

Your ref:
Our ref: SHN/LJN/JB66380
DD: 07932 699 707
E: Louise.Newton@bidwells.co.uk
Date: 3 November 2021

Planning and Development Control
South Holland District Council
Council Offices
Priory Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire
United Kingdom
PE11 2XE

Dear Sirs

**PROPOSED NEW INTERNAL AGRICULTURAL ACCESS TRACK AND ASSOCIATED
HARDSTANDING
D E BRAND & SONS - LAND AND BUILDINGS AT BIRDS DROVE**

Please find enclosed a Prior Notification under Part 6 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended 2018), for a proposed agricultural access track and associated hardstanding at Birds Drove, Surfleet, Spalding, PE11 4BE.

The application is submitted online via the Planning Portal (Ref: PP-10349579).

The Site

D E Brand & Sons are situated at Birds Drove, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Location of Birds Drove



45 Grosvenor Road, St Albans AL1 3AW
T: 01727 223900 E: info@bidwells.co.uk W: bidwells.co.uk

The farm extends to approximately 402 hectares (993 acres) comprising 399.57 hectares (987.34 acres) of agricultural land. There are a large number of agricultural buildings at the site. The site is built around a sizeable area of glasshouses at the south-east of the site. There are numerous associated packhouses, cold stores and offices, all of which service the farm.

Due to the labour-intensive packing and growing facilities at the site, there is a sizeable staff car park and a large number of farm workers regularly on site. The image below shows the area of built footprint across the site.

Figure 2 - Aerial image of site*



**Note: this image does not show the grain store to the north of the road, which has been constructed since this photograph was taken. Unfortunately, an up-to-date photo is not available.*

The land has been farmed by the applicant and his family for many years, with farming operations primarily comprising arable and horticultural farming, alongside glasshouse growing and packing activities. The land is all classified as Grade 1 on the former Ministry of Agricultural Land Classification Series. These soils are some of the best in the country, capable of growing a variety of crops including sugar beet, potatoes, field vegetables, horticultural crops, cereals and grassland. Cropping is currently a rotation of brassicas, potatoes, and cereals with potatoes grown one year in five.

The land occupied by the applicant can grow a number of high value crops, which requires specialist machinery. Growing these crops in rotation is also essential for soil health and productivity.

Given the range of high value crops growable on the holding, and the size of the farm, this means that the applicant has a large amount of machinery in the yard which is required for agricultural operations throughout the year. There is an area of hardstanding due north of the site across Birds Drove, which is also the site of a grain store, but as evidenced below, this is in full use and does not have any further space for machinery.

Figure 3 – existing hardstanding and agricultural machinery storage



As can be seen above, it is not possible to store any further machinery on this site as it would prevent access to the grain store and through flow of vehicles/machinery. It is considered to be at full capacity.

The applicant currently stores a large amount of high value and critical agricultural machinery on a grass field due east of the site. This machinery is accessed from an existing, established access at the north of the site onto Birds Drove, which is in regular use. The image below helps to clarify the volume of machinery currently having to be stored on grass.

Figure 4 – storage of agricultural machinery on grass





Proposal and Agricultural Justification

The existing glasshouses are in regular, active agricultural use (the definition of agriculture for planning purposes includes horticulture - 3.4 Section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides the definition of agriculture: “includes horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, the keeping and breeding of livestock...”). However, they are served by an access route which requires moving vehicles to move through other agricultural buildings, cold stores and pack houses on site. These buildings are in regular use by farm staff. The main access route requires agricultural machinery to undertake two 90-degree angle turns through a number of buildings and is not suitable for large machinery or trailers. This is entirely impractical and presents significant operational issues.

Vehicle drivers cannot ensure that they will have a clear route of access and this presents a significant safety hazard. The mixture of moving machinery and pedestrians would ideally be altered so that they are separate, to improve safety on site.

The proposed access route would ensure that all vehicles accessing the glasshouses had their own separate access. This would prevent the mixing of pedestrians and large agricultural vehicles. It would also reduce the overall volume of traffic using the main farm access.

Whilst such an access is established and in regular use by farm machinery, there is currently no internal access track leading from the point of access to the glasshouses. As such, the majority of vehicles can only utilise this track during summer, as it is a grass track. During the autumn and winter months in particular, if this route continues to be used, the ground will quickly become very wet, rutted and boggy, and likely impassable for reaching the buildings.

As such, the proposal is to install an internal access track, spanning from the buildings across the grassland, to meet the existing access onto the road. The track will be formed of crushed concrete, and will be a permeable surface, so as to ensure there is no run-off created as a result of the proposal.

