

**COMMITTEE DATE: 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

**Reference:** 18/00123/FUL  
**Date submitted:** 12 February 2018  
**Applicant:** Mr D Phipps  
**Location:** Buckminster Lodge Equestrian Centre, Wymondham, Sewstern, Grantham  
**Proposal:** The proposed alterations and conversion of former agricultural buildings.



**Proposal :-**

This application is for full planning permission for the conversion of existing buildings on the site to associated ancillary space for the British Model Flying Association model flying visitor centre and model flying site. The existing buildings form part of a range of former agricultural / equestrian buildings forming a courtyard at the centre of the built form of the site.

The application site covers approximately 1.77 hectares (the red line boundary). The immediate area is within the same ownership / tenancy and will remain in agricultural use, albeit model aircraft overflies it as part of the centre and model flying site.

This proposal relates to Phase II of the development; Phase I included the change of use of the site and was approved in 2016.

The proposal would utilise the existing access which already serves the site and was upgraded as per the conditions attached to the 2016 approval, prior to the centre opening in 2017.

**It is considered that the main issues for consideration of the application are:-**

- **Application of Development Policies and NPPF**
- **Impact upon highways**

- **Impact upon character of area and open countryside**

The application is presented to Committee due to the level of representations received.

**Relevant History:**

16/00438/FUL – Proposed change of use from equestrian centre, livery and ménage to model flying visitor centre and model flying site including alterations and conversion of the ménage and dwelling to associated accommodation. **Permitted**

**Planning Policies:-**

**Melton Local Plan (saved policies):**

**Policy OS2** - states that permission will not be granted for development outside town and village envelopes with some exceptions for agriculture, employment, recreation and tourism.

**Policy BE1** - Siting and design of buildings: Allows for new buildings subject to criteria including the design harmonising with the surroundings, no adverse impact on neighbouring properties by loss of privacy or outlook, adequate space around and between buildings being provided and adequate access and parking arrangements being made.

**The National Planning Policy Framework was published 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and replaced the previous collection of PPS. It introduces a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ meaning:**

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out -of- date, granting permission unless:
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

**The NPPF offers direction on the relative weight of the content in comparison to existing Local Plan policy and advises that whilst the NPPF does not automatically render older policies obsolete, where they are in conflict, the NPPF should prevail.**

It also establishes 12 planning principles against which proposals should be judged. Relevant to this application are those to:

- proactively support sustainable economic development to deliver business and industrial units,
- promoting sustainable transport
- Supporting a prosperous rural economy

**On Specific issues relevant to this application it advises:**

**Building a strong competitive economy**

- Planning should encourage growth, not prevent it and should plan proactively to encourage economic growth
- The planning system does **everything it can** to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth.
- **Significant weight** should be given to the need to support economic growth

**Sustainable Transport:**

- Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people.
- Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe.

**Prosperous Rural Economy**

- Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both new buildings and conversions.

**Consultations:-**

<b>Consultation reply</b>	<b>Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services</b>
<p><b>Highway Authority:</b> No objection</p> <p>The Highway Authority suggests that conditions may be considered reasonable for requiring any major events to submit separately for a traffic management plan approval. This condition would need to meet the necessary tests as set out in the NPPF. Particular attention would need to be given to the definition of a major event should the Local Planning Authority consider that a condition meets the necessary tests.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The access road leading to the site was upgraded with passing places as conditioned in the 2016 permission for the change of use, prior to the centre opening in 2017.</p> <p>The 2016 application and permission dealt with the change of use of the site to a model flying centre and visitor site. As such, any condition relating to ‘major events’, including the frequency, size or timing of them would have needed to be included on that permission.</p> <p>The 2016 permission did not limit the size, frequency or times of events. This was due to the extant use of the site as an equestrian centre. A successful equestrian centre of that size could attract large events, with the traffic associated with that use being larger vehicles, horse boxes and trailers, in addition to cars. The equestrian centre was not subject to any planning restrictions relating to its use or major events.</p> <p>According to the NPPF, conditions must be directly related to the development, necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and be fair and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development (paragraph 204).</p> <p>The development proposed within this application relates to the conversion of a building to create 7 bunk rooms, and the conversion of a separate building to create a sanitary block (showers /WC etc.) to service the bunk rooms. In addition a further building is to be converted into a study space and store.</p> <p>The conversions will not in themselves allow for major events, as they are small in scale. The 7 bunk rooms are all shown with single beds, so a maximum of 7 people will be able to stay, unless</p>

