to their herd shortly after giving birth. The new building would provide a purpose built building for younger cattle. The proposed building will be built for purpose and comply with the RPA's requirements. It is expected that the new building will house 30 young cattle. Overall, it will enable the expansion of the livestock on the holding by an additional 15 cattle.

In regard to location of the new livestock building, the RPA requires new livestock sheds housing young cattle to be located at least 200 meters from the existing cattle. This will ensure that the young cattle have clean air which will prevent respiratory problems. In compliance with this, the location of the proposed livestock shed exceeds 200 meters from the existing cattle sheds. The proposed

building will be situated adjacent to the field where the livestock are to be located. It is also situated on land that it is slightly lower than the existing farm buildings to the north. The site can also be accessed via an existing farm track to the existing farm buildings.

The proposed livestock shed measures 30.48m x 13.72m, which meets the RPA's requirements for the scale of the building. Additionally, the RPA requires that the proposed building is of a specific orientation away from the prevailing winds, in order to prevent respiratory problems. The Block Plan shows the orientation of the building, which complies with RPA requirements for rotation and sitting.

To meet the April 2025 deadline, this application seeks planning permission for the construction of a new livestock shed, which is compliant with the RPA's requirements in terms of location, design, scale and orientation. Further details are set out within the following sections of this letter, which demonstrates that the proposed livestock building will comply with the RPA requirements as well as local and national planning policy.

Planning Policy

The current adopted plan is the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, which was Adopted in November 2022. The below section sets out the relevant policies from the adopted Local Plan alongside the key objectives from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023).

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted November 2022)

- Policy SP1 (Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire)
- Policy SP5 (Countryside and Green Belt)
- Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability)
- Policy ETC2 (Employment Development Outside Employment Areas and Employment Allocations BA10 and RY9)
- Policy T1 (Assessment of Transport Matters)
- Policy D1 (Sustainable Design)
- Policy NE2 (Landscape)
- Policy NE4 (Biodiversity and Geological Sites)
- Policy NE7 (Reducing Flood Risk)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)

Chapter 2, Achieving Sustainable Development, sets out the three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development:

- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support*

growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay (paragraph 11).

Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive way.

Paragraph 88 (part a) states that planning decisions should enable the expansion of all types of business in rural area, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. Planning decisions should enable the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses (paragraph 88, part b).

In assessing specific applications for development, it should be ensured that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved and any significant impacts from the development on the transport network, or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree (paragraph 114, parts b and d).

Paragraph 115 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Chapter 12 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to the local character and history and establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

Chapter 13 relates to the green belt. Paragraph 143 sets out the five purposes of the green belt. Paragraph 152 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 154 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are buildings for agriculture and forestry (paragraph 154, part a).

Paragraph 173 states that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere.

Paragraph 180 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

Planning Assessment

This Planning Assessment reviews the proposed building in conjunction with relevant local and national planning policies to demonstrate that the development is suitable in this location.

Principle of development

The site is located within the green belt, on an existing farmyard.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the green belt. However, exceptions to this include buildings for agriculture and forestry (paragraph 154, part a). Therefore, buildings for agriculture are not inappropriate development in the green belt.

Ramridge Farm is an operational farmyard, with various agricultural related activities which contribute to the local economy and farming business. The farm is successful in livestock farming, and the proposed new livestock building will allow for substantially improved facilities for existing cattle on the farm and it will also enable the expansion of the livestock operations on the site.

The existing barns which currently house the cattle are not built for purpose. The RPA require young cattle to be housed in purpose built livestock sheds, separate from adult cattle, which improve cattle welfare and health. To house the increasing number of young cattle, the proposed new livestock building will be built to meet the requirements of the RPA.

As the livestock shed is essential for the operation and expansion of the cattle on an established farmyard, the principle of development is considered to be strongly supported. Taking into account paragraph 4.621 of the Plan, because the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle, it is now important to consider if there are any technical reasons, which would warrant refusal of the application.

Sustainable Development

The NPPF sets out three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development. These are economic, social and environmental in nature (paragraph 8).

The new livestock building will facilitate the continued growth of the livestock farming business at Ramridge Farm. This will benefit both the Applicant and the local area in being more self-sufficient in terms of livestock farming. The proposed development will secure existing jobs at the farm and generate further employment opportunities. The proposed development therefore complies with the economic objective set out in paragraph 8, part A, of the NPPF.

The proposed livestock shed will ensure that the future needs of the local community remain supported in terms of generating agricultural produce and economic benefits. There is a clear need for the growth of livestock farming within this business to keep pace with existing agricultural demand. Chapter 12 of the NPPF, Achieving Well-Designed and Beautiful Places, states that development should be sympathetic to the local character and history of the site, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (paragraph 135, part c). The proposed development adheres to the above policy and will positively contribute to the culture of the British countryside, complying with NPPF paragraph 8 (part b).

The new livestock shed will ensure that the fields are protected from trampling and unfavourable weather conditions in the incoming wintering months, protecting the natural environment. This complies with the environmental objective of the NPPF (paragraph 8, part c).

As this Planning Application seeks planning permission for a new purpose-built livestock shed in an already established farm, the proposed development should be viewed as a positive contribution to the agricultural industry within the District. The proposed development will yield economic, social and environmental benefits for the local community.

