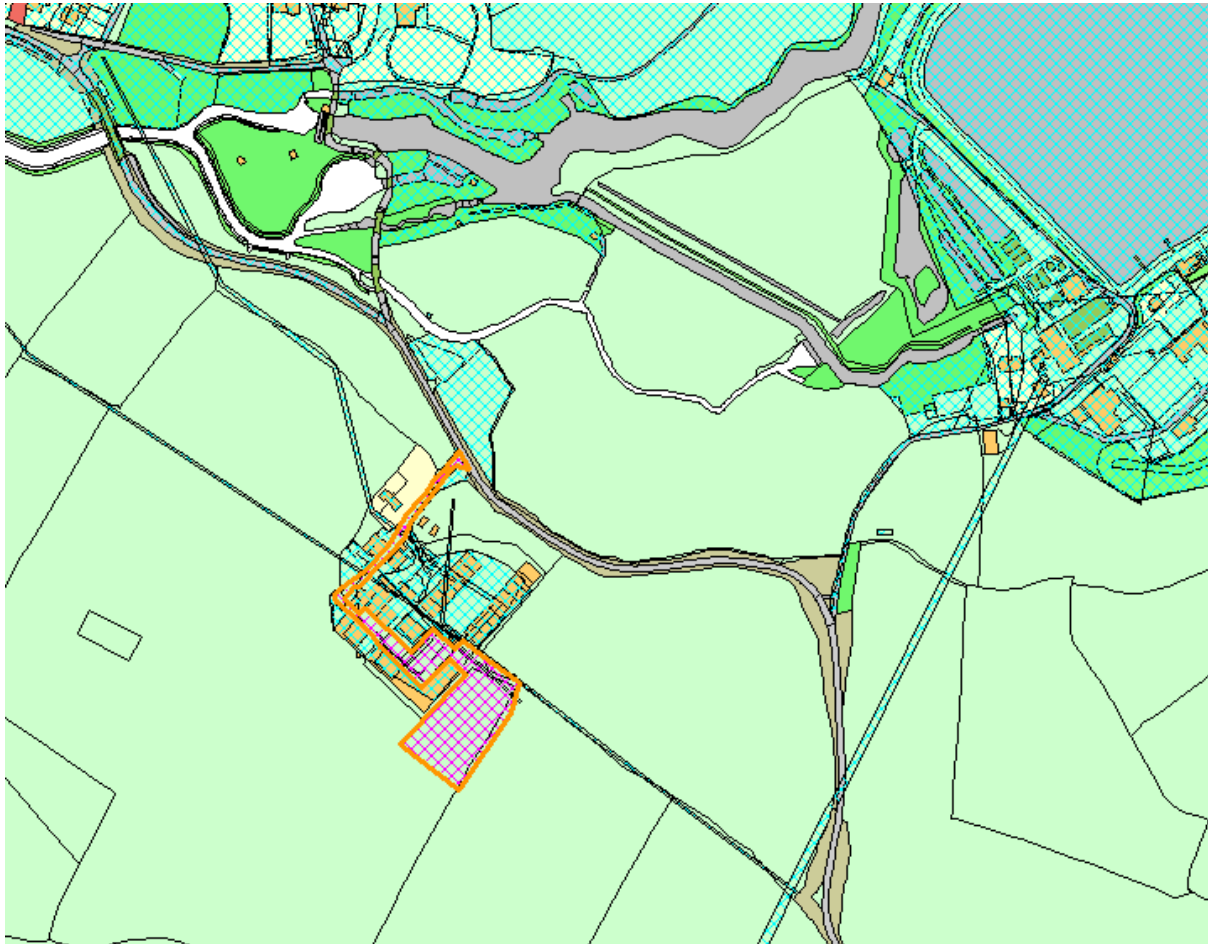


**Report to:** Planning Applications Committee  
**Date:** 7 September 2022  
**Application No:** LW/21/1005  
**Location:** Bridge Farm, Barcombe Mills Road, Barcombe  
**Proposal:** Erection of one workshop comprising 6 modular units with associated car parking on the established rural employment site  
**Ward:** Ouse Valley and Ringmer  
**Applicant:** Mr M Stroude  
**Recommendation:** Refuse planning permission.  
**Contact Officer:** **Name:** James Smith  
**E-mail:** [james.smith@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:james.smith@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

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**Map Location:**



**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The proposed development involves an expansion of an existing rural business estate outside of the area of previously developed land that the existing estate is built over.

