

**APPLICATION REFERRED FROM THE WEEKLY LIST****WEEKLY LIST NO. 1535 – 7 AUGUST 2020****19/00926/FUL****LITTLE STAMBRIDGE HALL FARM, LITTLE STAMBRIDGE  
HALL LANE, STAMBRIDGE****DEMOLITION OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL UNITS AND  
ERECTION OF 3 PURPOSE BUILT COMMERCIAL UNITS  
FOR USE WITHIN THE B8 (STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION)  
AND B1(C) (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) USE CLASSES WITH  
ANCILLARY PARKING AND LANDSCAPING****1 DETAILS OF REFERRAL**

- 1.1 This item was referred from Weekly List No. 1535 requiring notification to the Assistant Director, Place and Environment by 1.00 pm on Wednesday, 12 August 2020 with any applications being referred to this meeting of the Committee.
- 1.2 Cllr G J Ioannou referred this item on the grounds that the majority of the site is previously developed land so the development in principle is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The site provides modern, high quality commercial units of a size that is much in demand in the district, as evidenced by the Economic Development comments. No objections have been received from any party to this proposed use adjacent to an existing commercial site. The proximity of the site to Rochford and the demand in this area amount to very special circumstances.
- 1.3 The economic benefits and previous adoption of the site scheme collectively, amount to very special circumstances to outweigh that harm.
- 1.4 The item that was referred is attached at appendix 1 as it appeared in the Weekly List.
- 1.5 A plan showing the application site is attached at appendix 2.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is proposed that the Committee RESOLVES**

To determine the application, having considered all the evidence.

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

---

Application No :	19/00926/FUL	Zoning : Metropolitan Green Belt
Case Officer	Mr Arwel Evans	
Parish :	Stambridge Parish Council	
Ward :	Roche North And Rural	
Location :	Little Stambridge Hall Farm Little Stambridge Hall Lane Stambridge	
Proposal :	Demolition of existing commercial units and erection of 3 purpose built commercial units for Use within the B8 (Storage and Distribution) and B1(C) (Light Industrial) Use Classes with ancillary parking and landscaping.	

### SITE AND PROPOSAL

1. Little Stambridge Hall Farm is a predominantly arable farm of some 550 acres, accessed from Stambridge Road (east of Rochford town centre) and located at the far end of Little Stambridge Hall Lane which provides access through part of the application site to the westerly aspect of the existing buildings to be demolished and a cluster of buildings; a part of which are currently utilised by a Micro-Brewery business. The application site edged red is part of this wider site and is located to the east of a cluster of existing buildings comprising a working agricultural unit, and which has diversified giving rise to a range of uses on the wider site. The application site on its southern and easterly aspects is flanked by a private track which provides access to open fields to the east which comprise a number of equine paddocks whilst a large expanse of open arable land is located directly south and south east of the proposed development site which continues to the boundary of the agricultural unit with Stambridge Road.
2. The main farm centre covers an area of some 1.2 hectares comprising of a number of buildings, including a listed farm house and a mix of modern steel portal framed buildings, traditional timber and brick buildings and stables. The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, Flood Zone 1 and is located close to Little Stambridge Hall which is a Grade II Listed Building.
3. The farm is well established, and a degree of diversification has commenced with the letting of some of the smaller units and the provision of livery stabling. These commercial and livery uses were regularised in 2017 under applications 16/01064/COU and 17/00869/DPDP3M.
4. The application site consists of that area currently occupied by 4 former poultry units which are constructed of timber and corrugated asbestos roofing together with that area occupied by Little Stambridge Hall Lane and an area of land to the north west where car parking is proposed. Although the cluster of buildings which accommodate the Micro-Brewery are shown to be included as part of the planning application site (due to its physical affiliation with the

---

former poultry buildings opposite) these buildings are unaffected by the development and the application does not propose any rebuilding works or alterations to these buildings.

5. The existing poultry buildings are orientated such that the roof lines run from north west to south east and comprise 4 low lying buildings constructed of timber and corrugated asbestos set parallel to one another and linked by a flat roof section at their front westerly aspect. The scaled plans (as existing) indicate that these buildings are approximately 3.86 metres to their ridge bearing shallow roof pitches and low wall elevations which are approximately 2.34 metres to the eaves. Intermittent ventilation units occupy the ridge lines which are approximately 0.97 metres in height. The length of these buildings is approximately 46 metres.
6. These buildings due to their low height and shallow roof lines are not conspicuous or discernible within the wider locality from long range views. These buildings were the subject of planning application reference 18/00338/FUL which permitted their change of use to a flexible business use; this permission was granted on 27th June 2018.