This proposal will reduce the flow of traffic utilising the current main access route and will improve safety for the occupants of the relevant buildings, as well as significantly increasing operational efficiency of the farm business. The installation of hardstanding will also prevent mud being spread onto the public highway when this existing access route is utilised. It will have a minor impact upon the landscape (as the route is already in use and it is limited for agricultural purposes) and will not result in any additional vehicular traffic on the public road network whatsoever.

The proposal also incorporates an area of hardstanding for the applicant’s numerous pieces of agricultural machinery. Currently these must be stored in the grass field, as detailed above, which means

they can become hard to move during wetter periods and cause damage to the field. Due to the range of crops grown on the property, it is critical that various pieces of agricultural machinery can be easily accessed throughout the year, whatever the weather conditions. All existing areas of hardstanding on the property are already being utilised for vehicle storage, and so a new area is required to help the farm business continue to grow. It is proposed that this is situated to the front of the glasshouses, directly adjoining the existing area of hardstanding (that is too small to accommodate additional machinery).

The Location

We enclose the Site Plan and Block Plan which show the proposed access track edged in red.

The track has been identified as being in close proximity to the existing operations and is entirely contained within the existing site. The proposed route will require a length of hard core surfacing from the glasshouses to meet with the existing point of access.

The Design

The private way will be constructed of compacted crushed concrete.

The proposed design is considered to be appropriate for the site and is in keeping with nearby agricultural access tracks.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended 2018 – Part 6 Class A

Part 6 Class A allows for:

“The carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in an area of

(a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; or

(b) any excavation or engineering operations,

Which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit”.

It has been demonstrated above that the proposal is reasonably necessary (and arguably essential) for the purposes of agriculture on the agricultural unit. The proposal fully complies with the criteria set out within Part 6 Class A, as set out in Table 1 below.

DEVELOPMENT IS NOT PERMITTED BY CLASS A IF -	CRITERIA COMPLIANCE
(a) the development would be carried out on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1 hectare in area;	The parcel of land within the unit subject of the proposal exceeds 1 hectare.
(b) it would consist of the erection or extension of any building on an established agricultural unit (as defined in paragraph X Part 3) where development under Class Q or S of Part 3 (changes of use) of this Schedule has been carried out within a period of 10 years ending with	No such permitted development rights have been implemented within the unit.

the date on which development under Class A(a) begins;	
(c) it would consist of, or include, the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling;	The proposal does not consist of, or include, the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling.
(d) it would involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes;	The access track has been designed entirely for agricultural purposes, as demonstrated above.
(e) the ground area would be covered by – (i) any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock or any plant or machinery arising from engineering operations, or (ii) any building erected or extended or altered by virtue of Class A, would exceed 1,000 square metres	The proposed square metreage of the access track and associated hardstanding is 1,141.8 square metres.
(f) the height of any part of the building, structure or works within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 3 metres;	As a proposal for an access track, this is not relevant.
(g) the height of any part of the building, structure or works not within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome would exceed 12 metres;	As a proposal for an access track, this is not relevant.
(h) any part of the development would be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk or classified road;	The proposal does not fall within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk or classified road. The track will meet the existing, established point of access, which is already set back sufficient distance into the site.
(i) it would consist of, or include the erection or construction of, or the carrying out of any works to, a building, structure or excavation used or to be used for the accommodation of livestock or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge where the building, structure or excavation, or would be, within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building;	The proposal is for an agricultural access track and associated hardstanding for vehicle access and storage. It will not be used for the accommodation of livestock or storage of slurry or sewage sludge.
(j) it would involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 2 (4) land which are connected with fish farming; or	The proposal does not involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 2 (4) land which are connected with fish farming.

(k) any building for storing fuel or waste from a biomass boiler or an aerobic digestion system – (i) would be used for storing waste not produced by that boiler system or for storing fuel not produced on land within the unit, or (ii) is or would be within 400m of the curtilage of a protected building.	The proposal does not involve the storing fuel or waste from a biomass boiler or an aerobic digestion system.
--	--

Summary

There is an essential requirement for the provision of an agricultural access and associated hardstanding. The current access arrangements are not appropriate for the site and could be significantly improved.

The provision of a new access and associated hardstanding will significantly enhance farming operations for the applicant and provide a safe, secure location for the storage of essential agricultural machinery.

The proposal fully complies with all of the criteria set out under Part 6 Class A, as demonstrated within this statement and it is considered prior approval should therefore be granted for the proposal.

Application Documents

The application is submitted online via the Planning Portal and comprises the following documents:

- Application Form
- Covering Letter and Statement
- Site Plan
- Block Plan

If you wish to arrange a site visit or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



Louise Newton MRICS
Associate, Rural