

Item No	Application and Parish	No.	8/13 Week Date	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(2)	17/01235/COMIND Beedon Parish Council		28.07.2017	Erection of a free range egg laying unit. Plantation Farmhouse, Beedon Common Miss Hayworth

To view the plans and drawings relating to this application click the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=17/01235/COMIND>

Recommendation Summary: **The Head of Development and Planning be authorised to REFUSE the application as submitted.**

Ward Member(s): Councillor Clive Hooker

Reason for Committee determination: Called in by Councillor Hooker - This is an existing free range egg producing business that needs to expand to keep the business viable.

This opportunity will provide additional employment in the area and give the son of the business owner the opportunity to take on the new enterprise and contribute to the continued success of the farm for the future.

Two existing egg production buildings and associated runs exist on the farm and are in close proximity to the proposed, these are hardly visible from high viewpoints due to sympathetic landscaping and tree planting, the same will apply to the proposed development.

Committee Site Visit: 3rd August 2017

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Catherine Ireland
Job Title:	Planning Officer
Tel No:	(01635) 519111
E-mail Address:	Catherine.Ireland@westberks.gov.uk

1. SITE HISTORY

- 16/02057/COMIND - Erection of a free range egg laying unit - Invalid
- 16/02238/COMIND - Erection of a free range egg laying unit - Invalid
- 16/02744/COMIND - Erection of a free range egg laying unit - Refused 01.03.2017

2. PUBLICITY OF APPLICATION

Site Notice Expired: 13.06.2017

Neighbour Notification Expired: 01.06.2017

Advertised in the Newbury Weekly News: 18.05.2017

3. CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

Beedon Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No comments will be submitted as two members of Beedon Parish Council are associated with this business.
Chieveley Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concerns were raised regarding significant issues with respect to visual impacts in the AONB and the Parish Council agreed that appropriate weight needs to be applied to policies to protect the character and quality of the AONB.• The Parish Council noted the District Council's reasons for refusal of planning application 16/02744/COMIND.• Landscaping a concern and assurance nuisances controlled by environmental health required i.e. odours and vermin.• The Parish Council request a condition that the applicant has the responsibility to repair or meet the costs of repairs to footpath BEED 16/1 where the road crosses the path should it become damaged or in poor condition due to heavy goods vehicles using the access road. As the footpath crosses over the access road appropriate warning signs should be erected to warn pedestrians of vehicular movement in this location.
Highways	<p>No Objection - subject to condition and informatives. Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any additional vehicle movements should be minimal according to the Design Statement.
Environmental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Satisfied that noise and odour from the proposed development is unlikely to impact on neighbours.
Archaeological Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although there is some cropmark evidence for archaeological activity in the vicinity, there are no know sites within the development area and evidence suggests that there will be no major impact on any features of archaeological significance. Do not, therefore, believe that any archaeological assessment or programme of investigation and recording will be necessary in relation to the current proposal.
SUDs	<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Location-wise the silt traps are adequate, although think there are going to be issues with the development, it would be useful to have the size of these units too for completeness. These should be of a 'decent size' and much bigger than 250mm diameter domestic type preformed plastic units.• Having read the EA letter [submitted regarding application 16/02744/COMIND], agree with their views and despite them not submitting a subsequent comment, suggest the inclusion of

	<p>appropriately worded conditions as expect the same concerns will apply. The Conditions should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) seek details of the collection, storage and spreading over the land of the waste from the development once in operation; and b) require a construction method statement dealing with pollution risks during construction.
<p>Public Rights of Way Officer</p>	<p>No objection - subject to condition and informatives Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed development is located on Beedon Common, which is criss-crossed by a number of PROWs. Indeed the site itself is constrained on all sides by Public Footpaths and a Bridleway. The block plan shows the range fence will not obstruct any PROW. The proposed site access (for HGV use) crosses Beedon Footpath 16. • The LVIA acknowledges that PROWs are highly sensitive visual receptors. They are used by the public mostly for leisure purposes as a means of accessing and enjoying the countryside. Changes to the environment through which PROWs pass may therefore be keenly felt. • The LVIA indicates that the local topography may help reduce the visual impact of the proposed scheme. There is also a commitment to native screening planting, and this will also contribute to a reduction in the potential impact. It is also true to say that the countryside through which these PROWs pass is working agricultural land and members of the public would not be surprised to see a new (albeit larger) agricultural building consistent with this business expansion. The building is also to be rendered appropriately.
<p>Rambler's</p>	<p>Part objector and supporter Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We note that the Boundary for the development has been changed from an earlier application to avoid crossing footpaths to the North and East of the Unit which we welcome. However the access road also does cross footpath BEED/16/1 to the South of the development which does not get mentioned in the access statement. We believe this could present a hazard to footpath users and would request that suitable warning signs be added for the benefit of HGV drivers and pedestrians.
<p>Ecological Officer</p>	<p>Previous comments from 16/02744/COMIND apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new facility will be situated within an area of existing arable farmland which is unlikely to be of intrinsic ecological value. The proposals would not therefore result in any significant impact to valuable ecological features and it is not considered that an ecological assessment is necessary. • The proposed tree planting to the north of the facility is useful if it will utilise a range of locally-relevant native species and is managed accordingly. It is noted that the arboricultural consultee has suggested that a landscaping plan/strategy is secured by condition the Ecological Officer would echo these comments [Case officer note - further details were submitted with this application and the Tree Officer's recommended condition has changed accordingly].

