DELEGATED REPORT

Application Reference: PL/2023/11085

PROPOSAL

The application is to construct a Creativity Pavilion, to accommodate a reception and visitors area, demonstration kitchen and dining area, exhibition space and supporting facilities, including parking, at Stonegate Farmers Ltd, Lacock Green, Corsham Road, Lacock.

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application relates to Stonegate Farmers Ltd, an industrial complex with a number of buildings, hardstanding and parking; all of which support the established egg grading and packing business.

The site was historically railway sidings and the main London to Bristol line lies immediately to the east of the site. Lacock village is approx.. 1.5km to the south east. The site is situated within Flood Zone 1, with a low probability of flooding.

The site has been operational since 1987 and a CLE was granted in 2004 which granted lawful use of the site as an egg farm, collection, packing and distribution site (N/04/02944/CLE). The Council has subsequently accepted that the use of the site for agriculture has ceased.

In 2017 application 17/04676/FUL was granted for change of use of the land to B1(c) to accommodate changes to the layout of the industrial premises, with associated infrastructure. The proposal was part of a major investment to modernise the operation. The approval also increased the overall site area to 5.42 ha to create a new service area, additional parking and alterations to the internal circulation.

Under permission 18/07016/FUL planning permission was granted for an additional 14 class B2 units at the northern end of the site.

Planning permission was most granted under 20/06974/FUL for the demolition of buildings, rebuilding and extensions at the site and re-routing the access road. An extension to Building E was granted under 20/11/602/FUL.

The current application relates to an area at the front of the complex.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 20/11602/FUL - Proposed extension to Building E to house new Poaching Line – Approved with Conditions
- 20/06974/FUL - Demolition of units 4-11, demolition & re-build of Building C, extensions to Building C & D and re-routing of the access road. – Approved with Conditions
- 18/07016/FUL - Starter Industrial Units (Class B2) comprising: 100m2 x 3, 140m2 x 1, 170m2 x 5, 287m2 x 2, 289m2 x 1, 342m2 x1 and related infrastructure. – Approved with Conditions
- 17/04676/FUL - Change of Use of Land to B1 (c) to Accommodate Changes to the Layout of Existing Adjacent Industrial Premises, Related Infrastructure, Internal Roads, Vehicle Parking, Hardstandings, Drainage and Landscaping . The Enclosure of the Space Between Two Existing Buildings to Form One Building . Single and Part Two Storey Extensions to Accommodate Ancillary

Offices and Loading Bays and the Erection of 2.4M High Paramesh Deco Welded Mesh Fencing. – Approved with Conditions
- N/06/02912/FUL - Proposed Alteration Of Existing Car Park And Construction Of Car Park To Service Existing Egg Packing Unit (Resubmission Of 06.01681.FUL) – Approved with Conditions
- N/06/01681/FUL - Proposed Alteration of Existing Entrance & Construction of Car Park to Service Existing Egg Packing Unit. – Refused
- N/05/00531/FUL - Demolition of 2 Chicken Houses & Construction of New Egg & Packaging Store – Approved with Conditions
- N/05/00530/S73A - Retention of Egg Farm, Collection & Distribution & Ancillary Works – Approved with Conditions
- N/04/02944/CLE - USE OF LAND AS EGG FARM, COLLECTION/PACKING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTRE – Approved with Conditions
- N/92/02298/S73 - ERECTION OF 2 NO POULTRY LAYING UNITS (RENEWAL OF N/87/2862/F) 2 NO POULTRY UNITS (RENEWAL) - Approved

POLICIES

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) (Jan 2015)
Core Policy 1: Settlement strategy
Core Policy 2: Delivery strategy
Core Policy 11: Spatial Strategy: Corsham Community Area
Core Policy 34: Additional employment land
Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Core Policy 51: Landscape
Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
Core Policy 60: Sustainable transport
Core Policy 61: Transport and new development

Wiltshire Housing Sites Allocation Plan (Feb 2020)
No relevant policies

North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 (June 2006)
NE18 – Noise and Pollution

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Dec 2023)

ISSUES

The principal considerations in the determination of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Residential Amenity
- Highways/Parking
- Ecology

CONSULTATION

Lacock Parish Council: No comment received

Council Highway Engineer: Initial comments Jan 2024: “The Design and Access Statement explains the Creativity Pavilion is proposed to act as first point of contact for visitors, and to “showcase” the business.