#### PROPOSAL

7. Planning permission is sought to demolish the existing poultry sheds and construct three new commercial buildings comprising of commercial units of varying sizes, including associated landscaping and parking. The access to the site would remain as existing. The small group of buildings to the west of the access road would be unaltered and the existing micro-brewery would continue. The building to the southern end would provide a communal services block.
8. The proposal consists of the erection of three new building blocks mainly within that area occupied by the existing buildings to be demolished. However as demonstrated by the submitted section (North West and South East Section) (Elevation) drawings Block A which would be that block furthest north would extend approximately 8.70 metres further north than the footprint of the existing building in this position such that the area of built form would increase over the length of the building. The building would have a length of some 47 metres which would result in an increased footprint of approximately 408m<sup>2</sup> over the extent of the existing footprint.
9. The roof line of both Block A (furthest North) and Block C (furthest South) would comprise of a set of 4 multi spanned buildings bearing 4 separate ridge lines. These buildings would be orientated with front elevations facing south-west and rear elevations facing north-east. Block B, the middle block would be orientated in the same manner as the existing buildings; the roof of this block at its south-west elevation would feature solar panel arrays extending a length of 43 metres and a depth from the eaves towards the ridge line of approximately 5.89 metres.

10. The buildings would be served by shared parking and turning areas. The units would provide a mix of B1(c) Light Industrial (902m<sup>2</sup>) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) (1,472m<sup>2</sup>) space. Additional ancillary parking would be formally laid out to the west of the access road, behind the existing retained buildings, extending to the north and providing a total of 34 car parking spaces. The parking is shown to be arranged in an oblique layout arrangement with a central area providing approximately 4.8 metres separation to allow movement in and out of respective parking spaces. Cycle parking is also proposed.
11. Block A comprises of four pitched roof units with roller shutter doors to the front, rooflights and pedestrian access and windows to the rear. The building measures 47.45m wide, 17.8m deep, with an eave's height of 4.4m and a maximum height of 8.8m. Each unit contains 184m<sup>2</sup> of warehouse space, a W.C and small kitchen area.
12. Block B is a pitched roof building located centrally within the site comprising of eight units with roller shutter doors to the front and rear of the building. The building measures 47.45m wide, 17.9m deep with an eave's height of 3.4m and a maximum height of 8.55m. Each unit is some 98m<sup>2</sup>.
13. Block C comprises of four pitched roof units, externally similar to Block A. However, each unit building is divided into four smaller units, each with a roller shutter door. Block C therefore provides 16 units of some 49m<sup>2</sup>.
14. The proposed external facing materials would consist of larch timber cladding, red brick, sinusoidal profiled metal roof, solar PV panels, single skin steel roller shutter doors, galvanised steel guttering and concrete/permeable hard standing.
15. The submitted plans when taken in conjunction with the Tree Protection Plan indicate the location of potential new planting of tree species to replace the 5 trees (annotated as T1,T2,T3,T4 and T5 on the layout plan) which would replace existing mature trees which are located to the eastern flank of the existing buildings and which would be lost as a result of the proposed development. The potential new planting would be located further to the east within a part of an existing paddock area adjacent to an existing track.

#### PLANNING HISTORY

16/01064/COU - Change of use of redundant farm buildings to commercial uses B1(Business) B2 ( General Industry) B8 ( Storage or Distribution) and Equestrian Uses - Planning permission granted.

17/00869/FUL - Prior Notification for a Proposed Change of Use of an Agricultural Building to a Flexible Business Use - Prior Approval Required and Granted

18/00388/FUL - Change of use of existing agricultural buildings to a flexible business use - Planning Permission Granted

18/00953/FUL - Redevelopment of existing commercial warehouses to provide purpose-built warehouse units with associated parking - Application withdrawn

#### **MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

16. The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined by the Council's adopted Allocation Plan. The key issues for consideration are:
  - (i) Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt
  - (ii) The effect on the openness of the Green Belt
  - (iii) Other considerations and;
  - (iv) If the development is inappropriate, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.
17. The National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 143 indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 144 advises that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
18. Paragraph 145 indicates that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt although a number of exceptions apply including part (g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development or not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.
19. To be eligible to be considered under this exception the development is required to demonstrate as a first step that the site meets the definition of Previously Developed Land (PDL). The glossary to the NPPF defines previously developed land as the following:

'Previously developed land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface

infrastructure. This excludes land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape'.