<p>Tree Officer</p>	<p>No objection - subject to condition Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no significant trees that will be adversely affected by the proposals, the proposed landscaping scheme to enclose the egg laying unit will screen it from the properties in the north west in the medium to long term. For the woodland the species they have chosen is mainly oak and field maple (60%), with additional species of crab apple, cherry and white willow, which will provide a suitable screening. </p>
<p>Ministry of Defence</p>	<p>No safeguarding objections Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application relates to a site outside of Ministry of Defence safeguarding areas. Therefore no safeguarding objections to this proposal. </p>
<p>Natural England</p>	<p>North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - Refer to AONB Board The proposed development is for a site within a nationally designated landscape namely the North Wessex Downs AONB. Natural England advises that great weight be given to the advice given by the AONB board in guiding your decision. Their knowledge of the site and its wider landscape setting, together with the aims and objectives of the AONB's statutory management plan, should be considered as an extremely valuable contribution to the planning decision. Natural England would like to make the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal site sits within the AONB in a rural, secluded and undeveloped location within an area of downland with woodland, a landscape recognised as one of the Special Qualities of the North Wessex Downs within the AONB management plan (2014-2019).The development of a significantly larger egg laying unit at this location with greater levels of noise from the birds and increased vehicle movements would undoubtedly impact upon the rural, tranquil setting. The proposed screening does not follow the present historic field patterns and hedge lines, thus it could draw the viewer's eye to the egg laying unit rather than taking the focus away from it consequently not fulfilling its purpose. Although the locations of certain listed buildings in close proximity to the proposal site are included in the LVIA, no viewpoints looking towards the proposal site from these buildings (or vice versa) have been included. The historic environment is recognised as one the special qualities of the AONB, and consequently it is Natural England's opinion that it has not been given appropriate consideration. Users of the public right of way (PROW) footpaths surrounding the site, would experience sequential views of the development thus altering the scenic beauty of the area. In addition, Natural England notes that the views selected for the LVIA do not represent the potential impacts to PROW users from long distance viewpoints. <p>Ashridge Wood & Snelsmore Common Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) - No Objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the air quality assessment submitted, Natural

	<p>England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on Ashridge Wood & Snelsmore Common SSSIs and has no objection.</p> <p>General advice on landscape, agricultural land and soils, protected species, priority habitats and species, ancient woodland and veteran trees, environmental enhancement, access and recreation, rights of way, access land, Coastal access and National Trails and biodiversity provided.</p>
North Wessex Downs AONB	<p>Objection Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed development comprises a visual intrusion into the landscape which is not in keeping with the local landscape character and would result in harm to the special qualities of the AONB. • The scale and type of development proposed amounts to an extended industrialisation of the open farmed landscape which typifies the 'Brightwalton Downs' Landscape Character Area. The AONB Management Plan identifies that a key issue for the 'Downland with Woodland' landscape, which includes the Brightwalton Downs, is "... to maintain the remote, secluded and relatively undeveloped character of these wooded downs". The proposed development conflicts with this objective and is thus considered neither to conserve nor to enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB. It therefore does not align with the purposes of the AONB as set out in statute and elaborated in the Management Plan. • We remain of the view that the proposed screening mitigation will appear incongruous in the landscape, out of character with the historic pattern and form of field boundaries and, based on the 'Mitigation Planting' landscape visuals presented, rather similar in character to the block of plantation woodland adjacent to the existing egg laying units. • Consequently we maintain our objection to the proposed development.
Conservation Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst it is noted that Building Conservation comments were not requested on the previously refused application numbered 16/02704/COMIND, and whilst there are no designated heritage assets in close proximity to the application site (and therefore directly affected by the proposals), would support the opinions of Natural England and West Berkshire Council's Landscape Advisor that further assessment of wider views is required. Given the relatively open character of the AONB, such an assessment is essential to ascertain whether or not there are any such impacts arises.
Access Officer, Thames Water Utilities, Waste Management, BBOWT, Environment Agency	No response received
Representations	Comments summarised as follows.

