

Application Number	19/00767/AS	
Location	Grain Store Burscombe Farm, Coach Road, Egerton, Kent TN27 9BB	
Grid Reference	590135/148535	
Parish Council	Egerton	
Ward	Weald North Ward	
Application Description	Construction of office and warehouse facility with associated external works, following demolition of existing grain store and silos.	
Applicant	Mr McCloskey, The Vinorium, C/O Guy Hollaway Architects Ltd	
Agent	Guy Hollaway Architects Ltd, The Tramway Stables, Rampart Road, Hythe CT21 5BG	
Site Area	1.78 hectares	
(a) 11/2R	(b) +	(c) KCC Ecology X; KCC Heritage +; , NE +; KH&T +; PROW ; RPL +; FC ; ESM X

Introduction

1. This application is reported to the Planning Committee at the request of the Ward Member.

Site and Surroundings

2. The application site is currently agricultural land comprising of rough semi-improved grassland approximately 1.78 hectares in area to the south of Coach Road, with a large disused grain store and associated silos in the south west corner of the site. The existing agricultural building is served by a concrete farm track along the western side of the application site, with access from Coach Road continuing to Burscombe Cliff Farm (which sits to the south of the site). Immediately to the north west is Burscombe Farmhouse and the former associated farmstead curtilage buildings. There is an established roadside hedge along the road frontage with Coach Road, and, two bungalows on the opposite (northern) side of the road.
3. The application site is in the open countryside, approximately 1300m (0.8 miles) from the nearest settlement (Egerton). It is Grade 2 agricultural land. The access track forms a public right of way (PROW AW62), which wraps around the west and south of the site. Burscombe Farmhouse and a curtilage barn to the north west of the site are Grade II listed, and the entire site is within an Area of Archaeological Potential. A Local Wildlife Site and an area of Ancient Woodland wraps around the southern side of the site, which connects to a much larger area of woodland. The site itself has no special landscape or ecological designation and is within the Greensand Ridge Landscape Character Area (28. Egerton-Pluckley Greensand Fruit Belt). The application site location is shown in **Figure 1** below.



Figure 1 Site location Plan

Proposal

4. The application proposes the erection of a new contemporary building (790sqm), following demolition of the existing grain store (958sqm) and silos. The proposal also involves ornamental landscaping of the field with a mix of hard surface area and planting.
5. The proposed building would provide an office/warehouse facility for a wine importers and distribution company, who are seeking to relocate from their current premises in Lenham.
6. The facility would provide a wine storage warehouse in the higher southern end of the proposed building, to facilitate the wine storage racks. The building would also provide an office, a wine tasting cellar, a kitchen, bathroom facilities, and a tractor store for management of the land. The plan as originally submitted included residential accommodation, this was omitted in the amended plans. The building would have extensive full height glazing primarily on the south east elevation to maximise light and views of the countryside, the elevation that would be most visible from the road and the wider landscape. The north west elevation abutting the footpath and Burscombe Farm would feature some full height glazing, but would have a greater proportion of concrete as the external finish.
7. Vehicular and pedestrian access would be from Coach Road via the existing farm track. A gravel parking area would be provided to the north west of the proposed building, with 25 parking spaces. Landscaping in the form of native species woodland edge mix would provide a 15m wide buffer from the ancient woodland along the southern / south west edge of the site. Existing roadside vegetation would be retained and reinforced. The ornamental garden would include a central hard surface axis, featuring an ornamental pond with stepping stones. The garden would include a mix of vines, orchards, meadow grassland and seating areas. Hedges would soften the impact of the car parking area.
8. The main walls of the building are proposed to be full height glazing and rammed concrete, framed by smooth concrete. The ratio of glass to concrete on the flank elevations would be roughly two thirds glazing on the south east elevation, whereas the north west elevation would be primarily a concrete finish with only a few full height glazing panels to break it up. There would be a 'meadow' tilting green roof, with a hyperbolic paraboloid form. The site layout, elevations, ground floor plan and CGI image of the building are shown in **Figures 2, 3, 4 & 5** below:



Figure 2. Site layout plan

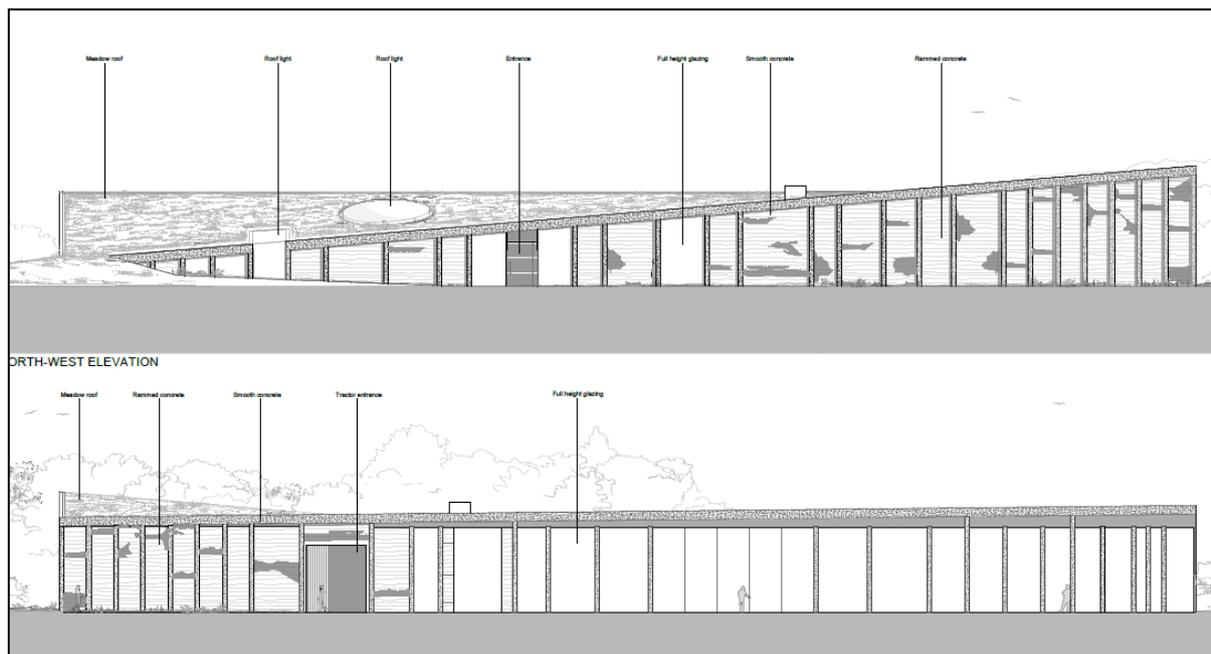


Figure 3. Elevations

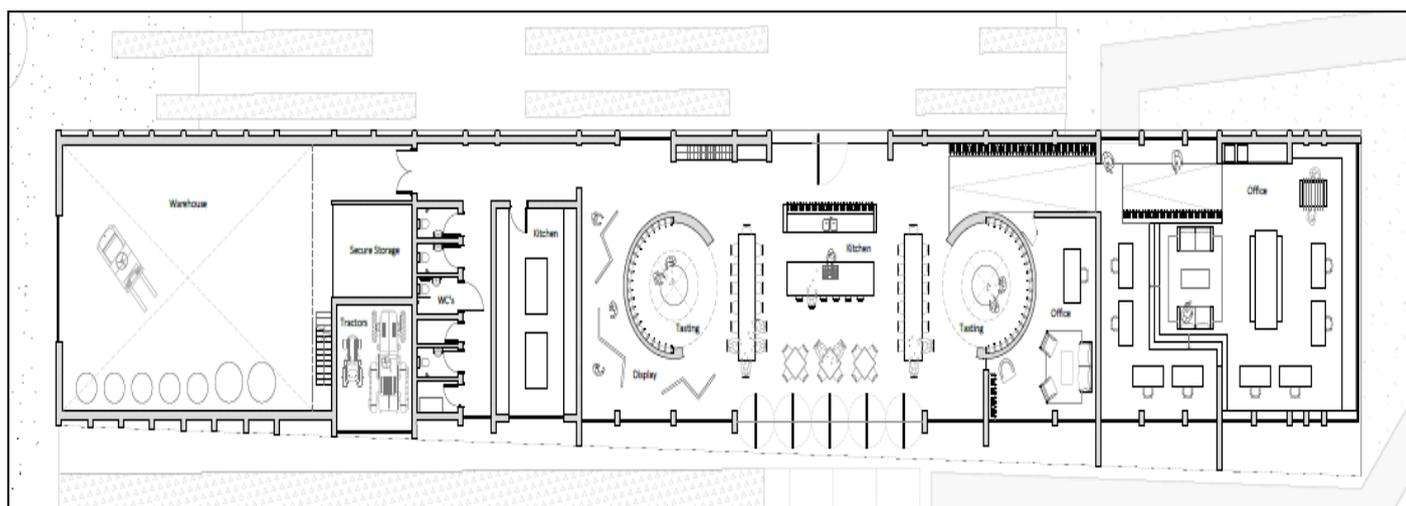


Figure 4. Ground floor plan



Figure 5. CGI images

9. The following supporting documents were provided with the application.

- Design and Access Statement – setting out an analysis of the site and the site constraints, and how the design has been developed in response to this. The approach taken was to use the form of the existing grain store as the starting point, and manipulating this to meet the requirements of business, and maximising the vista of the landscape, whilst at the same time taking contemporary precedents to respond sensitively to the topography of the landscape.
- Planning Statement – making a case that the proposal complies with planning policy and is acceptable in design terms.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – concluding that the impact of the development on the local wildlife site, ancient woodland, bat foraging areas, roosting barn owls and nesting swallows, and reptiles, could avoid potential adverse impacts through the mitigation specified.
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment – concluding that there are no known Arboricultural constraints which would prevent the development going ahead subject to the protection measures specified; and, any works within the 15m buffer from the Ancient Woodland would be low impact and would not be within the root protection areas of the trees.
- Archaeology Statement – concluding the site has low potential to contain archaeological deposits, and any that were present would be of low importance. No further archaeological works are required.