20. Agricultural land is excluded from the definition of PDL and evidence has therefore been sought from the applicant to demonstrate and confirm that the planning permission granted under planning reference 18/00388/FUL (Change of use of existing agricultural buildings to a flexible business use) has been implemented. The granting of planning permission for the commercial use would not confer an established use without the implementation of the planning consent which would take place on first occupation. Information has been submitted which confirms the occupation of the units for commercial use in accordance with the planning consent and this accords with business rates entries (which coincide with the start dates of occupation). It is therefore accepted that the planning consent for commercial use of the existing barns, previously in agricultural use has been implemented and that the lawful use of the existing buildings is no longer agricultural. Consequently, that part of the application site which relates to the 2018 consent for conversion of the existing barns is considered to constitute PDL. However, importantly not all of the application is can be considered PDL. The proposed northernmost building would be sited on land that is clearly currently part of an agricultural field; at least a third of the footprint of this substantial building would not be sited on previously developed land but on agricultural land. Green Belt policy both national and local does not allow for the construction of new large-scale commercial buildings on agricultural land within the Green Belt. A large additional parking area is also proposed to the western part of the site which is currently a grassed verge and also could not be considered to constitute PDL.
21. In order for proposed redevelopment of PDL to be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt, a proposal must however not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The Council's Green Belt policy as set out in Policies DM10 and DM11 also require that replacement buildings in the Green Belt would not be materially larger or be of a scale that would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
22. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that development which has any greater impact on Green Belt openness than the existing development which it would replace would be inappropriate and should not be permitted within the Metropolitan Green Belt unless very special circumstances exist that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by definition and any other harm arising.

- 
23. Harm to Green Belt openness has a visual as well as a spatial aspect. It is an established position that regardless of whether a development is visible within the wider landscape or not that any development comprising comparatively larger buildings in scale (height/width/depth) than previous development it would replace would have an increased adverse impact on openness in terms of the assessment of the spatial dimension of openness.
24. The proposed development would result in a significantly different development which would be far greater in scale and massing than the existing buildings. The area of built form would be extended significantly by approximately 8.70 metres at the northern aspect of the site which would be occupied by Block A. All of the proposed buildings regardless of the manner in which they are to be laid out (which however further aggravates the harm to the green belt) would be significantly larger buildings with significantly higher ridge heights in excess of 8 metres and prominent gable elevations further emphasising their massing. The difference in ridge height between the existing (3.8m) and proposed (8.8m) would over double in the case of the highest proposed block, whilst the other two blocks would also be significantly higher than the existing buildings. The existing low level, single storey height buildings would be replaced with very large two storey buildings which would appear significantly more prominent. The separation between the proposed buildings would increase but this would exacerbate the harm to green belt openness as the space between buildings would be used for the manoeuvring of vehicles and hard surfaced, as a result the site taken as a whole would appear more developed than the existing low level buildings closely positioned.
25. Whilst the proposal would reduce the overall internal floor area to 2,374m<sup>2</sup> as compared to the existing 2,587m<sup>2</sup>, the proposal would increase significantly the hard surfaced space between the proposed buildings and the volume of the proposed development at 12,720m<sup>2</sup> as compared against the current 7,634m<sup>2</sup> would also be increased significantly and would manifest itself in large buildings significantly larger than the existing built form as evidenced from the long plan sections which depict the physical form of the proposed development against the existing development.
26. The proposed reduction in gross floor area given the significantly increased massing and height that would result from the proposed buildings which would also be more spread out (which is further aggravating factor) would not mitigate the physical effect of the built form on Green Belt openness and for this reason it is considered that the development from a physical and spatial perspective would have a significantly greater adverse impact upon Green Belt openness as compared to the existing development.
27. The proposal also involves the creation of a large area of car parking to the western boundary, an area of the site which is currently open in nature. Whilst parked cars are not built form, the car park and cars parked would have a degree of permanency and parked cars and the additional hard surface would also contribute to the adverse impact on green belt openness both spatially and visually. The proposed extent of car parking to the western boundary is



much greater than was proposed and approved in relation to the planning consent in 2018 for conversion of the existing buildings with 34 spaces now proposed to the western boundary where only 10 had been approved. The proposed scheme would result in a greater degree of harm to the openness of the green belt than the approved scheme to convert the existing buildings.