Design, Layout and Scale

Local Plan policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) states that the Council considered good design to be a key aspect of sustainable development. Local Plan policy D1 (sustainable Design) states that planning permission will be granted provided that development proposals respond positively to the site's local context.

The RPA provides specific requirements for the design, scale, location and rotation of new livestock sheds to house younger cattle. These requirements are in line with the principles of sustainable design.

The livestock building must be designed to improve the health and welfare for young cattle. To do so, the building must be well ventilated and rotated in a position that will prevent draft. This will prevent respiratory issues for the young cattle. The Block Plan shows the location of the building, and the orientation which will face away from the incoming winds. The Elevation Plans shows the design of the building to maximise ventilation.

The scale of the building is compliant with the requirements of policy SP9, and it is in-keeping with the other agricultural buildings at Ramridge Farm. The building is set on slightly lower ground than the existing buildings to the north and therefore it will not be visually prominent within the landscape. This is shown in the photograph in Appendix B.

In terms of materiality, the building will comprise an exposed steel portal frame, concrete panels, Yorkshire boarding on timber, and natural grey fibre cement roof sheets. These are appropriate materials for the type of building proposed.

The design, scale, rotation and materiality of the new livestock shed are in-keeping with the existing modern day agricultural buildings within the farmyard. This positively responds to the site's local context. The building will meet the requirements of the RPA and is compliant with Local Plan policies SP9 and D1.

Access and Highways

Local plan policy T1 (Assessment of Transport Matters) states that planning permission will be granted provided that development would not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable impacts on the highway network.

Paragraph 114 of the NPPF states that it should be ensured that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved. Paragraph 115 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The new building will be accessible via an existing rack from Ramridge Farm. This is shown on the Site Location Plan. The access is currently in use and is suitable for larger modern day agricultural vehicles. The existing access to Ramridge Farm will remain unchanged as a result of the proposals.

Flood Risk

Local plan policy NE7 (Reducing Flood Risk) states that planning permission for development proposals will be granted provided that the development is located outside of medium and high-risk flood areas (flood zone 2 and 3) and other areas affected by other sources of flooding where possible.

Paragraph 173 of the NPPF states that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere.

The application site is wholly located in flood zone 1, where there is a low risk of fluvial or tidal flooding. The site is also at very low risk of surface water flooding. As such, the development complies with local plan policy NE7 and paragraph 173 of the NPPF.

Landscape and Biodiversity Net Gain

Local plan policy NE4 (Biodiversity and Geological Sites) states that all development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity. It is a national requirement for most planning applications to demonstrate 10% biodiversity net gain.

In compliance with this, this application is accompanied with a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. The Assessment concludes that the proposed development can achieve a 13.03% habitat net gain with the addition of fifteen trees planted within the site. The proposed development can achieve a 11.95% hedge net gain with enhancements to a section of the hedge within the site. The Applicant has confirmed that these enhancements are achievable within the red line boundary.

The development is compliant with local and national biodiversity net gain requirements.

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment also accompanies this submission. The Assessment concludes that the site itself and the habitats found on-site are common and widespread throughout the UK, and the habitats are of limited ecological value and only site value. The proposed development site contains local habitats with no irreplaceable, notable, statutory, non-statutory, or priority habitats. Additionally, the habitats for protected species were evaluated, and whilst breeding birds may require further consideration, the likelihood of other protected species is negligible, and no further consideration is needed. A species poor hedge is located within the site.

The Assessment recommends that any lighting should minimise spill onto the surrounding landscape and the removal of suitable habitats must be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season, unless unavoidable. In this circumstance, an inspection will need to be carried out by an ecologist before the start of site clearance.

The findings in the BNG report and PEA are compliant with Local Plan policy NE4 and national planning requirements. The development site is therefore considered acceptable in terms of ecology and biodiversity.

Summary

Ramridge Farm runs a successful cattle farming business. The erection of the new livestock building will secure improved living conditions for younger calves and it will also enable the expansion of the existing successful livestock business at the site. The agricultural need for the new building is considered to be strongly supported in agricultural terms, which is considered should be given substantial weight in planning terms.

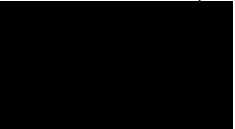
The site is located within the green belt, on an existing farmyard. Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the green belt. However, exceptions to this include buildings for agriculture and forestry (paragraph 154, part a). Therefore, buildings for agriculture are not inappropriate development in the green belt.

The design, scale, location and rotation of the proposed building complies with the requirements of the RPA and is in-keeping with the existing agricultural buildings at the farm. The development will have no significant adverse impacts on the local character of the area, and can deliver 16.64% biodiversity net gain.

The Applicant has applied for funding from the RPA, which can only be secured once evidence of Planning Permission is obtained. The deadline for this is April 2025. It is therefore considered that this application should be approved without delay.

I trust that this letter and the accompanying plans are sufficient to allow for validation of the application.

Yours sincerely



Isabel Ede
Graduate Planner
07845 656456

APPENDIX A – Images of the Existing Barns



APPENDIX B – Location of Proposed Livestock Shed