1 no. letter of support received:

- Demand for free range eggs is increasing, investment at farms like Beedon Common will be key to them continuing to meet ever increasing demand.
- It is important that more egg production is developed in the region to utilise returning delivery vehicles.
- Securing reliable sources is harder than you may think, and so support Lucy Hayworth's plans to increase Free Range production.

11 no. of letters of objection received:

Impact on AONB & Landscape

- Industrial building of this size and scale would be significantly harmful to the rural character of the site and area. Out of keeping in a green field in an AONB. In the unspoiled Beedon Common Valley in NWD AONB.
- Due to positioning unit would be very visible across a large area of otherwise unspoilt countryside.
- Very large, requires additional space for access. Due to location would have a major impact on appearance of the valley and views from properties and PROW users. Should be protected by NWD AONB, who have already objected.
- Size and location wholly inappropriate in an AONB.
- NWD AONB - test the development against the AONB management plan and core policies - contravenes these criteria.
- The Beedon Common area is relatively unspoiled and should be protected against such development. It is one of the few valleys in the area without a metalled road and is very peaceful.
- Two egg units have been built within the last ten years or so - progressive deterioration of the AONB in this area. When will the progressive building of industrial units stop?
- Large industrial scale out of keeping in a green field site and an AONB.
- Destruction of much loved and inspiring view.
- Plans seem to have been drawn up with no concern for the AONB. Does not reference the relevant sections of the North West [sic] Downs Landscape Character Assessment. Does not take account of the local AONB strategy conservation points.
- Area needs to be protected and preserved for residents and users of footpaths and bridleways.
- Loss of green space.

LVIA

- The photographs included do not fully detail the impact the site will have on the area. Feel that the LVIA is biased towards the developer and applicant and does not truly reflect the impact on the AONB or local residents. Feel that the suggestion that the development would not be out of character with its surroundings is incorrect as the building stands alone.
- The consultants clearly set out to justify the large industrial building, and not to protect this unspoiled valley.
- Photographs from positions of no significance.
- The view that '*the proposed scheme would not be out of character with its surroundings*', is unfounded and biased in favour of the development.

- Lacks objectivity.
- Omissions in the LVIA and disagree with the conclusions made within it.

Impact on neighbouring properties

- Impact on residential properties - social, environmental and financial.
- Visibility from neighbouring properties - would deter future buyers and devalue properties. Would be visible until trees have matured.
- Increase in vermin infestations, rats. Thatched properties would be at risk. If residents are infested is it fair to expect them to finance their own pest control?
- Chicken droppings and ammonia, smell and flies.
- Chickens in close proximity to residential boundaries will encourage pets to escape and potentially kill chickens - cause stress. Having to put up higher, solid fencing would be out of keeping and impact environmentally, financially and on view. How would this be addressed to ensure residents would not incur further financial penalties?
- Studies state that there will be little environmental impact from noise, smell light etc. - the only way these factors can be totally avoided is by not proceeding at all. Environmental impact reports state that impact will probably be low level - will only be proven once in operation and that will be too late. How loud would 7 large industrial fans be on a hot summer's day or night?
- Peaceful area - noise travels. Restrictions should be set on when automated feeding hoppers, fans and conveyor belts are to be used.
- Estimated noise and odour levels (reports are only an estimate) and vermin would increase. Increase infestations.
- Some neighbouring properties will be significantly impacted - imperative that their concerns are taken into account.
- Closer to properties on Beedon Common than previous two units.

Location

- The simulated views show what a "blot" on the landscape the development would be from a northern viewpoint. More sensitive site selection would avoid these issues and be hidden from all public rights of way.
- Would have less impact on eastern side of Beedon Common Farm - no residential properties apart from the farmhouse and access road - would reduce light and noise pollution.
- Would be better sited within the curtilage of the existing farm - less impact on local properties and the locality and would not further spoil the open fields along the valley.
- Eastern or southern side of Beedon Common Farm would have far less of an impact as there are no residential properties other than the main farmhouse and access road.
- Wrong development in the wrong place.

Public Rights of Way

- Will impact on views from footpaths and bridleway, in particular that running north to south to Beedon Common from the ridge

above.