- 1.2 Whilst farm diversification and rural employment development are supported as a means to improve the rural economy this support is caveated by a need, amongst other considerations, to preserve the character and quality of the surrounding rural environment.
- 1.3 It is considered that the proposed development represents unacceptable sprawl that encroaches into an undeveloped green buffer around the existing site. As such, it is considered that the proposed development would have a harmful impact upon the surrounding landscape which would outweigh any benefit provided by the scheme. It is also considered that there are more appropriate sites available within Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan allocations and other rural areas within the district to provide opportunities employment development.
- 1.4 It is therefore recommended that the application is refused.

## 2. **Relevant Planning Policies**

### 2.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2021

2. Achieving sustainable development
4. Decision making
6. Building a strong, competitive economy
8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
9. Promoting sustainable transport
11. Making effective use of land
12. Achieving well-designed places
14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding, and coastal change
15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
14. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

### 2.2 Lewes District Local Plan (Parts 1 and 2)

- LLP1: – SP1 – Provision of Housing & Employment Land
- LLP1: – CP4 – Economic Development & Regeneration
- LLP1: – CP10 – Natural Environment & Landscape
- LLP1: – CP11 – Built and Historic Environment & Design
- LLP1: – CP12 – Flood Risk, Coastal Erosion and Drainage
- LLP1: – CP13 – Sustainable Travel
- LLP1: – CP14 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
- LLP2: – DM9 - Farm Diversification
- LLP2: – DM10 - Employment Development in the Countryside
- LLP2: – DM11 - Existing Employment Sites in the Countryside
- LLP2: - DM14: Multi-functional Green Infrastructure

LLP2: – DM18 - Recreation and Rivers  
LLP2: – DM19 - Protection of Agricultural Land  
LLP2: – DM20 – Pollution Management  
LLP2: – DM21 - Land Contamination  
LLP2: – DM22 – Water Resources and Water Quality  
LLP2: – DM23 – Noise  
LLP2: – DM24 – Protection of Biodiversity and Geodiversity  
LLP2: – DM25 – Design  
LLP2: - DM26 - Refuse and Recycling  
LLP2: – DM27 – Landscape Design  
LLP2: – DM33 – Heritage Assets

### 2.3 Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan

4.1 The countryside in Ringmer  
4.4 The River Ouse banks between Lower Stoneham and Barcombe Mills  
4.5 Access to the countryside: public footpaths  
4.6 Accessible countryside and natural or semi-natural greenspace  
4.9 Green corridors, ponds, and streams  
4.10 Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity  
4.11 Avoidance of light pollution  
5.1 Employment in Ringmer  
EMP23 Bridge Farm, Barcombe Mills  
8.2 The local road network within Ringmer parish  
8.3 Provision of adequate off-road parking  
8.5 Road safety  
8.10 Water supply  
8.11 Drainage & sewerage  
8.12 Waste disposal & recycling  
9.1 Design, massing, and height of buildings  
9.2 Making good use of available land  
9.3 Materials  
9.6 Hard & soft landscaping

## **3. Site Description**

3.1 The site is located outside of the planning boundary and occupies a former farmyard area which has been redeveloped over time as a small

industrial/business estate which is occupied by a cluster of purpose built commercial units contained within metal clad sheds.

- 3.2 Units of a variety of sizes are present, contained within 7 main buildings which are subdivided accordingly. The site is accessed via a crossover on Barcombe Mills Road which connects with a network of hard surfaced internal roads which provide access to each unit. Hard surfaced parking areas are provided within the site.
- 3.3 The site occupies low lying land to the east of the river Ouse. Other than a pair of semi-detached houses to the immediate north of the site the surrounding landscape is largely undeveloped, comprising a network of predominantly arable enclosed fields with Barcombe Mills and reservoir relatively close by to the north. A public footpath, RIN/7/2 directly flanks the eastern site boundary, running north towards Barcombe Mills and south towards Upper Wellingham.
- 3.4 The majority of the existing business estate falls within the area identified as an Employment Site under EMP23 of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan. However, the site itself falls outside of this designation, lying to the south-east of it. The site falls wholly within the area subject to policy 4.4 of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan which seeks to encourage recreational and tourist use of the river banks between Chalkham Farm and Barcombe Mills.
- 3.5 The site itself is identified as being at very low risk of tidal, fluvial or surface water flooding. However, it is noted that the site access falls within Flood Zone 3 (high risk of tidal/fluvial flooding) and part of the wider business site to the north falls within Flood Zone 2 (medium risk of tidal/fluvial flooding). The site also falls within an Archaeological Notification Area.
- 3.6 Other than those mentioned above, there are no specific planning designations or constraints attached to the site or the immediate surrounding area.

