

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Andrew Hunter.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/02745/FP	Erection of livestock agricultural barn	Ramridge Farm Luton Road Kimpton Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 8HB

Submitted Plan Nos

01A 02 03-B 04-B 05-B 06-B

1.0 Policies

D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
HE1	Designated heritage assets
NE4	Biodiversity and geological sites
SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN13	Protecting Green Belt Land
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment
SECN15	Conserve + enhance natural environment
SP13	Historic environment
SP12	Green infrastructure, landscape and biod
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SP9	Design and Sustainability

2.0 Relevant Site History

2.1 None.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Ecologist** – No ecological objection.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The site is an area of land within an agricultural field accessed by a track, within the boundaries of larger agricultural farm Ramridge Farm. The main part of the site is SE of the main farm buildings on lower ground. Three of the farm buildings on the west side of the main farmyard area are listed buildings.

4.1.2 Vegetation comprises some of the nearby boundaries of the site. The character of the wider locality is rural agricultural with no nearby neighbours. The site is in the Green Belt.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 The erection of an agricultural livestock building with a pitched roof, accessed from the existing track. The building will house cattle. The building will have concrete and timber-clad walls, and a grey fibre cement roof.

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key material considerations are whether the proposal is acceptable in principle, design, neighbour amenity, and ecology.

Principle

4.3.2 The site is in the Green Belt. In the Green Belt, only certain types of development are acceptable in principle. If development is not acceptable in principle it will be inappropriate, and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

4.3.3 Policy SP5 refers to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt in paragraphs 154 and 155 (December 2024 version). Para. 155 is not relevant, and the most relevant part of 154 is:

154. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;

4.3.4 The proposal would result in the construction of a new building in the Green Belt. It's considered that the building would comply with a), i.e. that it would be a building for agriculture.

4.3.5 The site is part of a wider working agricultural farm Ramridge Farm, and the barn would be sited near an existing field used for livestock, therefore it's considered the building would be used for agricultural purposes. The proposal is not considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt and complies with Policy SP5 of the Local Plan and Section 13 of the NPPF.

Design

- 4.3.5 The proposed building would be approx. 340m from the listed buildings to the NW, which also have large barns between them and the site, therefore the settings and significance of those listed buildings will not be affected.
- 4.3.6 The proposed barn is considered to be of a design and appearance in keeping with its proposed agricultural function. It will be sited away from the main cluster of agricultural buildings to the NW, however it's siting is considered to be justified for the reasoning given by the applicant in the covering letter, i.e. it's a new building required for younger cattle that needs to be at least 200m from existing cattle that meets current required standards and would be near a field where the livestock are to be located.
- 4.3.7 The building is not considered excessively large or high for its proposed location, and will appear visually related to the wider agricultural use of Ramridge Farm, particularly as the main group of agricultural buildings will be visible to the NW and it would be on and near fields in agricultural use.
- 4.3.8 Public views of the building will be limited due to its siting away from public highways, modest height, being on a lower ground level than Kimpton Road to the north, and as it would be obscured by trees and vegetation. The proposal complies with Policies D1 and HE1 of the Local Plan, and Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

Neighbour amenity

- 4.3.9 The proposed building would be approx. 330m from the closest dwelling to the NW, and approx. 300m from the other closest dwelling to the SE. Due to these distances and intervening trees it's not considered that the proposed building and its use would be visually overbearing, cause loss of light, or generate adverse noise and smells (in some instances they may be noticeable, however they're not considered harmful due to the distances involved, the small size of the development, and as they will appear to 'blend in' with wider farm activity). Impacts on amenity are acceptable. The proposal complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan.

Ecology

- 4.3.10 The application was submitted with a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal that did not find protected species or their habitats, which the Council's Ecologist agrees with. As the location for the building would be a small area of grassland, I concur with the assessment and do not consider that there would be harmful ecological impacts. The PEA did advise a sensitive lighting strategy should be implemented to prevent light spills into the dark corridor at the rear of the site. The Ecologist has recommended an appropriate condition to secure this, which is considered would be attached to any permission granted.
- 4.3.11 The proposal also has to be provide a mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), on or off-site. The documents submitted with the application show that the proposal would deliver a 13% gain in habitat units and 12% gain in hedgerow units and so is compliant with the mandatory requirement. The proposal is considered acceptable regarding ecology, and complies with Policy NE4 of the Local Plan.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.4 In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **GRANTED**.

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from 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 Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. The approved building shall only be used for agricultural purposes.

Reason: In the interests of controlling the character and appearance of the site and locality. To comply with Policies D1 and SP5 of the Local Plan.

4. Prior to first use of the approved building, a lighting design strategy for biodiversity for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall identify those areas/features on site to which bats and other nocturnal species are particularly sensitive where lighting is likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places, or along important routes used to reach key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging, and show how and where external lighting will be installed so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of ecology. To comply with Policy NE4 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act

1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Hertfordshire District Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>).

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Proactive Statement:

1. Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 21 February 2025	