- The footpath running south to north from Rossett Cottage to the Common will look directly onto the huge building and associated hard standing to the east. The footpath running west to east from the garden of Rossett Cottage will be crossed by the access road - should be taken into account.
- Will take years for the building to be properly screened to reduce the impact on the AONB and the green field site. During this time the building will be clearly visible from footpaths around this beautiful valley and also from the residential properties adjacent to the site.
- After 20 years of tree growth, the building may be shielded but will still be highly visible from most of the footpaths and bridleways in the valley.

Ecology

- Concerned about the effect on local wildlife from the extensive electric fencing to enclose the site. There should be measures in place to allow small mammals especially hedgehogs to pass through. Concerned that the electric fencing will force other wildlife through the garden of Rossett Cottage - cannot fully protect as the footpath runs through it.
- The proposed building and chickens would jeopardise the birds that are found in the area.
- There will be significant impacts on wildlife, bird bio-diversity and local environment from this progressive industrial development within an important and unspoiled valley.

Traffic

- Roads to Beedon Common not built for large HGV lorries. HGVs already come down small tracks onto the Common and get stuck.
- Has the council done a true feasibility study of the impact on the surrounding area - who is going to maintain the track and roads when damaged.

Other

- "Thin end of the wedge" - concerned this development will result in more along the valley. Creeping industrialisation.
- Little change in this application. Refusal should stand.
- Concern over light pollution - restrictions should be set on use of outside lighting.
- Impact on the valley.
- Concerned about the long term issues that this may raise. What will happen if, or when, these buildings [egg units] are regarded as redundant, or no longer needed as agricultural buildings. A change of use could bring significant impact to the Beedon Common Area.
- Concerned that within local institutions called upon to comment on such developments that there is a lack of leadership and passion for protecting the local landscape.
- The new tree belt should not be used to justify the building of the unit: will take 15 years to grow and provide visual shield intended. Out of keeping - will enhance the incongruity of the development and its inappropriate siting. Will not provide an effective visual shield from medium to longer distance public

	<p>rights of way view-points, which are entirely missing from the applicant's LVIA. Inadequate in view of the time needed to grow and impossibility of guaranteeing their long term survival.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned whether the development would increase the risk of flooding; live at the bottom of the hill immediately below the proposed site where a large amount of concrete is going to be poured. • Concerned about noise, smell, pollution and extra heavy good vehicles.
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4. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The statutory development plan comprises:
- West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026)
 - Housing Site Allocations DPD
 - West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007)
 - Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire (2001)
 - Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (1998)
- 4.2 Other material considerations include government guidance, in particular:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (NPPF)
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- 4.3 The following policies from the West Berkshire Core Strategy are relevant to this application:
- Area Delivery Plan Policy 1: Spatial Strategy
 - Area Delivery Plan Policy 5: North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - CS 10: Rural Economy
 - CS 13: Transport
 - CS 14: Design Principles
 - CS 16: Flooding
 - CS 17: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - CS 18: Green Infrastructure
 - CS 19: Historic Environment and Landscape Character
- 4.4 The West Berkshire Core Strategy replaced a number of Planning Policies in the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007. However the following Policies remain in place until they are replaced by development plan documents and should be given due weight according to their degree of consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework:
- TRANS1: Meeting the Transport Needs of New development.
 - OVS5: Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control.
 - OVS.6: Noise Pollution
- 4.5 The following Housing Site Allocations Development Plan document policies carry full weight and are relevant to this application:
- C1: Location of New Housing in the Countryside
- 4.6 Paragraph 215 of the NPPF advises that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the framework. Some saved policies from the WBDLP have not been replaced by policies contained within the WBCS and are therefore relevant to this application:
- OVS.5: Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control
 - OVS.6: Noise Pollution
 - TRANS.1: Meeting the Transport Needs of New Development

- 4.7 Other material considerations for this application include:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (NPPF)
 - Planning Practice Guidance
 - The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019

5. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 This application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of a free range egg laying unit, as well as associated egg collection and packing facilities, two feed bins and external hard standings and concrete aprons. It is proposed that the building would operate a multi-tier system and would accommodate 16,000 hens.
- 5.2 The application site is located in open countryside outside of any defined settlement boundary, approximately 0.8km north of Chieveley and 1.3km south east of Peasmore. It is within the North Wessex Downs AONB, and is bordered on all sides by public rights of way.
- 5.3 To the south of the site are two existing free range egg laying units which were granted planning permission in 1999 and 2002, in addition to a mobile building. Combined these house 20,700 hens, of which 1,900 are located in the mobile unit, which is to be removed as part of this scheme.
- 5.4 There are several, scattered neighbouring properties in the area, with the largest collection being located to the north west of the site, where there are six properties.
- 5.5 The proposed building would be situated along the southern boundary of the site, in front of an existing border of trees that screen the existing units. From here the site undulates and slopes gently away to the North West. The site is currently very open, with views into the site from the many public rights of way in the area.
- 5.3 The building would be 91 metres long, and between 19 and 20 metres wide (the width will be confirmed in the update) and would have a dual pitched roof, with the height to the ridge being approximately 5.7 metres, and to the eaves, approximately 3.05 metres. Seven vents would be included along the ridge of the building, and would increase the maximum height of the building to approximately 6.1 metres. The west elevation would contain three sets of double doors whilst the east elevation would contain one pair of double doors and one single doorway. The south elevation would not have any openings, but the north elevation would have 16 pop holes which would open at 8am daily and close at 9pm or dusk.
- 5.4 Approximately 1560m² of floorspace would be provided as a bird area, and would include a scratch area and perchery as well as nest boxes. At the eastern end of the building approximately 171m² of floorspace would provide a control room and egg packing area.
- 5.5 It is proposed that the building would be clad in polyester coated profile sheeting in juniper green on the walls and dark grey on the roof, with black ventilation chimneys.
- 5.6 Access to the public highway would be created by extending the current access to the existing units to the south, into the site, crossing over public right of way BEED/16/1.

6.0 CONSIDERATION OF THE APPLICATION

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are:

- 6.1 The principle of the development
- 6.2 Design and the impact on the character of the area and the North Wessex Downs AONB (NWD AONB)

- 6.3 Neighbouring amenity
- 6.4 Highway safety
- 6.5 Public rights of way
- 6.6 Trees
- 6.7 Flooding and drainage
- 6.8 Ecology
- 6.9 The assessment of sustainable development
- 6.10 Community Infrastructure Levy

6.1 The Principle of Development

- 6.1.1 The spatial strategy for West Berkshire district is set out in Core Strategy policy ADPP1, which is clear that development should follow the existing settlement pattern. The policy goes on to state that within open countryside, where this site is located, only appropriate limited development will be allowed which is focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy.
- 6.1.2 Planning Policy ADPP5 of the WBCS re-emphasises Policy ADPP1. It sets out the criteria for the principle of development within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in which this site is situated. Policy ADPP5 permits development preserving the strong sense of remoteness, tranquillity and dark night skies, particularly on the open Downland of the AONB. It seeks to conserve and enhance the character of the area, ensuring that any development responds positively to the local context.
- 6.1.3 The use of the land for an agricultural business is considered an acceptable use in principle on this site. This application however, is for a substantial building within a sensitive, designated landscape. There needs to be a balance between the requirements for physical developments within the site, the ability of the business to operate effectively and the protection of the NWD AONB and local amenities.
- 6.1.4 The impact on the character of the area including the AONB is considered in detail below. In summary however, whilst landscaping is proposed to shield the building from views in to the site, this is not considered sufficient to mitigate the adverse impact caused by the proposal, as it would break up an existing open landscape.
- 6.1.5 The development is therefore not considered to accord with the context of the surrounding rural area. The significant mass and siting of the building proposed does not fit in to the landscape of the site or the surrounding area to the north of the site.
- 6.1.6 In view of the above the principle of development is therefore unacceptable.

6.2 The Impact on the Character of the area including The North Wessex AONB

- 6.2.1 Planning Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 - 2026 are relevant to this application. Policy CS14 states that new development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area, and makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. It further states that design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate area, but to the wider locality.
- 6.2.2 The criteria contained within the policy state that development shall contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place. Proposals are expected to make efficient use of land whilst respecting the density, and character of the area.
- 6.2.3 Policy CS19 seeks to conserve and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character of the District by considering the natural, cultural and functional components of its character as a whole. Particular regard will be given to the sensitivity of

the area to change and to ensuring that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character. Proposals for development should be informed by and respond to features identified in various settlement character studies including the Quality Design West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Document, and community documents which have been adopted by the council such as Parish Plans and Town Design Statements. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF places great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which is also reiterated by Core Strategy Policy ADPP5.