28. The impact on the visual aspect of openness of the Green Belt must also be considered. The proposed development would occupy an area of land which is detached from the cluster of larger buildings positioned further to the north west. The existing building on the application site have low roof heights and shallow pitched roofs and are therefore not overly prominent features when viewed in the locality from wider viewpoints. There are uninterrupted views of the site from the south and east from visual receptor points both at points along Stambridge Road and further to the east at Little Stambridge. There is no built form or topographic changes which interrupt these longer views of the site.
29. It is considered that the development by reason of the proposed layout, scale and form, featuring 4 ridge roof lines (Block C) and significant gable massing would result in very significant and prominent buildings in the locality which would have a significantly greater adverse impact on openness when considering the visual dimension compared to the existing lower level and less prominent building structures. It is considered that Block B which would feature one single long ridge line and a significant gable massing would comprise a significantly prominent building when experienced from those receptor points at some distance from the site at Little Stambridge. Block C due to its position and orientation would be less prominent, however the visual impacts and effects of the development would be significantly greater as a collective as compared to the existing built form at distance and at close range from the footpath (Public Right of Way, Stambridge FP21) which runs north/south directly through the proposed development. Rights of way are classed as high visual receptors due to their public use. The site would be visible from the junction of Footpath PROW 291\_21 and Footpath PROW 291\_2 and from Meadow Cottage, located to the north of the site.
30. There is an open and direct view of a section of the site at the northern end of Little Stambridge Hall Lane, at the junction with the southern end of Footpath PROW 291\_21 which would result in a view of the development at this location and range which would be significantly prominent. The site and building on it would be more prominent from these receptor points than the other farm buildings located further to the west.
31. There are noted to be views of the site looking south west towards the site from Footpath PROW 291\_20. This footpath was not easily accessible, due to overgrown vegetation and the arable crop within the field. There is a glimpsed view of the former poultry sheds and existing warehouses at Little Stambridge Farm from this location on a public footpath to the north east of the site.
32. It is considered that the greatest visual impacts would result from the south and east at long and medium range and at close range from the footpath and

that the proposed development as a result of the increased scale of built form and extent of hard surfaced areas in between buildings would have a significantly greater adverse impact on the visual aspect of Green Belt openness as well as on the spatial dimension. Whilst the existing lower level buildings appear less prominent in the locality, blending in as part of an established agricultural holding, designed for agricultural use the proposed buildings would have a much more industrial scale and form.

33. The proposed development would have a greater adverse impact on both the spatial and visual aspects of the openness of the Green Belt and could not therefore be considered to be redevelopment of PDL that would be appropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development which must only be permitted if very special circumstances exist which would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

**Very Special Circumstances**

34. Consideration has to be given to the economic aspects of the proposed development and whether this would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The applicant has provided the following case. 'The existing buildings at Little Hall Farm has provided approximately 2,906m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space and it is proposed to replace this with 2,644 m<sup>2</sup> without any loss of any Green Belt land.' It is however considered that the proposal would actually intrude further into green belt land as Block A would be pushed approximately 8/7 metres further north than one of the existing poultry building as evident from the existing and proposed site layout plan when compared to the existing circumstance.
35. The applicant goes on to state that the location of the farm so close to the town of Rochford has meant that there has always been strong demand for units at this site. The site is located just over 0.5 miles away from Stambridge Road on which there is a separate paved footpath to the town centre of Rochford.
36. Consideration has therefore been given to the need for the proposed employment uses. Local and national policy seeks to support appropriate economic growth. There is recognised future demand for sustainable employment land in the district. The council's Employment Land Study Update identifies that there is a mismatch between the supply of, and demand for, grow-on space across the county, with both industrial and office space being in short supply. This shortage of grow-on space was found to be particularly pronounced in the Rochford District. This development proposal has been designed to enable on site growth by providing a wider range of small and medium sized units.
37. The Employment Land Study Update 2014 also states that; "Similarly the role of smaller, rural business locations should not be ignored. Whilst not a core part of this Study, the increasing trend for farm building conversion to employment use should be welcomed, enabling a greater choice for residents and local businesses. With the rise of internet trading these types of provision

---

are becoming increasingly demanded, allowing people to work closer to home. Where appropriate, and conforming with other planning considerations, this activity should be encouraged."