- Heritage Statement – concludes that the proposed development would not harm the significance of the nearby heritage assets.
- Supplementary Information – setting out a case for the site becoming a visitor hub for the wine region.

Planning History

18/01257/AS - Prior approval for change of use of agricultural barn and land within its curtilage to two dwellings – Prior approval granted

18/01258/AS – Prior approval for change of use of agricultural barn and land within its curtilage to three dwellings – Prior approval granted.

Consultations

Ward Member: Has requested that the application be determined by the planning committee.

Egerton Parish Council: General comments received stating:

- This is an ambitious proposal which requires careful consideration in view of the sensitivity of the site.
- The modern design is innovative but unlike anything in Egerton and is in open countryside.
- Need for strict lighting conditions for both internal and external lighting to protect neighbours and dark skies.
- Proposal whilst bigger in footprint is lower than the existing grain store and could be a visual improvement.
- Trees and hedges must be retained and addition landscaping provided to screen the development.
- Subject to implementation of recommendations in the ecological report are welcomed.
- Traffic would be an improvement over the existing use.
- Proposal is a form of farm diversification. [Officer note: The site is no longer part of a working agricultural unit, and therefore the proposal cannot be considered as farm diversification]

ABC Environmental Protection: No objection subject to conditions covering the following;

- (i) Reporting any unexpected contamination.
- (ii) Controlling noise/vibration.
- (iii) Electric charging facilities.
- (iv) Delivery times.