#### **4. Proposed Development**

- 4.1 The proposal involves the erection of a single workshop building which would be subdivided into 6 x self-contained units. The building would measure approx. 91.5 metres in length. The western elevation would be staggered increasing from 16.76 metres depth on the northern side of the building to 22.76 metres on the southern side. The eaves height of the roof would be at 5.629 metres with a shallow pitch up to the ridge at 6.1 metres. The overall floor area provided would be 1,842 m<sup>2</sup>, all at ground floor level.
- 4.2 It is noted that mezzanines have been installed in some of the existing units but no mezzanine level would be included within the proposed building.
- 4.3 Openings provided would comprise roof lights installed in both the east and west facing roof slopes, full height shutter doors and adjacent personnel doors for each unit on the western (front) elevation and a single personnel door for each unit on the eastern (rear) elevation.

- 4.4 A hard surfaced parking, turning and access area would be provided to the north of the building. 31 parking bays provided, 4 of which would be of suitable dimensions for use by people with disabilities.
- 4.5 The existing footpath flanking the east of the site would be diverted to the opposite side of the hedgerow marking the boundary between the site and the field to the east. This would require a footpath diversion order to be agreed with East Sussex County Council.
- 4.6 A surface water attenuation pond would be formed to the south of the building and tree and hedge planting would be included on the eastern boundary and to the south of the building where it would be in the form of a 5-10 metre wide belt of trees and hedging intended to provide screening.

## 5. Relevant Planning History

- 5.1 **LW/11/0124** - Change of use of farm buildings to business uses (B1 & B8) – Approved Conditionally 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011
- 5.2 **LW/15/0456** - Change of use from agricultural building to a flexible commercial use under Class R – Approved Conditionally 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015
- 5.3 **LW/16/0506** - Erection of new B1/B8 workshops – Approved Conditionally 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016
- 5.4 **LW/17/0257** - Amendment to planning approval LW/16/0506 (Erection of new B1/B8 workshops) to alter the elevations to provide translucent panels – Approved Conditionally 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017
- 5.5 **LW/19/0923** - Erection of two B1/B8 workshops on established rural employment site – Approved Conditionally 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020

## 6. Consultations

### 6.1 Consultations:

Ringmer Parish Council:

Support.

Barcombe Parish Council (Note: The application site is in Ringmer Parish but adjacent to Barcombe Parish)

Barcombe Parish Council is negative towards application LW/21/1005.

The main concern for both neighbours and members of the Parish Council was over development of the site. The existing size and level of activity on the site was felt to be sufficient. Other issues raised included increase in traffic volume, road safety, road damage caused by increased traffic, the impact on the dark sky of site lighting and possible flood risk from increase in hard surfaces.

The Parish Council also requests that conditions from the previous development are reviewed as light fittings appear not to be

hooded/subject to motion detection triggers. It is also reported that lights are on late into the evening.

#### LDC Ecology:

It is considered that sufficient information has been provided to be able to assess the ecological impacts of the proposed development. Works should only be undertaken under a precautionary approach and in accordance with the recommendations in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Phlorum, June 2021) and in the additional advice given above. Further details of habitat and species enhancement measures should be submitted prior to commencement of development. These could be included within an Ecological Design Strategy (EDS) or similar document.

#### ESCC Highways:

This application seeks approval for the erection of one B1/B8 workshop with 1842sqm of lettable space and associated car parking. This will create an extension to an existing site which received approval under planning applications (LW/11/0124) and (LW/19/0923) for B1/B8 use. Given the rural nature of the site it is difficult to fully predict the number of movements generated by the development. Although the trips rates put forward with the previous application were considered unlikely to have a severe impact on the surrounding transport network, as this application seeks to effectively double the site, a survey showing the number of daily movements to and from the site should be submitted in support. This could be done by way of occupant survey detailing the number of average daily movements (this should include staff and deliveries) or a count at the access. Concerns with the location of the site and the lack of footway connection were also raised in the previous comments; but given the size of development it was considered that suitable measures to reduce private car trips could be implemented to meet CIL tests i.e., be in scale with the development proposals.