38. The re-use and redevelopment of rural sites to provide high quality workspace is an important part of employment land provision within the District. This proposal has been designed to meet the identified demand in this area of the district. By providing small units with larger grow on space available on the same site there is continuity for business. The location of the proposal on the eastern side of Rochford offers easily accessible workspace for the smaller businesses established within the rural side of the District.
39. It is noted that a search of the Rightmove commercial property website on 20/11/2018 revealed that only 2 industrial properties of below 2,000 sq ft were available to lease within Rochford District. Regular searches during 2019 have indicated that the number of small industrial premises within the district has always been scarce, underlining the findings of studies. It is important to consider that the Council's Allocation Plan seeks to provide additional commercial space of the type proposed and discussed above on new sites including for example at the Airport Business Park which has outline planning permission to accommodate the type of uses proposed here and there is no evidence that the council is policy deficient in providing such land through its Development Plan process.
40. The proposal would support the rural economy by providing a high standard of and range of size of new business accommodation. Commercial space at this site would provide an opportunity to address the shortfall in space detailed above and may help to prevent some businesses being forced to move out of the district as they grow, or otherwise remain in unsuitable premises or at home. The site however already benefits from a planning consent to convert the existing buildings and indeed the site already provides commercial space through the implementation of the conversion consent which already secures economic benefit.
41. The site can and already does provide commercial space. Economic considerations must be balanced against harm to the openness of the green belt where national policy is clear that such harm should be given significant weight. The key importance of green belts is their openness and permanence. The conversion of the existing buildings in 2018 was appropriate development and allowed for diversification of the business at the site. The current proposal to significantly increase the scale and extent of built form would adversely affect the openness of the green belt and the economic benefit, particularly given that the proposed commercial uses can and do already operate from the existing buildings, permitted by the conversion planning consent, would not outweigh the harm. The economic benefit would not be unique such that it could not be replicated elsewhere in the district and it is not therefore very special in nature such that this consideration outweighs the harm of the development in Green Belt terms.

---

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Impacts upon Heritage Assets

42. Little Stambridge Hall (grade II), The Lodge (grade II) and the wall attached to Little Stambridge Hall and enclosing garden to south (grade II) are listed structures. There is no direct intervisibility between these listed buildings and the site, however the site, which is currently forms a part of the agricultural holding, with former poultry sheds, forms a part of the wider landscape setting to Little Stambridge Hall. It is not considered that the development proposed would have any significant undue impacts upon designated heritage assets and Essex County Councils Built Heritage and Conservation team does not object to the proposal.

Transport and Traffic Impacts

43. A transport statement has been submitted in support of the application which assess the access, operational, traffic and transportation issues associated with the proposed development. The assessment concludes that the impacts are immaterial based on an access visibility of 2.4m by 287m to the left (westbound traffic) and 2.4m by 333m to the right (eastbound traffic) on the basis of hourly peak flows along Little Stambridge Hall Road. The peak flows at the junction of Little Stambridge Hall Road and Stambridge Road are noted to be a total of 322 vehicles in the morning and 278 in the afternoon. It is not considered that the development would give rise to any highway safety issues and this position is confirmed by the formal consultation response received from Essex Highways.

Potential Impact on Trees.

44. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been undertaken identifying the constraints of trees located on the site, in relation to the proposed development. The report identifies the strip of grass behind the buildings which accommodates 5 trees close to the rear of the existing buildings. A ditch line runs parallel with a group of trees to the western side of the site and there is a native hedge along the southern boundary. The assessment identifies the trees as being in a healthy condition with no signs of pests or diseases normally associated with the species. The report identifies that in the near future minor works are likely to be needed to lift and clear the canopy spreads of T1 - T5 to maintain the clearance to prevent direct damage to the buildings, whilst it is advised that it would be prudent to clear the ivy around the trees in G1 to ensure it is not obscuring any defects or fungal decay.
45. To implement the demolition of the existing buildings and construct the new buildings, none of the trees need to be removed and could be worked around if need be. However, this would involve careful demolition of the buildings and removal of hard surfacing adjacent to T1 - T5. The Council's tree officer has been consulted on this proposal and has made the following comment:

---

*"Whilst in principle I would agree on their removal as they are non-native specimens situated in a rural location, they do however provide screening and reduce the impact of the built environment in a relatively flat landscape, if they are to be retained then suitable mitigation will be required to ensure their suitable retention, if they are to be removed then suitable replacement planting will be required to maintain the landscape character and visual amenity."*

46. The owner has expressed an interest to remove these trees and taking on board the comments offered by the tree officer is keen to plant a row of new trees in a more suitable location to screen the buildings in the landscape and be more beneficial for wildlife habitat by using native specimens. The proposed location where new tree planting could be located is shown on the Constraints Plan accompanying the application particulars.
47. New trees could be planted with a stem girth of between 14cm - 16cm and be of native species which could in time have develop a natural form that would be of benefit to visual amenity in the locality.
48. G1 is a cluster of self-set Ash trees growing out of the side of an existing ditch. They have heavy ivy cover around the main stem which will need to be removed to allow reinspection to ensure there are no defects or decay, to ensure they do not present a hazard for persons or property. Because of their location on the others side of the deep ditch from the proposed construction activity, their RPA (Root Protection Area) has been adapted to reflect the constraint offered by the ditch. Therefore, the spread of the roots is unlikely to be impacted by activities on site during demolition and construction works. To ensure the protection of G1 and the space the constraints plan depicts for the new planting area, the tree protection measures highlighted in the Tree Protection Method Statement contained within Appendix 3 of the submitted document.
49. In summary the proposed development could achieve replacement tree planting where necessary and would not be objectionable with regard to Policy DM25 which seeks to protect existing trees of high amenity value.