Informative requested on construction hours, burning controlled wastes, measures to minimise dust.

KCC Ecological Advice Service: No objection subject to conditions on;

- (i) Mitigation for Great Crested Newts and reptiles in accordance with GCN & Reptile Survey and NE protected species licence.

(ii) Lighting design plan for biodiversity.

(iii) Biodiversity Enhancements.

Kent County Council Heritage: No comments received.

Natural England: No specific comments but advise that separate ecological advice be sought.

Kent Highways: Does not meet the criteria to warrant highways involvement

Rural Planning Advisor: No comments as this is not agricultural development

KCC PROW: No comments received

Forestry Commission: No comments received

Neighbours: 2 objections received stating in summary the following:

- Not in keeping with rural character
- Design would be visually intrusive
- Light pollution
- The access and rural roads are not capable of accommodating the scale of the development
- Hazard for pedestrians, cyclist and horse riders
- Services are not capable of accommodating the scale of the development
- More disruptive for residents than the grain store which was only used for 3 weeks of the year

Planning Policy

10. The Development Plan is the Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted February 2019), except where the Chilmington Green AAP (2013) applies instead, together with (where relevant) the Wye Neighbourhood Plan (2016), the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan (2017), the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan (2019) and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2016).

For clarification, the Local Plan 2030 supersedes the saved policies in the Ashford Local Plan (2000), Ashford Core Strategy (2008), Ashford Town Centre Action Area Plan (2010), the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD (2010) and the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD (2012).

11. The relevant policies from the Development Plan relating to this application are as follows:

SP1 - Strategic objectives

SP3 - Strategic approach to economic development

SP6 - Promoting high quality design

EMP1 - New employment uses

EMP5 - New employment premises in the countryside

TRA3b - Parking standards for non-residential development

TRA7 -The road network and development

ENV1 - Biodiversity

ENV3a – Landscape character and design

ENV4 – Light pollution and promoting dark skies

ENV5 – Protecting important rural features

ENV9 - Sustainable drainage

ENV13 – Conservation and enhancement of Heritage Assets

ENV15 - Archaeology

12. The following are also material considerations to the determination of this application:-

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Sustainable Drainage SPD

Landscape Character Assessment SPD

Dark Skies SPD

Village Design Statements

Egerton Village Design Statement

Government Advice

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

- 13 Members should note that the determination must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A significant material consideration is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF says that less weight should be given to the policies above if they are in conflict with the NPPF. The following sections of the NPPF are relevant to this application:-
- 14 Key points from the NPPF material to the application are as follows - the presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11); building a strong, competitive economy (para 80 to 84); requiring well designed places (para 124 -132); and, conserving and enhancing the natural environment (para 170 -183).

Assessment

15. The key issues are:

- (a) The principle of the development.
- (b) The impact on visual amenity.
- (c) Residential amenity.

(d) The impact on highway safety and parking provision.

(e) Other planning issues: ecology, landscaping/trees, archaeology, heritage assets, PROW, drainage, and contamination.

The principle of the development.

16. The strategic policies of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 emphasise the importance of jobs and economic development. One of the key objectives of policy SP1 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 is to provide a range of employment opportunities to respond to the needs of business, support the growing population and attract inward investment. Policy SP3 states that job growth and economic prosperity will be supported in order to enable the achievement of a sustainable economy. This includes promoting rural employment opportunities in sustainable locations in accordance with [as relevant in this instance] policy EMP5 – New Employment Premises in the Countryside.
17. In accordance with policy EMP5, new employment premises in the countryside will not be permitted unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated to set aside the normal presumption against such developments. Such circumstances may include the functional need for a countryside location, such as the processing of local agricultural products.
18. In seeking to avoid inappropriate development in the open countryside Policy EMP5 sets out that proposals for employment development on new sites in the countryside will not be permitted unless the following criteria can be met:
- a) It is essential to be located in the countryside;
 - b) Development can be integrated sensitively into its context respecting the character of any important existing buildings, the landscape setting and sites of biodiversity value;
 - c) There would be no significant impact on the amenities of any neighbouring residential occupiers; and,
 - d) It can be demonstrated that the development will not generate a type or amount of traffic that would be inappropriate to the rural road network that serves it.
19. As such, the key consideration in assessing the principle of the proposed development is local plan policy EMP5 which provides the critical criteria for 'New Employment Premises in the Countryside'. The local plan is recently adopted and NPPF compliant, and as such, the planning policies therein can be afforded full weight. Such proposals also need to be guided by paragraph 83 of the NPPF