	<p>bunk beds are used. The sanitary block is small and would support only the numbers staying within the bunk rooms. The study block and storage space is also small in scale.</p> <p><b>This development will not therefore have a residual cumulative impact upon the highway which could be considered severe, and it should not be refused on highways grounds (NPPF paragraph 32).</b></p> <p><b>In addition, it is considered that a condition relating to controlling of major events on the site would not meet the tests as set out in at paragraph 204 of the NPPF as it would not directly relate to the development which is being applied for.</b></p>
<p><b>Buckminster Parish Council: Object</b> The Parish Council was not invited to comment on application 16/00438/FUL. The refurbishment is welcomed, in that the external appearance of the buildings will essentially remain the same.</p> <p>The 2016 D&amp;A Statement recorded that on weekdays there would be 25-50 visitors per day, with on average the weekend 50-100 per day, with 4 or 5 events throughout the year attracting higher numbers.</p> <p>Whilst this application may in a small way reduce the number of day visitors by providing overnight accommodation, the increased level of visitors has already made its presence felt, particularly in Sewstern, without reaching the levels mentioned in the D&amp;A Statement. Additional groups may also be visiting for education and engineering skills purposes.</p> <p>The Parish Council is concerned that the excessive traffic resulting from the significant number of daily visitors for flying events, compounded by the additional visitors attending for educational purposes will extend beyond a simple access issue to significantly impacting use of minor roads serving Sewstern and Buckminster.</p> <p>Noise generated at the site is also having a significant impact on village life in Sewstern when flying events occur. There appears to be no noise assessment undertaken for the 2016 application.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The Parish Council was informed of the 2016 application on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and allowed 21 days for comment. The Parish Council was again contacted on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2016 in relation to amended plans and allowed 14 days to comment. No representations were received from the Parish Council in response to either consultation. Representations were received from other interested parties that were consulted at the same time.</p> <p>The level of visitors expected at the site (in accordance with the D&amp;A statement) is similar to that which would be expected at a successful equestrian centre. The equestrian centre could have reopened with no improvements required to either the access drive or the highway. <b>It is therefore not considered that the traffic associated with the development could be considered severe, nor is it considered that conditions are required or would meet the tests within the NPPF (please see commentary above in response to the Highway Authority).</b></p> <p>A Noise Impact Assessment was not requested in relation to the 2016 application as the nearest habitable dwelling is some 700 metres from the flying site, with the village of Sewstern being approximately 1.5km from the flying site to the north east. It is essential that those flying the model aircraft can see the aircraft to be able to control it, therefore it is understood that the aircraft cannot venture far from the site at all, significantly limiting the impact of any noise in villages. No complaints have been made to the Council's Environmental Health team in relation to noise at the site.</p>

**Representations:**

A site notice was posted. The site does not share a boundary with any other habitable properties, therefore no neighbours were consulted. As a result 10 representations have been received to date objecting (6 objections, 4 support). The representations have been summarised as follows:

<b>Representation</b>	<b>Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services</b>
<p><b>Traffic and Highway Safety</b></p> <p>The traffic seems to have gone from 20-30 to max 100 per day with 4 or 5 events throughout the year. Can you confirm that highways have taken this into consideration.</p> <p>Sewstern is a small village, struggling with the BMFA traffic. The thought of approximately 100 cars on small, non passable lanes is very worrying.</p> <p>Traffic levels are affecting the village of Sewstern, excessive traffic on the minor roads serving the site and village. What will highways be doing to address it?</p> <p>Highways have specified that the access routes should avoid villages wherever possible, but Sewstern is already taking the brunt of the traffic and this will increase as the club increases in popularity.</p> <p>25-50 cars a day means an extra 50-100 cars using the lanes on a daily basis, more during events. It is likely that this will increase as the site becomes more popular.</p> <p>The narrow lanes already take far too much traffic and because Timber Hill is so narrow vehicles have problems passing so the grass verges are already becoming eroded. The crossroad in Sewstern is dangerous and has seen many accidents over the years with walls being knocked down.</p> <p>The safety of more vulnerable road users is already compromised by the numbers of vehicles accessing the site. Parking on the wide grass verges by sightseers at the site is inevitable, so they will be damaged.</p> <p>There is inadequate public transport, only an infrequent bus link to Melton and Grantham.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Highways considered the extant use of the site in the determination of the 2016 application. Please see comments made in response to the Highway Authority consultation response above.</p> <p>It is important to understand that this application is not considering the use of the site, or the principal of the use of the site as a model flying centre. That use was established in 2016 and it cannot be withdrawn. This application is for the change of use of former agricultural / equestrian buildings to 7 bunk rooms providing overnight accommodation for those visiting the site, in addition to a small sanitary block and study / store room.</p> <p><b>This application is unlikely to generate any significant additional traffic movements to / from the site that could be considered to have a severe impact on the safety of the highway. As such, the application cannot be refused on highway safety grounds.</b></p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that sightseers to the site park on the highways verge at present. There is sufficient space for the expected number of vehicles within the site, and no restrictions on entering the site when it is open, therefore it is not considered that parking on verges is expected.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Impact / Ecology</b></p> <p>This is a popular site for many endangered and protected species, barn owls, red kites, plovers and skylarks. How can the noise of this activity not disturb them?</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The ecology department at Leicestershire County Council were consulted on both this application and the 2016 application for the change of use of the site. They made no comments in response to</p>

	<p>either consultation and did not ask for any surveys to be conducted.</p> <p><b>It is not considered that this application endangers protected species.</b></p>
<p><b>Noise / Residential Amenity</b></p> <p>The thought of more noise in Sewstern from cars and model aircraft is an anathema.</p> <p>Noise is impacting the village and residents of Sewstern.</p> <p>Times should be considered for visitors to enter and leave the site as traffic noise will be unbearable for properties in Sewstern. Several properties open directly onto the roadside and vehicles travelling at all times, even into the night, will affect residents well being.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The noise from vehicles in the village is no more than could be expected from the use of the centre as a successful equestrian centre.</p> <p>Noise from the model aircraft was considered in the 2016 application; this application is for the use of buildings to be changed to bunk room accommodation, sanitary facilities (showers, WC's etc.) and a room for study and storage. It is not considered that this will have any impact upon the residential amenity of villagers in Sewstern.</p> <p><b>No complaints have been received to Environmental Health regarding the noise of the model aircraft operating at the site since the site opened almost a year ago.</b></p>
<p><b>2016 Application Consultation</b></p> <p>It is a shame that the original Phase I planning notice never came to publication in Sewstern as the whole village would have objected. Do not let this ruin our small village.</p> <p>The villages of Sewstern and Buckminster were not privy to this application and were therefore stopped from objecting.</p> <p>Melton Borough Council has been negligent in not consulting the residents of Sewstern and Buckminster.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>As stated above in response to the Parish Council's comments, the Parish Council was consulted twice on the proposal in 2016. In both cases there was no response from the Parish Council.</p> <p><b>The 2016 consultation was undertaken in accordance with Melton Borough Council's adopted consultation strategy.</b></p> <p>Melton Borough Council's adopted consultation strategy does not allow for all households to be consulted in nearby villages. It is possible for the Parish Council to make representations on behalf of the residents, and to advertise the application more widely should they consider it necessary (on village notice boards for instance). As the site does not share a boundary with any postal addresses a site notice was posted at the site entrance, in the same way as this current application was advertised. Representations were welcome on the 2016 application from the date it was valid (29<sup>th</sup> June 2016), until the date the decision was made (9<sup>th</sup> September 2016). No representations were made in response to the consultation.</p>