As part of the proposal, it is advised that three parking spaces for guests would be provided to the front of the new building. However, such an area is already being utilised for parking, although this has not been approved as part of the previously approved parking arrangements.

The application form advises that there is no proposal to increase the number of staff, as a result of the proposed new building.

The Design and Access Statement does not provide any detail of the nature of the demonstration and dining area, or the exhibition space, and who this is intended to benefit. As the area is quite limited, I would assume this to be for the benefit of visitors in connection with the business operations, and not an attraction in its own right. However, I would be grateful for some clarity of its use, and if this would generate any additional visitor traffic to the site.

I would also presume the regularisation of the additional parking outside of the proposed building for visitors would be considered sufficient to accommodate the anticipated number of visitors to the site at any one time. Again, I would be grateful for some clarification to understand if the “showcasing” of the business is already an existing practice, and that the proposed building is not expected to generate any material change in the level of visitors to the site, but simply offering a better experience for visitors.”

Revised comments April 2024: “Given that there is no intended additional uses proposed within the site, I would have no objections.”

Council’s Drainage Engineer: No objection

Public Protection: No objection subject to conditions requiring a Construction and Environmental Management Plan and a condition regarding noise from any extraction or air handling plant serving the proposed creativity pavilion.

Economic Development: “The applicant Stonegate Ltd’s facility at Lacock is the largest and the only dedicated free range and organic egg packing operation globally. It guarantees fast, accurate grading of their world-class range of eggs and is a centre of innovation for egg products, working with leading wholesalers, retailers and suppliers across the UK. Despite the backdrop of recent economic headwinds the business has doubled in size over recent years, investing in robotics, solar energy and staff facilities, and in November 2023 unveiled plans to invest a further £10M to improve its site and production capabilities.

This proposal addresses the issue that ‘first impression’ visitor arrangements at the site are not ideal, with the current reception in the middle of the extensive site. The new entrance pavilion will provide a new reception and visitors area and will better showcase the business and its facilities through a demonstration kitchen and dining area, exhibition space and supporting facilities. The design aims to parallel the company’s principles of quality and sustainability.

From an Economic Development perspective, this application is strongly supported. Stonegate is a strategically significant food sector business (in Wiltshire’s top 20 by revenue), productivity contributor and employer, and the company’s commitment to the area and ongoing capital investment is welcomed, helping cement its presence and safeguard a workforce of 500 staff including specialist/technical high value roles. The company also supports indirect jobs and local supply chains and there is considerable spend on corporate accommodation and hospitality venues in the local area, which the new demonstration and exhibition facilities will further support. Whilst the Pavilion is not a significant job creator in itself, experience elsewhere in the county shows similar investments in improved facilities can provide a range of business payback including brand enhancement, enhanced client relations and improved staff recruitment.”

Ecology: No comment received

REPRESENTATIONS

No representations received.

ASSESSMENT

Principle

Stonegate Ltd is an established facility where free-range and organic eggs are graded and packed at the site. As part of the facility, the applicants wish to create a entrance pavilion (the "Creativity Pavilion") at the front of the site to act as a first point of contact for visitors.

The Creativity Pavilion would accommodate a reception and visitors area, demonstration kitchen and dining area, exhibition space and supporting facilities. The building is intended to showcase the business.

The proposed building would be ancillary to the existing business at the site, the principle of which has been established through previous applications.

CP34 of the WCS supports proposals for development in the open countryside that is for existing rural based businesses adjacent to small villages. The site is near to but not directly adjacent to Lacock, which is defined as a small village in the WCS. This is also subject to other considerations such as it being consistent with its scale within the location, wouldn't adversely affect nearby buildings or detract from residential amenity. This policy also states that it would support developments that are considered essential to the wider strategic interest of the economic development of Wiltshire, as determined by the council.

The Council's Economic Development team have identified Stonegate as a strategically significant food sector business (in Wiltshire's top 20 by revenue), productivity contributor and employer, and the company's commitment to the area and ongoing capital investment is supported. It has a significant workforce of 500 staff. The Pavilion is expected to provide a range of business payback including brand enhancement, enhanced client relations and improved staff recruitment.

Para 88 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings.

Given the nature of the proposals is for a facility to help showcase the existing rural business, which is valued as a strategically significant food sector business in Wiltshire, it is considered the proposals are acceptable in principle in accordance with CP34 and the NPPF.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

The proposal is for a single storey building close to the site entrance. The applicant has considered the materials palette based on materials found within the local area. The building would be finished in brick and timber cladding set beneath a slate roof and at the rear partially a flat green roof. There would be oak framing details and large glazing detailing on the south east and north east elevations. The majority of other buildings at the site are of industrial appearance.