- 6.2.4 The proposed development, whilst set in an agricultural landscape, and adjacent to existing free range egg laying units, is considered to have an unacceptable impact on the NWD AONB. The existing units are on a parcel of land distinctly separated by planting from the proposed site and are located on land that is more level and less overlooked. The proposed site however is undulating and exposed in character by comparison. As a result the existing units are considered to have a lesser impact on the AONB than that which is proposed under this application.
- 6.2.5 The mass of the proposed building is considered to have a harmful impact on the AONB; at 91 metres long it would spread across the top of the site and would be viewed from many points along the public rights of way that surround the site.
- 6.2.6 Natural England have been consulted and have commented, stating that the development of a significantly larger egg laying unit at this location would impact upon the rural, tranquil setting. They also commented that the proposed screening does not follow the present historic field patterns and hedge lines, and could therefore draw the viewer's eye to the egg laying unit rather than taking the focus away; consequently it would not be fulfilling its purpose.
- 6.2.7 Natural England also commented that users of the public right of way (PROW) footpaths surrounding the site would experience sequential views of the development thus altering the scenic beauty of the area.
- 6.2.8 The North Wessex Downs AONB Planning Advisor has been consulted on this application and maintained their objection from the previously refused application, 16/02744/COMIND. They considered that the proposed development comprises a visual intrusion into the landscape which is not in keeping with the local landscape character and would result in harm to the special qualities of the AONB.
- 6.2.9 The scale and type of development proposed amounts to extended industrialisation of the open farmed landscape which typifies the "Brightwalton Downs" Landscape Character Area ¹. The AONB Management Plan identifies that a key issue for the 'Downland with Woodland' landscape, which includes the Brightwalton Downs, is "... *to maintain the remote, secluded and relatively undeveloped character of these wooded downs*". The proposed development conflicts with this objective and is thus considered neither to conserve nor to enhance the natural beauty of the NWD AONB. It therefore does not align with the purposes of the AONB as set out in statute and elaborated in the Management Plan.
- 6.2.10 The NWD AONB remain of the view that the proposed screening mitigation will appear incongruous in the landscape, out of character with the historic pattern and form of field boundaries and, based on the 'Mitigation Planting' landscape visuals presented, rather similar in character to the block of plantation woodland adjacent to the existing egg laying units.

¹ North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2002) Technical Report pp 91-95.
http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/uploads/File_Management/Publications/Landscape/LCA_Chapters/Landscape%20Character%20Assessment%205%20-%20DOWNLAND%20WITH%20WOODLAND.pdf

- 6.2.11 Consequently the NWD AONB maintain their previous objection, previously disagreeing with the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted, as they believe that the potential harm is not minor to moderate, but at least moderate to major, and would therefore have a significant impact.
- 6.2.12 To the east of view point 4 in the LVIA, is an open, sweeping view of the site and open landscape beyond. The AONB Officer states that this is a highly valued vista which would have a high sensitivity to change and therefore a significant impact would be caused by the introduction of a new building and subsequent planting mitigation.
- 6.2.13 Whilst it is acknowledged that planting is proposed around the proposed building, it is considered that due to the open nature of the site and landscape in this area, the planting of such a large area of trees would appear contrived and out of place. Also, the sloping nature of the site means that the planting would be at a lower level than the proposed building and so would take longer to grow to conceal the development.
- 6.2.14 It is acknowledged that whilst mitigation planting could be secured by condition, the AONB Officer considers that it would take up to 15 years to achieve its purpose of screening the development, and would therefore not be an appropriate method of minimising harm. The AONB Officer also noted that the trees could be removed in the future, as they could not be secured by condition indefinitely. However a condition securing their retention and replacement where necessary could be attached to any permission granted.
- 6.2.15 The submitted landscape and visual impact assessment has been assessed and has been found to not fully represent the visual impact of the development with further work required before the full extent of the visual effects can be considered. It was also considered that the proposed woodland relates poorly to the field pattern and would emphasise the perception of poorly located development.
- 6.2.16 The AONB Officer also states that the viewpoints provided within the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment are considered close distance, with no long distance viewpoints considered. Natural England also commented that the LVIA views do not represent the potential impacts to PROW users from long distance viewpoints. They also stated that whilst the locations of certain listed buildings in close proximity to the site are included within the LVIA, no viewpoints from these have been included. As the historic environment is recognised as one of the special qualities of the AONB, Natural England were of the opinion that it has not been given appropriate consideration.
- 6.2.17 The Council's Conservation Officer was subsequently consulted and supported the comments of Natural England and the Council's Landscape Adviser, that further assessment of wider views is required. Given the relatively open character of the AONB, such an assessment is essential to ascertain whether or not there are any such impacts arises.
- 6.2.18 Therefore it is concluded that the LVIA is considered insufficient to fully assess the impact on the NWD AONB.
- 6.2.19 Taking the above policies into account, the development is not considered to accord with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The mass of the proposed building and the proposed landscaping in addition to the proposed siting is considered to harm the character of the surrounding open countryside and the NWD AONB.
- 6.2.20 The proposal will also require the removal of part of the tree belt screening the existing poultry units to create an access point. It is considered that this removal will also enable further views through from the public rights of way to the existing units and increase the level of adverse visual impact.