#### Flooding, Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage:

50. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 the least vulnerable to flooding. A Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage Assessment has been submitted in support of the application and Essex County Council SuDS as the Lead Local Flood Authority despite initially issuing a holding objection on the basis of lack of information now has no objection.

#### Highway and Parking Implications

51. The adopted parking standard sets out maximum parking standards for proposed non-residential uses as is proposed here. The parking standard is a requirement of 10 car parking spaces and 6 cycle spaces for the B8 use and

---

30 car parking space and 13 cycle spaces for the B1(C) (Light Industrial Use). The level of proposed parking provision would be considered acceptable.

**BREEAM**

52. Development would be expected to achieve the BREEAM rating of very good in accordance with Core Strategy Policy ENV10 (BREEAM). This would be conditioned in the event of planning permission being granted.

**Potential Residential Amenity Impact**

53. The site has four residential properties within the immediate vicinity. Three of these properties are owned by Little Hall Farms Ltd. The main farmhouse, Little Stambridge Hall is a Grade II listed building and is 130 metres to the west of the site. This property is shielded from the buildings by mature trees and hedging and existing buildings and therefore it is not considered that the commercial uses at this site would have an adverse impact on the amenity of this dwelling.
54. Two further properties owned by the applicant are located approximately 40 metres south of the proposed buildings. These properties are let out on assured shorthold tenancy agreements. The garden area of these properties runs up to the buildings however it is proposed to introduce a further landscape buffer to the rear of these gardens. Meadow Cottage is situated over 150 metres to the north of the farmyard and owned by a third party. This property is accessed in the same way as the other residential properties and the farmyard, via Little Stambridge Hall Road but then the private access continues up through the site. All three of the above properties have previously been co-existing with the historic poultry use within the existing buildings. It is considered that the proposed development would not give rise to unreasonable impact on residential amenity by way of noise and disturbance, overlooking or any other impacts. The redevelopment to the proposed B1(C) and B8 uses is considered an acceptable use within a residential area with no detrimental impact on residential amenity. Further residential properties are located at the end of Little Stambridge Hall Road these too would not be adversely impacted.

**CONCLUSION**

55. There was no objection to the proposed re-use of the redundant farm buildings for other commercial purposes within Class B Use Class at this site and indeed, planning permission was granted for change of use of the existing buildings in 2018. There would also be no objection to rebuilding to provide more modern buildings for these same commercial uses, in principle, however such as proposal must consider the green belt location of which the site is a part. Any rebuild proposal must be for a scale of development that would not have a greater impact on the openness of the green belt. The current proposal does not seek to replace the existing buildings like-for like in terms of scale but instead seeks to construct much larger buildings which would be much more prominent in the rural landscape. One of the proposed buildings

would be sited further north, on land which is not previously developed but which is part of an agricultural field. Proposals for new commercial units on agricultural land in the green belt is contrary to all local and national green belt policy. A revised proposal for new buildings of lesser scale and confined to that part of the site that is previously developed land could well meet adopted local and national policy and be an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt whereas this proposal would not.

**Representations:**

56. STAMBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL: Stambidge Parish Council approve but ask that if the planning permission is granted, a way of limiting the speed of traffic using be agreed in the interest of road safety for all residents living in and nearby Little Stambidge Hall Lane.
57. ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (SUDS) LLFA: Initial Response received 14th November 2019: Having reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment and the associated documents which accompanied the planning application, we wish to issue a holding objection to the granting of planning permission based on the following:
58. Discharge rate - should be restricted to the greenfield 1 in 1-year rate (2.2 l/s) opposed to QBAR (2.6 l/s). Update calculations accordingly.
59. Half drain times should be provided for the 1 in 30-year storm event plus 40% climate change.
60. In the event that more information was supplied by the applicants then the County Council may be in a position to withdraw its objection to the proposal once it has considered the additional clarification/details that are required
61. Further response received 7th February 2020: Having reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment and the associated documents which accompanied the planning application, we do not object to the granting of planning permission based on the following:

**Condition 1**

No works except demolition shall takes place until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme should include but not be limited to:

Limiting discharge rates to 2.2l/s for all storm events up to an including the 1 in 100-year rate plus 40% allowance for climate change subject to agreement with the relevant third party. Demonstrate that features are able to accommodate a 1 in 10-year storm event within 24 hours of a 1 in 30 year event plus climate change. Final modelling and calculations for all areas of the drainage system.