The building is considered to be well designed for its purpose. It is not located within a highly sensitive setting. There is existing established landscaping to the south of the building. It is not considered the proposals would cause any harm to the character and appearance of the area that would warrant refusal of the application. The proposal would comply with the requirements of CP51 and CP57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Residential amenity

The building is at the front of an established commercial site. It is situated some distance from the neighbouring residential properties (approximately 85m to the closest). Given the purpose of the building to be used to showcase the business, which is already an existing practice, it is not considered it would result in a significant increase in traffic or disturbance to any neighbouring properties.

The Council's Public Protection Officer has suggested two conditions in relation to noise and a Construction and Environmental Management Plan. The noise related condition requires the development not to increase the existing background noise levels which is considered reasonable within the context of the other commercial activity at the site.

Having regard to the expanse of the applicant's land ownership which comprises a significant land holding of commercial use at the site, and that the nearest residential properties are in excess of 85m away, it is considered the construction of the building can be managed adequately without the need for prior approval by the council. The building is not of significant size and there would be sufficient space within the applicant's ownership to manage this effectively without compromising the amenity of neighbours. Consequently, it is not considered a condition requiring a Construction and Environmental Management Plan is necessary in this instance, and is not included.

Subject to the noise level related condition, the proposal would comply with the requirements of CP57 (vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. There would be no harm to the amenities of residential properties as a result.

Highways/Parking

The Highways Engineer had some queries in respect of the use of the creativity pavilion and how much traffic it would generate. The applicant has clarified that this building would be an alternative venue to host business guests and hold meetings, which already takes place on the site and utilises the existing parking arrangements. The activities are ancillary to the existing use and will be used for the sole benefit of visitors with business operations. The proposed activities are not to provide an attraction for the public or general visitors. The proposed guest parking is for VIP guests, and other guest parking is already accommodated within adjacent parking areas.

The proposals would not generate any additional vehicle movements, or alter the means of access. The Council's Highway Engineer has no objection to the proposals. It is considered the proposals meet with the requirements of policies CP60 and CP64 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Ecology

The Council's Ecologists were consulted due to the level of glazing proposed within the building and consideration for light spill. No comment has been received from the Council's Ecologists within the consultation period. The site is not within the consultation zone for the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC. Having reviewed the application site circumstances further, the application site is at the front of the wider commercial site where there is car parking/hardstanding, regular activity, and lamp posts. Within the context of existing uses, it is not considered that this specific site would be a sensitive ecological receptor. There is already significant activity within the area and it is not considered that the creativity pavilion would have a harmful impact on ecology within the wider area. There is already a landscape buffer to the south of

the proposed building. The building is to be used in relation to the business use so this will be used during business hours. The proposals are considered to be acceptable in respect of CP50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

CONCLUSION

The proposed creativity pavilion is considered acceptable in principle associated with the existing use at the site; and is acceptable in design terms. There would be no harm to the character and appearance of the area, neighbour amenity and no highway safety or parking issues. There is considered to be no unacceptable impact on protected species or habitats. With no material considerations indicating otherwise, the application is recommended for approval in accordance with the NPPF (2023) and Wiltshire Core Strategy (Jan 2015) policies CP1, CP2, CP11, CP34, CP50, CP51, CP57, CP60 and CP61.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

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

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

   Location Plan 2447-001-A
   Proposed Site Plan 2247-010-A
   Proposed Elevations and Floor Plan 2447-011-A
   Existing Site Plan and Pump Room Plans 2447-002-A

   REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The rating level (LArTR) of the noise emitted from the proposed development shall not exceed the existing background noise level (LA90T). The rating level shall be determined by measurement or calculation at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive premises or at another location that is agreed with the local planning authority. Measurements shall be made in accordance with BS4142:2014 +A1:2019. Where the background levels are to be taken as a LA90 1 hour and the ambient noise levels shall be expressed as an LAeq 1 hour during the daytime [07:00- - 23:00] and shall be expressed as an LA90 and LAeq 5 minutes during the night [23:00 – 07:00] at the boundary of the nearest residential noise-sensitive receptors.

   REASON: Core policy 57, Ensuring high design and place shaping such that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable.

   + Standard informatives