6.2.21 In view of the above, the development is not in accordance with the character and appearance of the area and AONB and is contrary to Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 - 2026, The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019 and advice contained within the NPPF.

6.3 Neighbouring Amenity

6.3.1 The proposed development is sufficiently distant from nearby dwellings, such that it would not impact on neighbouring amenity in terms of sunlight, daylight, overlooking or loss of privacy.

6.3.2 A plant noise assessment and a dispersion modelling study have been submitted as part of this application. These were reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Officer who was satisfied that the noise and odour from the proposed development is unlikely to impact on neighbours. They raised no objections to the application.

6.3.3 It is therefore concluded that there would be no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity and the application accords with WBCS Policy 14 and WBDLP Saved Policies 2007 OVS.5 and OVS.6.

6.4 Highway Safety

6.4.1 The proposal would be accessed via an existing route off of the highway which currently serves existing chicken units. This would be extended to the new unit.

6.4.2 In the design and access statement it is stated that the proposal would generate an additional 76 commercial traffic movements per annum.

6.4.3 When consulted the Council's Highways Officer had no objection subject to a condition ensuring that parking and turning is in accord with the plans. They concluded that any additional vehicle movements should be minimal. Therefore the proposal is considered acceptable in accordance with development plan policies on highway safety.

6.5 Public Rights of Way

6.5.1 Policy CS 18 of the Core Strategy covers green infrastructure, which is defined as including Public Rights of Ways. It states that the District's green infrastructure will be protected and enhanced and that developments resulting in the loss of green infrastructure or harm to its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted unless in exceptional cases a suitable replacement is proposed.

6.5.2 The proposed development is located on Beedon Common, which is criss-crossed by a number of public rights of way. Indeed the site itself is constrained on all sides by Public Footpaths and a Bridleway. The block plan shows the range fence will not obstruct any PROW. The proposed site access (for HGV use) crosses Beedon Footpath 16.

6.5.3 The public rights of way are used by the public mostly for leisure purposes as a means of accessing and enjoying the countryside. Changes to the environment through which PROWs pass may therefore be keenly felt.

- 6.5.4 The Public Rights of Way Officer noted that the LVIA indicates that the local topography may help reduce the visual impact of the proposed scheme and that there is also a commitment to native screening planting which will also contribute to a reduction in the potential impact. They also commented that the countryside through which the public rights of way pass is working agricultural land and members of the public would not be surprised to see a new, albeit larger, agricultural building consistent with this business expansion. They also felt that the building is to be rendered appropriately.
- 6.5.5 The Public Rights of Way Officer raised no objections to the proposal subject to a condition securing warning signage for drivers and pedestrians using Beedon Footpath 16.
- 6.5.6 However, it is acknowledged that whilst this is an agricultural building in an agricultural landscape, the building's location and significant size would result in an unacceptable level of harm to the AONB. In addition, the nature of the planting would introduce a feature that would not be in keeping with character of the with the open field landscape.
- 6.5.7 As previously noted, the proposal would be seen from many viewpoints along the public rights of way that surround the site, and would therefore have an adverse impact on the visual enjoyment of users of the public rights of way. This would be contrary to WBCS Policy CS 18 as green infrastructure would not be protected or enhanced.

6.6 Trees

- 6.6.1 The Tree Officer was consulted on this application and concluded that there are no significant trees that will be adversely affected by the proposals and that the proposed landscaping scheme to enclose the egg laying unit would screen it from the properties in the north west in the medium to long term. The woodland the species they have chosen are mainly oak and field maple (60%), with additional species of crab apple, cherry and white willow, which will provide a suitable screening.
- 6.6.2 No objection was raised by the Tree Officer subject to a condition to ensure that all landscape works are completed in accordance with the submitted details and that any trees, shrubs or hedges which die within five years are replaced within the next planting season.