which refers at point a) to the enablement of “the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings.”

20. The application site is in the open countryside, in a remote rural location characterised by sporadic dwellings and farmsteads, served by narrow rural roads. The site is not within reasonable walking distance of any services due to the considerable distances involved and the lack of any pedestrian friendly roads. It is approximately 1 mile from the M20 with minor rural roads connecting the site to it. As such, the site is not a sustainable location in planning terms for the use proposed.
21. The grain store has a legitimate fall-back position, in that prior approval is not required for conversion of the building into three dwellings, under permitted development rights. Consequently, the change of use from an agricultural use is established. These approvals have yet to be implemented and as such the site remains agricultural. Agricultural buildings are not classed as previously developed land (pdl) as per the NPPF and as such the site in question is a ‘greenfield’ site.
22. The application confirms the ornamental landscaping will include vines, orchards, a kitchen garden, a herb garden and beehives. The proposed small scale wine production (fermentation) would be for the consumption and educational purposes of the staff and visitors.
23. Vinorium Limited were founded in 2005. They are a wine merchant based on an industrial estate close to the A20 in Lenham specialising in the import of Australian, New Zealand and American wines. It is a market leader in selling Australian wine. The stated aim of the proposal, is to provide a bespoke building to match the quality of the product they sell, and providing an opportunity for the customers to whom they distribute, to sample the products.
24. The applicant has provided supplementary information since the initial submission, setting out where the site is in relation to surrounding south east England vineyards. The layout of the building has been amended to provide a second tasting area for visitors to experience locally produced wines, as a hub for the wine growing region. The company has an educational foundation, and the proposed small vineyard is intended to provide an educational resource for the school children, students and local community groups, as well as for the employees.
25. It should be noted Vinorium Ltd neither produce nor distribute English wines, they are a wine importer. Many of the English vineyards, such as Gusbourne within Ashford Borough already provide tours of the vineyard and the viticulture process, which include wine tasting and opportunities to buy the product at

source. In the case of large English wine producers such as those locally at Gusbourne, Biddenden and Chapel Down and also Denbies (in Surrey), there is an essential need to have operational buildings for the wine making process in the countryside, to be in close proximity to the vineyards associated with these facilities. This is not the case here.

26. Taking all of the above into account when assessing the principle of the proposal and whether it meets the requirements of policy EMP5, the scheme is not policy compliant. The application states that a countryside location is required to satisfy its “organic and ecologically sound credentials.” The company seeks to create an enjoyable and educational experience for its employees, visitors and students. However, it is considered this is a desire rather than a necessity for a countryside location. Indeed, the existing premises are located within an existing industrial estate in Lenham which is accessed from the A20.

27. The proposed building would not be connected with an agricultural process (other than very small scale vine planting as explained in paras. 22 and 24), as the company is primarily a wine importer and distributor. The building would function as the company HQ and not as a functional building for wine production or any other large scale agricultural/rural production. The visitors that would patronage the site, would in the main be customers that would sample the imported product, with a view to placing orders, not tourism. As such, it is considered there is no essential or functional need for a building of this nature and scale to be justifiably located in an unsustainable rural location. It could essentially be located anywhere without affecting the operational functioning of the business, and in fact, from a distribution/storage and staff accessibility point of view, it would be more sustainable within or close to an existing settlement with access to major transport routes. This is the current situation in Lenham. It is not considered that the educational case made for a small scale vineyard, nor as a visitor hub for the region, would provide a suitably robust justification. There are numerous large vineyards in the area that offer tours that fulfil this, that do have a genuine need to have production facilities and ancillary offices on the site and in the countryside. For these reasons, it is considered the proposal would not meet criterion a) of policy EMP5 as it is not considered essential for the building, and associated use, to be located in the countryside. As such, the proposal is unacceptable in principle, and policy EMP5 is quite clear that such employment development on new sites in the countryside shall not be permitted.