Following the outcome of the survey the travel plan statement and measures put forward should be reviewed to ensure that the site will still provide suitable methods to reduce private car trips to and from the site.

It should be noted that the whole site had been developed under one planning application improvements to pedestrian/cycling connections to and from the site are likely to have been requested from the start.

## **7. Neighbour Representations**

7.1 19 letters of support have been received. A summary of comments made is provided below:-

- The site has good infrastructure, good transport connections, a sense strong community and is appealing to businesses.
- There is high demand for modern purpose-built commercial units.

- Sympathetic screening can be provided.
- Supports local businesses and provides employment.
- Shorter commutes for rural based workers.
- Lack of similar units available elsewhere.
- There would be minimal amenity impact.
- Presence of people on site supports other local businesses.
- Introduction of recreational uses on industrial estates in Lewes is making it harder for commercial uses to operate there and a facility such as the proposed development is therefore needed.

7.2 17 letters of objection have been received. A summary of comments made is provided below:-

- Would create an industrial estate in the countryside.
- Unsympathetic to the open character of the countryside.
- Industrialisation of an area of countryside which is well used for recreational purposes.
- Additional traffic passing through Barcombe Cross.
- Unsympathetic lighting would impact upon dark night skies.
- Increase in noise pollution.
- Lack of footpath links for pedestrians and position of site access close to bend in road causes a highway hazard.
- The landscaping provided for the existing development has not been effective, especially in winter months.
- Loss of habitat and damage to wildlife.
- Increased flood risk due to hard surfacing.
- Goes far beyond the renovation of the original farmyard.
- Loss of agricultural land.
- Overdevelopment of the site.
- LDC planning policy objected to the previous application.
- Piecemeal development of the site

7.3 1 neutral letter has been submitted stating the following:-

- It should be ensured that translucent panels are not included in the walls of the buildings as they have been in those approved under LW/19/0923 as this has resulted in light pollution.

## 8. **Appraisal**

### 8.1 Key Considerations

8.1.1 The main considerations relate to the principle of the development; the impact upon the character and appearance of the area, upon green

infrastructure and the wider landscape, neighbour amenities, highway/pedestrian safety and flood risk with the ultimate consideration being the balance any harms and benefits caused by the scheme on the context of the economic, environmental and social objectives that comprise sustainable development.

- 8.1.2 The demand for additional employment facilities will be considered as well as the current availability of land/existing facilities to meet this demand.

## 8.2 Principle

- 8.2.1 The site is located outside of the settlement boundary. Policy DM1 of the Lewes District Local Plan (part two) adopts a strict approach to development within the countryside, stating that 'outside the planning boundaries, the distinctive character and quality of the countryside will be protected and new development will only be permitted where it is consistent with a specific development plan policy or where the need for a countryside location can be demonstrated.
- 8.2.2 Para. 84 (b) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should support the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.
- 8.2.3 Para. 85 goes on to state 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. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.'
- 8.2.4 Policy CP4 of the Lewes District Local Plan Part 1 states that 'in order to stimulate and maintain a buoyant and balanced local economy through .... the rural economy and ensuring that the district's economy does not become reliant on one or two sectors, the local planning authority will take a flexible and supportive approach to economic development.'
- 8.2.5 Policy DM9 of Local Plan Part 2 (LLP2) identifies development which forms part of a farm diversification scheme or otherwise helps maintain the viability of farm businesses engaged in sustainable land management as acceptable within a rural location provided the following criteria are met.
- I. the proposed development will stimulate new economic activity with a use appropriate to its rural location.
  - II. wherever possible, new or replacement buildings are located within or adjoining an existing group of buildings.