---

Detailed engineering drawings of each component of the drainage scheme.  
A final drainage plan which details exceedance and conveyance routes, FFL and ground levels, and location and sizing of any drainage features.  
A written report summarising the final strategy and highlighting any minor changes to the approved strategy.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site. To ensure the effective operation of SuDS features over the lifetime of the development. To provide mitigation of any environmental harm which may be caused to the local water environment. Failure to provide the above required information before commencement of works may result in a system being installed that is not sufficient to deal with surface water occurring during rainfall events and may lead to increased flood risk and pollution hazard from the site.

Condition 2

The applicant or any successor in title must maintain yearly logs of maintenance which should be carried out in accordance with any approved Maintenance Plan. These must be available for inspection upon a request by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the SuDS are maintained for the lifetime of the development as outlined in any approved Maintenance Plan so that they continue to function as intended to ensure mitigation against flood risk.

62. RDC (ARBORICULTURAL AND ECOLOGY ADVISOR): Proposed new planting should be of native stock and form large specimens upon maturity such as oak, hornbeam, field maple or similar. Recommend suggested tree planting be of native stock and be large specimens upon maturity such as oak, hornbeam, field maple or similar.
63. ESSEX POLICE: There is no reference to physical security submitted within this application. It is advised that the developers make contact directly with a view to discuss crime prevention through environmental design.
64. NATURAL ENGLAND: Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes.
65. ECC (SPECIALIST ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVICE): No archaeological features directly impacted by the proposed development
66. ECC HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE: Little Stambridge Hall comprises of four separate listed buildings. There is no objection to this application. I recommend conditions are attached requiring a detailed landscaping scheme and details/samples of materials of the new building. The buildings and landscaping should be of high quality in the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. A condition should also be attached pertaining to surface treatments of the shared hard standing drive with the listed



farmhouse to ensure this does not have an adverse impact on setting of the heritage asset.

67. ECC HIGHWAYS: No objection subject to conditions relating to surface water discharge from the development onto the Highway, all loading / unloading / reception and storage of building materials and the manoeuvring of all vehicles, including construction traffic undertaken within the application site, clear of the public highway and the retention of the public's rights and ease of passage over footpath number 21 in Stambridge.
68. ANGLIAN WATER: There are no assets owned by Anglian Water or those subject to an adoption agreement within the development boundary that may affect the layout of the site. The network has available capacity for these flows for waste water. The preferred method of surface water disposal would be to a sustainable drainage system (SuDS). A Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been submitted in support of this application.
69. RDC ECONOMIC REGENERATION: The 2018 update of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) covers the economy in Chapter 6, stating that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, and that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The chapter also makes specific reference to supporting the rural economy, stating that planning policies and decisions should enable:
  - a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.
  - b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.
70. In this respect, we consider that the proposal respects these aims, and will provide a range of new business accommodation on part of a farm site that is currently surplus to requirements. The farm in question has a track record of hosting a small number of start-up businesses on the site, including a micro-brewery and a caravan repair business, and the proposal has the potential to further add to the local ecosystem of small business in a rural part of Rochford District, contributing to both the diversification of the farm and the growth of rural employment opportunities.
71. Para. 82 makes reference to the need to make provision at a variety of scales, and the proposals accord with this in providing a range of accommodation for small businesses, with units varying in size between 500 sq ft and 2,000 sq ft.
72. Para. 84 states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are

---

not well served by public transport. The site in question fits this description, and therefore its potential as a location for employment should be considered.

73. Chapter 11 ('Making effective use of land'), para.118 states that policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, something especially pertinent in the farming sector, where mechanisation and changes to farming practices has meant there are considerable numbers of agricultural buildings which have now surplus to requirements.
74. Rochford District Core Strategy 2011: The Core Strategy's approach to rural diversification within the Green Belt is set out within policies GB1 and GB2. Broadly, although the policies are restrictive to development, they recognise the need to support rural diversification and employment, acknowledging that agricultural businesses need to diversify into other activities to remain viable. With a clear aim to prevent coalescence of settlements through the development of new rural land, it would be preferable to make use of existing sites where there are already buildings, and in which employment activities are already taking place.
75. Rochford District Council's Employment Land Study (ELS) 2014 forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, and notes that Rochford District currently experiences low job density, and consequently high flows of out-commuting as residents travel elsewhere for work. It also highlights that small rural business locations have a role to play in meeting local business and employment demand.
76. The South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) 2017, a study by GVA, identified a severe under-supply of employment space in Rochford District relative to demand, whilst more widely supply has dropped sharply across South Essex. The analysis also considered scenarios such as the Greater London Authority Industrial Land Study 2016-2036 and a model to reflect growth as a result of London Southend Airport. This anticipated potential workspace demand for Rochford District 2016-2036 to be for an additional 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment space, over 7ha land, creating an additional 1,200+ jobs. This is clearly dependent upon provision of suitable employment space, and whilst the Council's Allocations Plan 2014 identifies new sites with potential to accommodate new offices and industrial units with large floorplates, it is important to consider provision of small business workspace in tandem with this.
77. The Essex Grow-On Space Feasibility Study, conducted by SQW and commissioned by Essex County Council in October 2016 includes data which demonstrates that in regards to grow-on space there is a mismatch between the supply of, and demand for, grow-on space across the county and that both industrial and office space are in short supply. This is most pronounced in Rochford District. Rochford is the second highest in the area and above the County, Eastern region and National for Micro Businesses (0 to 9 employees) so there is a good supply of local businesses that would either require start-up space or eventually grow-on space. This indicates there is a lack of available