<p><b>Other Material Considerations</b></p> <p>The application seems to be favouring Buckminster, not Sewstern – is this to do with Buckminster Estate being involved?</p> <p>Due to the nature of the application, all properties should have been given notice of both the 2016 application, and this application.</p> <p>The sign on the gate is hardly visible and the village hasn't been notified again.</p> <p>As the application is for 'bunk rooms' for guests to stay overnight, does this not suggest some type of residential unit now or in future?</p> <p>I am at a loss to see how this project is to be beneficial to our villages. Only 4 full time employees, and 4 part time is irrelevant. The application states that shops will benefit, however Sewstern has no shop, the village store closed years ago.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>It is not understood what the representation means in regards to favouring Buckminster. The site is owned by Buckminster Estate; however they are not the applicant.</p> <p>Please see the comment above in respect of the consultation strategy. It would be disproportionate to notify all households in a village of an application. The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the adopted consultation strategy. The site notice is visible from the highway and printed on waterproof 'paper'.</p> <p>Any future proposals will be considered in accordance with the adopted policies at the time, taking account of any other material considerations.</p> <p>Some employment, no matter how small, may be beneficial to local people who may wish to work at the site and not travel significant distances to work. Whilst Sewstern does not have a shop, there are facilities locally, such as pubs, B&amp;B's and shops which are likely to benefit from more people visiting the area.</p> <p>The NPPF is very supportive of the rural economy, and promoting growth and expansion of all types of business.</p>
<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>We live at the western end of Sewstern, about one mile from Buckminster Lodge and although we're aware that the centre is not yet fully operational, we can honestly say we haven't notices and noise nuisance or traffic problems associated with the place.</p> <p>It is a wonderful place for young people to learn new skills in engineering and aerodynamics surrounded by open countryside.</p> <p>I am impressed on a personal level by the improvements that have already taken place and feel that the BMFA should be supported in its wish to continue to improve the facilities. They seemed very eager to forge links with the community and I think that this should be encouraged. The opportunity for local children to learn engineering skills is very valuable and the BMFA were very keen to help. The proposed development will strengthen their presence and have very little detrimental impact.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

<p>Model flying is a minority interest, but is officially recognised as a sport. The BMFA are now in a fortunate position to have a National Model Flying Centre at Buckminster Lodge. Members live countrywide and for some the travelling distance is considerable. Consequently, the application to provide simple bunk accommodation will make the visit worthwhile. The impact of such a small amount of accommodation on the roads will be negligible.</p> <p>The development will continue to bring people to the local area, helping to support vital services, such as village shops, pubs and B&amp;B's. As a parent governor at the local primary school, I am excited about the plans being developed to integrate activity at the centre with the children's curriculum. Pupils are also very excited having already had some visits to the site.</p> <p>Traffic has not been an issue, and nor has noise, and I'm confident that any larger events can be managed through traffic management plans agreed in advance.</p>	
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**Other material considerations (not raised through consultation or representation)**

Consideration	Assessment of Head of Regulatory Services
<p><b>Compliance (or otherwise) with Planning Policy</b></p> <p><b>The (new) Melton Local Plan Submission Version</b></p> <p>The Submission Version (as amended by the 'Focussed Changes') underwent its Examination in Public in January and February 2018, and is currently being considered by the Inspector.</p> <p>The NPPF advises that: From the day of publication, decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);</li> <li>● the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and</li> <li>● the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).</li> </ul> <p>Policy C7 of the submitted Local Plan relates to Rural Services and states that support will be given to proposals and activities that protect, retain or enhance existing community services and facilities</p>	<p><b>Whilst the Local Plan remains in preparation it can be afforded only limited weight.</b></p> <p>When assessed against the NPPF criteria opposite:</p> <p>The Local Plan is now post Examination and has the following steps to complete before it can be adopted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination results to be published and any 'modifications' to be the subject of consultation</li> <li>• Further examination to take place into Modifications</li> <li>• Final Inspectors Report and recommendations</li> <li>• Adoption by MBC</li> </ul> <p>There are several hundred representations to the local plan covering very many aspects, It can only be reasonably concluded that vey many relevant objections remain unresolved</p> <p>Whilst it is the Council's view that the Local Plan is consistent with the NPPF (as this is a requirement allowing its submission) this is contested by many parties. This will be the subject of consideration by the Inspector</p>