- III. any new building responds sensitively to its rural setting, in terms of its scale, layout, design and use of materials.
  - IV. the proposed development would not create an unacceptable impact on the local road network or require highway improvements that would harm the landscape or ecological value of rural roads in the area.
- 8.2.6 Policy DM10 of LLP2 supports 'low-scale employment development' outside the planning boundaries. The re-use of existing rural buildings is preferred but the demolition and replacement of an existing agricultural or other rural building is supported where this would result in a more sustainable development than could be achieved through converting the building.
- 8.2.7 Finally, LLP2 policy DM11 supports redevelopment and intensification of existing employment sites and, exceptionally, the outward expansion of a site where it can be demonstrated that it would facilitate the retention of an employment use which is important to the local economy, there being no suitable alternative site available and subject to accordance with various criteria that will be assessed in the main body of this report.
- 8.2.8 It is also noted that the bulk of the existing development falls within an area designated as an employment site under EMP23 of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan, although the site itself does not fall within this designation.
- 8.2.9 The general principle of rural employment development is therefore considered to be acceptable and the suitability of the site itself for this form of development will be assessed against relevant local and national planning policies and legislation in the main body of this report.

### 8.3 Planning Obligations

- 8.3.1 None required although a footpath diversion order would need to be put in place to secure the realignment of the footpath on the eastern boundary of the site.

### 8.4 Visual Impact

- 8.4.1 The site is within a rural setting, other than the cluster of buildings that make up the existing business estate and neighbouring dwellings there is no development within the immediate surroundings and development in the wider landscape is restricted to sporadic clusters of agricultural buildings and rows of dwellings that generally flank roads and do not intrude significantly into the countryside.
- 8.4.2 The business estate has grown in a somewhat piecemeal way, having initially been contained largely within the farmyard area and utilising agricultural buildings that were converted and re-clad it has since extended, primarily northwards towards Barcombe Mills Road, with purpose built buildings being erected, most recently in 2020.
- 8.4.3 The proposed development represents a further outward expansion of the estate. This would bring the development within 6 metres of the

hedgerow that marks the field boundary, Unlike the recent development to the north of the site, which occupies an area which had been partially developed in the past through the provision of chicken sheds and a slurry lagoon, the proposed development would be built over land which is outside of the confines of the original farmyard and previously served as a green buffer, forming part of the field that extended around the western, southern and eastern edges of the farm yard.

- 8.4.4 Policy DM11 of LLP2 specifically states that outward expansion of existing rural employment sites will only be allowed where it can be demonstrated that it would allow for the retention of an existing employment use. There is no indication that any of the existing enterprises occupying units on the site require additional space to continue to function and, in any case, any expansion would still need to comply with criterion 2 of DM11 in that it must not detract from the distinctive rural character of the locality or local residential amenities by virtue of the nature and intensity of the use, noise, dust, fumes, the siting, design, scale and site coverage of the buildings, or its access requirements or associated traffic generation. It is noted that policy 5.1 of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan supports the intensification of use of existing sites but not their expansion outside of their defined boundaries. It is also noted that the Neighbourhood Plan states that the identified employment sites 'make provision for more than sufficient new employment land in major sites to meet the anticipated level of demand over the plan period'.
- 8.4.5 The development of the site would intrude into an open buffer maintained around existing buildings, would involve further expansion of the existing hard surfaced internal road, a further expanse of hard surfaced parking area and, ultimately represent a sense of sprawl, with the development of the employment use going beyond the redevelopment of the farmyard area, supported by the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan.
- 8.4.6 It is considered that the resultant sprawling nature of the site would generate a cluttered appearance, with the nucleated appearance of the employment site as originally permitted unravelling and the green buffers maintained around the site to soften visual impact being removed. Furthermore, whereas a modest collection of commercial buildings in a concentrated arrangement could be read as consistent with a typical agricultural development within when viewed in context with the wider landscape, it is considered that the increase in the scale, intensity and plot coverage brought about by the proposed scheme would generate a cumulative impact that would be fundamentally at odds with the general character of the surrounding landscape.
- 8.4.7 Whilst it is intended to reroute the existing footpath flanking the eastern part of the site to the other side of the hedgerow, the proposed development would be within approx. 7 metres of the realigned path. The proposed building would be visible above the hedgerow, as well as through it in winter months and it is considered

that its prominence would be such that it would appear intrusive and significantly detract from the amenity value of a significant stretch of the footpath, noting that the building is approx. 91.5 metres in length.