28. Summing up, the application is for B1/B8 office/warehousing accommodation in an unsustainable location where there is no demonstrable essential need for a building of this scale in a countryside location. As such, the use is contrary to policy EMP5 and the proposal is therefore unequivocally unacceptable in principle.

The impact on visual amenity

29. One of the requirements of policy EMP5 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 is that development can be integrated sensitively into its context respecting the character of any important existing buildings, the landscape setting and sites of biodiversity value. Policy ENV3a requires all proposals for development in the Borough to demonstrate particular regard to landscape characteristics proportionally. Where development is considered appropriate in principle (which as set out in this report is not considered to be the case in this instance) it will be required to be designed in a way which complements the particular type of landscape in which it is located. The NPPF outlines that planning should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
30. The applicant has explained in the supporting design and access statement how the design of the building has evolved since conception. The design and finish of the building has ambitions to appear organic in its setting with a curved green roof, and extensive use of glass to reflect the surroundings through the building. The building would be single storey and partly sunken to minimise the visual impact from the road, and would vary in height for functionality, with the highest end to facilitate the warehouse racks. The building would be no higher than the existing grain store on the site, but would have a larger footprint, with a significantly more elongated flank.
31. The existing grain store whilst not obviously aesthetically pleasing is clearly functional in its appearance and not out of place or incongruous in this countryside location. It is what is commonly expected to be seen in a rural setting.
32. The proposed building would have a 'meadow' green roof with concrete and glazing finishes to the external walls. It would have an avant-garde low level twisted appearance to maximise the sunlight and proposed mixed functionality. Whilst having a larger footprint, the proposed building would retain the linear form of the grain store and the same orientation. The low level sunken nature of the proposed building and green roof would help it blend into the landscape, however conversely, the glazing and concrete would visually jar with the appearance of the countryside. This would be compounded in winter when the internal illumination would be highly visible in the wider landscape against the characteristic grey skies, in contrast to the dark silhouette of the existing grain store. As such, while it is not disputed the design is high quality, it fails to recognise the distinctive character of the landscape, and the distinctive architectural detailing of the buildings that contribute to the local landscape character. Furthermore, the formal landscaping intersected with hard surface paths and expanses of hardstanding for car parking would appear contrived in a landscape characterised by regular field patterns and clearly agricultural in nature

and appearance. Whilst low level, the sheer scale of the proposed building would make it visually prominent and incongruous in this countryside setting and the harm would be significantly increased due to the internal lighting given and large expanses of glazing.

33. The applicant's agent has stated that the building has been designed to sit 'comfortably' in a rural setting, however, it is considered the proposals would not have an acceptable visual impact on the surrounding area, and would visually jar rather than complement the rural setting. The building would be highly visible from the public footpath and the road and would appear alien, incongruous and intrusive in the countryside to the detriment of the visual amenity of the area, contrary to policies ENV3a and criteria b) of policy EMP5 of the adopted Ashford Local Plan 2030.
34. The company has eight employees at their current Lenham base, and it is proposed the move would involve taking on a further three. The small scale contribution to local employment and the local economy would not outweigh the objection in principle and the visual harm identified.