<p>or that lead to the provision of additional assets that improve community cohesion and well-being to encourage sustainable development.</p> <p>Policy EC2 relates to employment growth in the rural area (outside Melton Mowbray) and states that in order to support the rural economy, the Council will allow for the expansion of existing rural businesses, dependant upon the nature of the activities involved, the character of the site and its accessibility amongst other things.</p> <p>The proposal is in line with the Policies as mentioned above.</p> <p>Policy EC2 – Employment Growth in the Rural Area (Outside Melton Mowbray) states that: In order to support the rural economy, the Council will allow for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new employment land to be provided in rural settlements; and/or;</li> <li>• rural employment proposals which create or safeguard jobs.</li> </ul>	<p>following the Examination.</p> <p><b>It is therefore considered that it can attract weight but this is limited at this stage.</b></p> <p><b>The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the emerging local plan in terms of its location (see applicable policy opposite) which it is considered adds to the issues that add weight in support of the proposal.</b></p>
<p><b>Design / Layout</b></p>	<p>The application relates to three buildings that surround a courtyard within the centre of the site, to the west of the house that was converted to offices for the BMFA. The western, single storey block of former stables is to be converted into 7 single bunk rooms, with space for a desk and single bed. The plans show that there is internal space for a wheelchair.</p> <p>Across the courtyard on the eastern side, the former stables are to be converted into separate ladies and gents toilets and shower facilities and a small storage area. The smaller, separate stable block on the southern side of the courtyard is to be converted into a study room and small storage space.</p> <p>The submitted plans show that the buildings will appear as renovated / converted stables, with casement windows and wooden painted doors. The heights will remain unchanged, and no new development is proposed. The buildings will retain their general rural appearance, with changes to the roof coverings to metal sheet roofing in slate grey colour.</p> <p><b>The conversion is considered to accord with the requirements of policy BE1.</b></p>
<p><b>Impact on Open Countryside</b></p>	<p>The buildings are set within a courtyard in the centre of the site. Views to the courtyard from the wider countryside setting are very limited, and the</p>

	<p>proposals are considered to be sympathetic to the general rural appearance of the site.</p> <p><b>No new buildings are proposed, and the impact on the countryside of the conversion is therefore considered to be minimal. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with policies OS2 and BE1.</b></p>
<p><b>Policy Compliance</b></p>	<p>The proposal is considered to comply with saved Melton Local Plan policies OS2 and BE1 for the reasons as discussed above.</p> <p>The proposal is also considered to accord with the overall aims and objectives of the NPPF, in particular, paragraph 28 which seeks to support sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, through the conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings.</p> <p>In addition, this paragraph states that there should be support for rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and respect the character of the countryside.</p> <p>The BMFA visitor and model flying centre is providing local employment, and benefits to the limited amount of small businesses in the local area. By providing a small amount of overnight accommodation, it is likely that local pubs and cafes will also benefit as there are no facilities for food and drink on site. The site is doing well, and has moved onto phase II of the development within a year of opening.</p> <p><b>As such, it is considered that the proposal complies with the saved policies of the adopted Melton Local Plan, and the NPPF.</b></p>

### Conclusion

The application seeks to convert three small buildings around a courtyard in the centre of the site to provide ancillary accommodation in relation to the BMFA's use of the site. The accommodation consists of 7 bunk rooms, a separate amenities block, a small study room and some storage space. The conversions are sympathetic, and retain the general overall appearance of converted stable blocks, and the conversions are not considered to have a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the open countryside.

Whilst there have been objections principally relating to traffic movements, the small scale development proposed in this application is unlikely to have a severe cumulative impact upon the safety of the highway. The principal of the use of the site as the BMFA's model flying and visitor centre was established in the planning permission granted in 2016, and the highway authority raised no objection at that time. The highway authority has not objected to this application.

For these reasons stated above, the proposals are considered in accordance with local and national planning policy (NPPF) and no other material considerations indicate it should depart from these. The application is recommended to be approved, subject to conditions.

**RECOMMENDATION: - Permit subject to the following conditions:-**

1. The development shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawings numbered 1126-25 Rev A (Floor Plans), 1126-27 Rev A (Proposed Elevations) and 1126-22 Rev A (OS / Site Plan), received by the Local Planning Authority on 1st and 12th February 2018.
3. The external materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall be in strict accordance with those specified in the application unless alternative materials are first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved details
4. The bunk room accommodation hereby permitted shall be occupied solely as ancillary accommodation and it shall not be used or severed from the principal site and used as a separate and unconnected dwelling unit.

**The reasons for the conditions are:-**

1. To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by S51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. For the avoidance of doubt.
3. To ensure a satisfactory standard of external appearance.
4. The site is situated outside the defined limits of any settlement and where only residential uses for agricultural dwellings or holiday accommodation is likely to receive planning permission.

**Officer to contact: Mrs S Legge**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018**