- 8.4.8 Para. 100 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. LLP2 policy DM35 states development that would have a harmful impact on the convenience, safety or amenity value of the existing or proposed footpath, cycle or bridleway network will only be permitted where this impact can be satisfactorily mitigated or an alternative facility of equivalent or improved quality would be delivered as part of the development. As stated above, given the scale of the development and its proximity to the footpath, it is considered that the rerouting of the footpath would not satisfactorily mitigate the impact of the development.
- 8.4.9 It is considered that the site has been developed to its maximum capacity in terms of landscape impact and it is noted that the Council has supported this. It is therefore considered that the sprawling nature of the proposed development would result in an incongruous, intrusive, and unsympathetic impact upon the rural character of the surrounding environment and that it therefore fails to comply with para. 92, 100 and 174 of the NPPF, policies CP8 and CP10 of LLP1, policies DM11, DM14 and DM35 of LLP2 and policy 4.1 of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan.
- 8.5 Impact upon amenities of neighbouring residents:
- 8.5.1 The site is relatively isolated from neighbouring dwellings, with the only residential properties within the immediate vicinity being at 1 and 2 Bridge Farm, some 150 metres to the north of the site, adjacent to the existing employment development.
- 8.5.2 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not result in any unacceptable adverse impact upon residential amenity due to the relative isolation of the site, provided the use of the proposed building is consistent with the light industrial/storage use of the existing commercial buildings (use classes E (g) and B8) and that there are suitable restrictions on hours of use to prevent sustained vehicular movements around the site entrance, which is adjacent to 1 and 2 Bridge Farm throughout the night as well as noise associated with activities taking place within the building.
- 8.6 Need for employment facilities
- 8.6.1 The application is accompanied by a statement from Locate East Sussex which maintains that the existing units on the site are in high demand, that enquiries for this type of site are regularly made, that units of this type support small and start-up businesses and assist economic growth in the rural area and that there is currently a lack of supply of good quality and affordable business space, driven partly by the loss of industrial units as part of the North Street Quarter development in Lewes and the delay in business development at Malling Brooks coming forward.

- 8.6.2 The Council's Regeneration Officers estimate that the proposed development would provide up to 39 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs and that this would represent an 8.4% increase in FTE employment available within the parish of Barcombe. As such, they consider that the development supports the LDC objective of building community wealth.
- 8.6.3 The Regeneration Officers also consider that the development is consistent with the national government 'levelling up' strategy to address area-based inequality, given that employment opportunities in rural areas are more restricted than in urban parts of the District.
- 8.6.4 The points made above are taken on board and, to a large degree, agreed with. However, it is not considered that they make a case for the need to develop this specific case that is significant enough to warrant allowing a development that would cause harm to the surrounding landscape and environment. The Council supports rural diversification and redevelopment of existing buildings and it is considered that there are many sites within the surrounding area that could be redeveloped in a manner more sympathetic to the rural environment, by remaining within the footprint of existing developed land. It is also noted that intensification and development of a large proportion of employment land sites identified in the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan has not yet taken place and, as such, there are sites available where such development would be actively supported.
- 8.6.5 Ultimately, the need for rural employment is accepted but it is considered this does not warrant the concentration of a significant, over intensive level of employment on one site. Given the availability of other sites with suitable potential it is considered that refusing the current application would not thwart the delivery of rural employment.

## 8.7 Transport and Parking.

- 8.7.1 The proposed development would utilise the existing access to the business estate, taken from Barcombe Mill Road and the internal road system would be extended to the east to provide direct access to the site. No designated footways would be provided.
- 8.7.2 A hard-surfaced parking, turning and service area would be provided to the front (west) of the building. A total of 31 car parking bays would be provided within this area to cater for staff and visitor demand.
- 8.7.3 Each building would be fitted with a full height roller shutter door to facilitate deliveries and collections. The areas to the front of each shutter door would be kept free of parking and other obstructions.
- 8.7.4 A condition could be used to prohibit the open storage within the hard-surfaced area in order to ensure accessibility is maintained and pedestrians and vehicles can safely circulate within the site.
- 8.7.5 ESCC Highways have assessed that application and consider that the existing site access is suitable for more intensive use. Whilst there is a minor shortfall in car parking spaces, with ESCC Highways anticipating a demand for 39 spaces rather than 31, the Highway officer considered that parking within the existing development could

provide the necessary additional capacity as it is not currently being fully utilised.