Residential amenity

35. The two residential properties north of the site on Coach Road are low level with windows below the hedge line, and benefit from considerable space separation from the proposed building. The barn style residential conversions of the former Burscombe Farm buildings, enjoy both space separation and considerable screening from a robust timber fence and a well-established tree line. As such, the proposed building would not be considered to give rise to overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing issues for nearby residents.
36. It is considered the proposed use and associated vehicle movements, would cause less disturbance for occupiers of local properties than the previous use, as a grain store involves movement of large vehicles and mechanical noises from the likes of conveyor belts and dryers/extraction systems. As such, the levels of noise and disturbance from the proposed development would be acceptable. There would therefore be no conflict with criteria c) of Policy EMP5.

The impact on highway safety and parking provision

37. The site will be serviced by the existing concrete farm track off Coach Road, which previously accommodated large agricultural vehicles associated with the grain store. The site layout originally showed 7 parking spaces for staff and visitors with a recessed area adjacent to this that would be unmarked bays but could accommodate further parking. The company currently employs a team of eight which would grow to eleven. The application states that visitors are limited, as the majority of business is conducted online. However, the application does

refer to wine tasting events, visits from producers, and educational tours. It had not been made clear how the parking provided would meet this requirement.

38. Policy TRA3(b) of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 requires parking provision at 1 space per 25sqm for a B1 use, 1 space per 110sqm for a B8 use and 1 space per 2 members of staff in addition to this. The application is for a mixed use B1 / B8 although only approximately 1/3rd of the building would be for B8 (storage/distribution) usage with the remainder B1 (office). Based on this split the total parking provision in order to comply with TRA3(b) is 25 spaces. Amended plans have now been received depicting this provision so that parking complies with this policy.
39. The application confirms deliveries would typically be once a day in a van sized vehicle, with only occasional deliveries from a 12-18 tonne lorry (once every 3 months). The area is characterised by narrow rural lanes lined with ditches and hedges. That said the current use of the site as a grain store would have required larger agricultural vehicles to access the site than is proposed with this application. Therefore whilst the access arrangement is not ideal it is likely to be an improvement over the current authorised and unrestricted agricultural use.
40. In conclusion, it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposal is acceptable in terms of parking provision, access/egress and highway safety.

Other planning issues such as ecology, landscaping/trees, archaeology, heritage assets, PROW, drainage and contamination.

Ecological issues / Ancient woodland

41. The site is not within any ecological designated area, however, the site is in close proximity to Ancient Woodland and the Foxden Wood Wildlife Site. The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concluded that given the proposed 15m buffer zone provided, the proposed development would not adversely impact on the ancient woodland or the Local Wildlife Site. This is an acceptable distance to ensure no harm to either designation, and accords with Natural England's standing advice.
42. KCC Ecological advice services requested further information be submitted with regard to understanding the impact of the development on Great Crested Newts (GCN) and appropriate mitigation proposals. Following receipt of a GCN survey, KCC Ecological advice services are satisfied with the ecological information and raise no objection subject to conditions. It is considered that the proposed development could meet the derogation tests, regarding the issuing of a European Protected Species License (EPSL) from Natural England in that it would result in the favourable conservation of protected species.

43. The proposal is therefore acceptable in respect of impact on nearby designated sites and protected species that may be present on the site.

Landscaping/trees

44. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement has been submitted in support that shows that two trees will be removed to facilitate the proposed development, and retained trees will be protected during demolition and construction. The two trees to be removed are both C category trees and therefore of little amenity value and have a limited lifespan. Their removal is therefore not objectionable in principle.
45. Hedgerows and significant trees will be retained, and the proposal incorporates the planting of vines, orchards and other formal landscaping as well as the bolstering of perimeter planting.
46. In light of the above the proposal is acceptable in terms of impact on existing trees and hedgerows. A landscaping scheme to mitigate the impact of the development further can be secured by condition.

Archaeology

47. The submitted Archaeological Assessment concludes no further archaeological works are required. KCC Heritage has not commented on the proposal.