grow-on space for our businesses, and the site in question represents a prime opportunity to address this and prevent such businesses being forced to move out of the district as they grow, or otherwise remain in unsuitable premises or at home.

78. A search of the Rightmove commercial property website on 20/11/2018 revealed that only 2 industrial properties of below 2,000 sq ft were available to lease within Rochford District. Regular searches during 2019 have indicated that the number of small industrial premises within the district has always been scarce, underlining the findings of studies.
79. Consequently, the Council's adopted Economic Growth Strategy 2017, part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, commits the Council's Economic Regeneration team to encouraging inward investment; growing and retaining businesses; and supporting new businesses. Stated measures to support these goals include to be responsive to planning consultations to support business growth and investment; and support and encourage the development of enterprise centres offering flexible workspace within the District wherever possible.
80. With these considerations in mind, the Economic Regeneration Team supports the proposal from a business growth and employment angle. As it provides for new opportunities for employment and economic growth in a rural portion of the District, and addresses a clear need for smaller workspace that is not adequately provided elsewhere
81. The proposal would meet local policy requirements with regard to supporting the rural economy and provide a high standard of new business accommodation and provide a range of unit sizes. The Economic Regeneration Team supports the proposal from a business growth and employment angle. As it provides for new opportunities for employment and economic growth in a rural portion of the District and addresses a clear need for smaller workspace that is not adequately provided elsewhere.
82. NEIGHBOUR AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION:  
  
1 letter of representation has been received from 48 Lee Lots, Great Wakering.
83. A Public Right of Way, Stambridge FP21, runs north/south directly through the proposed development. Access to this footpath must remain unobstructed at all times both during and after construction. A Public Right of Way, Stambridge FP21, runs north/south directly through the proposed development. It crosses the area outlined in red on the Location Plan indicating the site of the development. If this application is approved, a condition should be attached stating that access to this footpath must remain unobstructed at all times both during and after construction.

---

REFUSE

- 1 The application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined in the Council's Local Development Framework Allocations Plan (2014). In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework inappropriate development within the Green Belt is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It is considered that the proposed development by reason of the proposed site area and the proposed scale, form and design of buildings, would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt as a result of the proposal having a significantly greater adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt in both spatial and visual terms than the existing development on the site. In addition, the site would not all qualify as PDL. No very special circumstances exist that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The proposal would be contrary to paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, GB1 of the Local Development Framework's Core Strategy and Policies DM10 and DM11 of the Development Management Plan.

**Relevant Development Plan Policies and Proposals:**

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

Planning Practice Guidance

Rochford District Council Local Development Framework Allocations Plan (2014)

Rochford District Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2011) - Policies CP1 (Design), ENV1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Landscape and Habitats and the Protection of Historical and Archaeological Sites), ENV10 (BREEAM), T1 (Highways), T6 (Cycling and Walking), T8 (Parking Standards), GB1 (Green Belt Protection), GB2 (Rural Diversification and Recreational Uses), ED1 (Employment Growth).

Rochford District Council Local Development Framework Development Management Plan - Policies DM1 (Design of New Developments), DM10 (PDL), DM11 (Existing Businesses in the Green Belt), DM30 (Parking Standards) DM31.

Essex Parking Standards Design & Good Practice (September 2009)

The South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) 2017, a study

The Essex Grow-On Space Feasibility Study, conducted by SQW and commissioned by Essex County Council in October 2016

The local Ward Member(s) for the above application are Cllr S Wootton  
Cllr G J Ioannou Cllr Mrs L Shaw

Appendix 2

19/00926/FUL



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. This copy is believed to be correct.

Nevertheless Rochford District Council can accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions, changes in the details given or for any expense or loss thereby caused.

Rochford District Council, licence No.LA079138



NTS