- 8.7.6 The highway officer lodged an objection to the scheme on account of the estimated trip rates not being evidenced by a survey of the existing use. The trip rates generated would impact upon the scope of a Travel Plan Statement, which would set out measures to be implemented to reduce private car trips to and from the site. Whilst the objection is noted, it is considered that the matter could be addressed by a planning condition for a fully evidenced Travel Plan Statement to be provided prior to commencement of development, were the application to be approved.

## 8.8 Flooding and Drainage

- 8.8.1 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and, therefore, not identified as being susceptible to tidal or fluvial flooding. Environment Agency mapping also shows that the risk of surface water flooding on the site is low although. It should, however, be noted that the vehicular access to the site falls within Flood Zone 3 and is therefore identified as being at high risk of surface water flooding.
- 8.8.2 The proposed development would introduce a substantial building on a site that is currently undeveloped and permeable. Further development in the form of associated hard surfacing for access, parking and turning would also be introduced on the greenfield site.
- 8.8.3 The submitted application refers to the formation of an attenuation pond to the south of the proposed building which would be used to store surface water and allow for controlled discharge into an existing drainage ditch which follows the course of the field boundary to the east of the site. A package plant would be used to process foul water which would be discharged into the attenuation pond once it had been cleaned. The package plant would require a licence from the Environment Agency, and this would need to be issued prior to any installation. The plant would need to operate in accordance with the licence and Environment Agency conditions throughout the lifetime of the development.
- 8.8.4 Council has proposed a motion requiring greater scrutiny of the capacity for foul sewerage disposal to be provided when assessing all major developments. This is based on the observation that recent figures show that SW discharged sewage into local rivers & seas in Lewes District over 800 times in 2020 totalling over 11,000 hours of sewage discharge in just one year. As foul sewerage would be managed by a package plant rather than public sewer infrastructure there would be no impact upon Southern Water capacity.
- 8.8.5 The use of an existing watercourse to discharge surface water at an appropriate rate represents a sustainable form of drainage and is supported in principle. If the application were to be approved then full details of the drainage scheme, including discharge rates, attenuation pond capacity, water course capacity, groundwater information and management and maintenance procedures would need to be

submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.

## 8.9 Ecology & Biodiversity

- 8.9.1 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). The PEA includes a habitat survey for areas within and around the site and provides a series of mitigation measures and ecological enhancements that should be incorporated into the development.
- 8.9.2 The proposed development would not result in the loss of any trees that may provide roosting opportunities for bats. An Environmental DNA (eDNA) survey was carried out, incorporating all ponds within 500 metres of the sit. The surveys found no evidence of Great Crested Newts being present in the area. The PEA concluded that the site did not provide a valuable habitat for reptiles and noted that there would be no harmful impact upon breeding birds and dormice given existing hedgerow would be retained and enhanced.
- 8.9.3 The PEA was assessed by the Council's Ecologist and its findings were supported. A precautionary approach to construction works, including a phased clearance of vegetation, has been recommended by the ecologist in order for any wildlife that is on the site to be protected and any reptiles on site to have time to move from the site to other areas.
- 8.9.4 The proposed attenuation pond to the south of the development would also create habitat as well as allow for the control of surface water discharge from the site.
- 8.9.5 Mitigation planting including the strengthening and gapping up of existing hedgerow and the planting of new hedgerow and trees would be incorporated and would serve the dual purpose of providing screening to the development as well as enhancing habitat and green connectivity. Ecological enhancements including bat and bird boxes would be installed in appropriate locations around the development. The ecologist is satisfied with the principle of this approach, subject to full details (including species to be planted maintenance practices) being provided as part of an Ecological Design Strategy (EDS) which would enable the Council to secure a scheme that maximises biodiversity net gain. A minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain would need to be achieved, in accordance with the Council's Technical Advice Note. This would be secured by condition, were the application to be approved.

## 8.10 Sustainability

- 8.10.1 The development would utilise sustainable drainage systems that include the formation of an attenuation pond that would also provide an amenity and habitat asset. This, as well as other green space created within the overall site area is considered to support the delivery of multi-functional green infrastructure as required by LLP2 policy DM14.
- 8.10.2 The proposed buildings are of a simple metal clad construction, with an interior space that could be configured in a number of ways,

allowing for a good level of adaptability, as evidenced by the range of business types occupying the existing buildings. The materials used could also be easily removed and recycled at the end of their useful life, with the buildings either being renovated or replaced.