6.7 Flooding and Drainage

- 6.7.1 The NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy strictly applies a sequential approach across the district. The application site is not within flood zones 2 or 3, nor is it within a critical drainage area. It is however within a groundwater source protection zone and the Environment Agency have been consulted accordingly.
- 6.7.2 When consulted Land Drainage requested that silt traps be added to the soakaways. As they anticipated issues with the development, for completeness, requested the size of the units. The silt traps would prevent silt or pollution entering the SuDS features and would prolong the life of the drainage system. These have been shown on the submitted plans and a condition could be attached if planning permission were to be granted to secure the details requested and to ensure that these are implemented in accordance with the details submitted.
- 6.7.3 Whilst the Environment Agency did not supply a consultation response for this application, they did comment on the previous, similar application, raising no objection. However they offered advice relating to ground water protection, as the site is located in a Source Protection Zone III (SP3), an area that requires protection from pollution. They also stated

that safeguards should be implemented during the construction phase to minimise the risks of pollution and detrimental effects to the water interests in and around the site.

- 6.7.4 The Land Drainage engineer recommended conditions to secure details of the collection, storage and spreading over the land of the waste from the development once in operation and to secure a construction method statement dealing with pollution risks during construction.

6.8 Ecology

- 6.8.1 Policy CS 17 of the WBCS states that biodiversity and geodiversity assets across West Berkshire will be conserved and enhanced.

- 6.8.2 The Ecological Officer concluded that the new facility will be situated within an area of existing arable farmland which is unlikely to be of intrinsic ecological value. The proposals would not therefore result in any significant impact to valuable ecological features and an ecological assessment was not considered necessary.

- 6.8.3 The Ecological Officer commented that the tree planting to the north of the facility is useful if it is to utilise a range of locally-relevant native species and is managed accordingly.

6.9 Assessment of Sustainable Development

- 6.9.1 The NPPF places a strong emphasis on sustainable development. All planning applications must result in sustainable development with consideration being given to economic, social and environmental sustainability aspects of the proposal.

- 6.9.2 The proposal has the potential for economic benefit. However this is outweighed by the impact that the unit would have on the environment in terms of adverse visual impact on the AONB and social aspects in terms of adverse impact on the public rights of way network. The environmental considerations have been assessed in terms of design, amenity and impact on the character and appearance of the area and AONB and for the reasons given above are considered unacceptable. Social considerations overlap those of environmental in terms of amenity. As these have also been found unacceptable the development is considered to not constitute sustainable development.

6.10 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.10.1 This application does not propose the creation of floor space that would be CIL liable.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, the local planning authority (LPA) must adopt a screening opinion as to whether the proposal constitutes Environmental Impact Assessment Development and therefore whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required as part of the application.

- 7.2 A screening opinion has been adopted because the proposed development is considered to fall within Section 1(c) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, and the development exceeds the applicable criteria, and the site is located within a sensitive area. The LPA does not consider the proposed development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. As such, the LPA concludes that the proposal is not EIA development, and therefore EIA is not required.

7.3 The proposal was re-assessed as part of this application due to comments included within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, but it was concluded that the original screening opinion issued under application 16/02744/COMIND was correct.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Having taken account of all the relevant policy considerations and other material considerations referred to above, it is considered that the application is contrary to development plan policies in respect of the impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB and green infrastructure.

9. RECOMMENDATION

The Head of Development and Planning be authorised to REFUSE Planning Permission:-

9.1 The location and built form of the proposed development would have an adverse visual impact and detrimentally alter the character of the site and the setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The siting of the proposed building on top of land which is undulating, open and exposed in character is visually prominent and part of a sensitive rural landscape. The substantial scale, size and massing of the building, at 91 metres long, would introduce an overly dominant structure into the landscape. The building would be visible beyond the site and from public rights of way, conflicting with the aims of the public right of way network and the amenity of its users. Insufficient justification has been submitted with the application to demonstrate that the visual harm identified can be suitably and appropriately mitigated. The LVIA received with the application requires further work to assess the impact of the proposal on further viewpoints, including from listed buildings and Peasemore Conservation Area.

9.2 As such the proposed development is contrary to the principle of development and impact on the character of the area under policies ADPP1, ADPP5, CS14, CS18 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019 and advice contained within the NPPF, by being inappropriate in location and scale and failing to respond positively to local context or conserve the existing landscape character and setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

9.3 Informative: In attempting to determine the application in a way that can foster the delivery of sustainable development, the local planning authority has approached this decision in a positive way having regard to Development Plan policies and available guidance to try to secure high quality appropriate development. In this application whilst there has been a need to balance conflicting considerations, the local planning authority has also been unable to find an acceptable solution to the problems with the development so that the development can be said to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

DC