Heritage Assets

48. The grain store has formed part of the setting of the historic farmstead since its construction. However, there is little inter-visibility between the grain store and the heritage assets (Burscombe Farmhouse and barn (both Grade II listed)) due to a well-established tree line on the opposite side of the farm track. Whilst the buildings were until recently functionally tied to Burscombe Farm, their contribution to the significance of the listed buildings within the farm is limited, and the grain store, whilst close by, is outside the historic farmstead. As such, its loss would not be considered to harm the significance of the listed buildings. Therefore, whilst the proposed replacement contemporary building would be alien in an historic farm context, because it would be viewed in isolation from the farm buildings from most vantage points, the impact on their special interest and heritage significance would not warrant grounds for refusal.

Public Right of Way (PROW)

49. The public right of way follows the farm track along the western edge of the application site, and wraps around Burscombe Cliff Farm to the south of the site.

It is considered the proposal would not adversely impact the public right of way and certainly to no greater extent than the lawful agricultural use of the site.

Drainage

50. Policy ENV9 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 states that new development should include appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) for the disposal of surface water, in order to avoid any increase in flood risk or adverse impact on water quality. In this instance, given that there is land within the application site that could accommodate this, and the proposal would replace existing built development (albeit what is proposed is of a greater footprint), I am satisfied that SUDs could be incorporated and secured by condition in the event that planning permission is granted to ensure the requirements of policy ENV9 are met.

Contamination

51. The Environmental Protection team has identified the potential for contamination in connection with the previous use of the land and buildings. As such, a precautionary condition to deal with unexpected contamination would need to be applied in the event that planning permission is granted.

Human Rights Issues

52. I have also taken into account the human rights issues relevant to this application. In my view, the "Assessment" section above and the Recommendation below represent an appropriate balance between the interests and rights of the applicant (to enjoy their land subject only to reasonable and proportionate controls by a public authority) and the interests and rights of those potentially affected by the proposal (to respect for private life and the home and peaceful enjoyment of their properties).

Working with the applicant

53. In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) takes a positive and creative approach to development proposals focused on solutions. ABC works with applicants/agents in a positive and creative manner as explained in the note to the applicant included in the recommendation below.

Conclusion

54. The proposed B1/B8 office/warehouse building in the open countryside is contrary to the adopted development plan policies and is unacceptable in principle as set out in the assessment section. The proposal fails to satisfy criteria a) and b) of policy EMP5 and would result in unnecessary and unjustified

development in the countryside and would represent an unsustainable form of development. Further, whilst the design is not objectionable per se, in this location it would appear at odds with the open rural character of the countryside. The development would be clearly visible from Coach Road and highly visible from PROW AW62. The proposal would appear incongruous in its context and detract from and be harmful to the visual amenity of the area and the character and appearance of the countryside.

55. In respect of other material planning considerations, as set out in the assessment section, any harm can be offset through the imposition of conditions.
56. The non-compliance with the local plan and the significant visual harm that would arise, when balanced against the limited economic benefits of the scheme providing minimal employment / jobs does not justify a grant of planning permission in this instance and as such it is recommended that planning permission is refused.

57. Recommendation

(A) Refuse

For the following reasons:

The proposal is contrary to policies SP1, SP6, EMP5, and ENV3a of the Ashford Local Plan 2030, Central Government guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and would therefore be contrary to interests of acknowledged planning importance for the following reason:

- 1) The proposed building, by virtue of its size and design, is considered to be a visually intrusive development which would appear alien and incongruous in the context of the rural setting; and, in the absence of any essential or functional need for a building of this nature and scale to be located in an unsustainable rural location, the proposal is unacceptable in principle, and, would therefore result in unnecessary and unjustifiable harm to the character and appearance of the rural landscape, visual amenity of the area and environment as a whole.

Background Papers

All papers referred to in this report are currently published on the Ashford Borough Council web site (www.ashford.gov.uk). Those papers relating specifically to this application may be found on the [View applications on line](#) pages under planning application reference 19/00767/AS)

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