- 8.10.3 There is an established business use on the adjacent site, and this is likely to allow for increased potential for car sharing and for delivery services making shared trips to the site, thereby mitigating traffic increase. There is a bus stop approx. 750 metres walking distance to the north-west of the site which is on a circular route to Lewes. Approx. 1.2 km walking distance to the east of the site, on the A26, is a bus stop on the main Brighton to Tunbridge Wells route. Whilst these bus stops are fairly close by, it is noted that there is no pavement alongside the road in either direction away from the site.
- 8.10.4 The applicant has stated that a token operated electric vehicle charging point would be installed for shared use. Given that the Electric Vehicle Charing Points Technical Guidance Note requires 2% of parking bays to be equipped with charging points on all commercial developments incorporating over 100 parking spaces the provision of 1 charging point for 31 spaces is considered to be proportionate. There are shower blocks within the existing development, and it is considered that the availability of these facilities would encourage people to cycle to work. A condition could be used to ensure suitable cycle parking facilities are provided.
- 8.10.5 The proposed building would be constructed in energy efficient materials. There would be openings to the front and rear of each building to allow for ventilation and roof lights would allow for natural light to permeate during daylight hours, reducing the need for artificial lighting.
- 8.10.6 A condition will also be used to secure a Site Waste Management Plan that will detail how any waste material produced during construction can be reused or recycled either on site or, if that is not possible, then in other areas.

#### 8.11 Archaeology

- 8.11.1 The site lies within an Archaeological Notification Area (ANA). The applicant has submitted a desk-based assessment of the archaeological value of the site, potential impacts of the development and mitigation measures to allow for the recording and protection of archaeological artifacts.
- 8.11.2 No comments have been provided by the County Archaeologist to date but it is considered that, were the application to be approved, a condition requiring a programme of archaeological work informed by a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) could be secured by condition, as is common practice for development on sites within an ANA.

### 9. **Human Rights Implications**

- 9.1 The impacts of the proposal have been assessed as part of the application process. Consultation with the community has been

undertaken and the impact on local people is set out above. The human rights considerations have been taken into account fully in balancing the planning issues; and furthermore the proposals will not result in any breach of the Equalities Act 2010.

## 10. Conclusion

10.1 It is considered that, whilst the development offers benefits in terms of delivery of additional employment space, this does not outweigh the harm caused by the encroachment of the development outside of the well defined edges of the site and into the wider countryside.

## 11. Recommendation

11.1 It is recommended that the application is refused for the following reason.

11.2 The development would compromise the nucleated appearance of the existing business estate, encroaching into a green buffer maintained around the site and representing unacceptable sprawl and a cluttered and unsympathetic pattern of development that would be incongruous and disruptive when viewed in context with the surrounding rural environment and would detract from the amenity value of the passing public footpath. The development is therefore in conflict with para. 92, 100 and 174 of the NPPF, policies CP8 and CP10 of LLP1, policies DM11, DM14 and DM35 of LLP2 and policy 4.1 of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan.

11.3 This decision relates solely to the following plans:

<u>PLAN TYPE</u>	<u>DATE RECEIVED</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Location Plan	29 December 2021	2116-SK00 - Location Plan
Additional Documents	29 December 2021	Renewable Energy Strategy
Additional Documents	29 December 2021	10511 Rev 1 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Additional Documents	29 December 2021	Planning Statement
Additional Documents	29 December 2021	2021/10 Issue 1 - Highway Report
Additional Documents	29 December 2021	10511 Rev 0 - Great Crested Newt eDNA Report
Additional Documents	29 December 2021	Desk Based Archaeological Assessment
Additional Documents	29 December 2021	hla 429 R01 - Landscape Appraisal



Proposed Block Plan	29 December 2021	2116-SK05 - Proposed Site Plan
Proposed Floor Plan(s)	29 December 2021	2116-SK06 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
Proposed Roof Plan	29 December 2021	2116-SK07 - Proposed Roof Plan

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

## 12. **Background Papers**

12.1 None.