



## Committee Report

Planning Committee South – 28 May 2024

Application no DC/23/3717/FUL

### Location

Walk Farm  
Old Felixstowe Road  
Stratton Hall  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP10 OLR

### Expiry date

**Application type** Full Application

**Applicant** Stratton Hall Farms Limited

**Parish** Stratton Hall

**Proposal** Change the use of three agricultural buildings to Class E(g)iii (Industrial processes) Use and the siting of three ancillary office/welfare facilities cabins.

**Case Officer** Grant Heal  
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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 Full planning permission is sought to change the use of three agricultural buildings to Class E(g)iii (Industrial processes) Use, along with the siting of three ancillary office/welfare facility cabins at Walk Farm, Old Felixstowe Road, Stratton Hall.
- 1.2 Considered against all relevant material planning matters, the proposal is deemed sustainable and therefore recommended for approval in accordance with the NPPF and the relevant policies of the adopted development plan. However, the referral process was triggered in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation because the 'minded to' decision of the Case Officer was contrary to the Parish Council's recommendation to refuse the application. The application was therefore presented to the Referral Panel on Tuesday 16 April 2024 where members determined that the merits of the application warranted debate at Planning Committee due to concerns relating to the loss of the existing buildings use for purposes in support of the agricultural function of the farm, including for storage of crops etc. grown on the surrounding arable land.

## **2. Site Description**

- 2.1 Walk Farm is located on the north-eastern side of Felixstowe Road with the A14 to the north and a railway line located further south. The buildings subject to this application are modern portal frame structures that have previously been used for storage purposes associated with the farm's agricultural use.
- 2.2 The buildings are two-storey in height and are positioned in a row surrounded by an extensive area of concrete hardstanding which stretches eastward to several other single and two-storey buildings that have already been permitted for industrial processes, under planning permission refs. DC/18/3197/FUL and DC/17/4411/FUL.
- 2.3 Vehicular access into the site is from Felixstowe Road and is shared by the existing industrial use buildings. Walk Farmhouse is to the south-west and is bound by substantial trees and vegetation that provide screening and reinforce separation from the buildings subject of this application.

## **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 This application seeks full planning permission to change the use of three agricultural buildings to Class E(g)iii (Industrial processes) Use, along with the siting of three ancillary office/welfare facilities cabins at Walk Farm, Old Felixstowe Road, Stratton Hall.
- 3.2 The proposal would not result in any physical changes to the external appearance of the three existing buildings, however, each would be provided with a single storey modular cabin for ancillary purposes.
- 3.3 The submitted application forms states that the units would be let out for employment purposes similar to those already permitted DC/18/3197/FUL and DC/17/4411/FUL which the applicant states are in high demand. The proposal would result in the creation of eight full time equivalent staff employment opportunities.

## Post Referral Panel

- 3.4 Following questions raised by members during the referral panel meeting concerning the loss of the existing buildings use for purposes in support of the agricultural function of the farm, including for storage of crops etc grown on the surrounding arable land, the Case Officer received a statement from the agent dated 3 May 2024.
- 3.5 In summary, the statement sets out that the nature of farming has experienced significant change in recent years. This is partly due to changing consumer habits resulting in lower demand for unprocessed potatoes. Higher demand for alternative processed potato products now means that crops are transported directly from the field to the manufacturers for processing instead of being stored for months on-site before being sent to supermarkets. This means that the subject buildings are no longer required for the storage of potatoes grown on the surrounding farmland. The applicant otherwise asserts that:

*'Diversified income is becoming critical to underpinning the agricultural industry. The key reasons for this are changing weather patterns, volatile commodity markets, the basic payments scheme being brought to an end and high interest rates.*

*The importance for diversified income into the farm has been demonstrated in recent years where the farming operation has made a loss in 2 out of the last 5 years. The Basic Payment Scheme has already been reduced by 53% and will be reduced to nil by 2027. For Stratton Hall Farms Limited to continue to own the farming assets they need to have diversified sources of income. The income from the proposed change of use will work towards mitigating these issues in modern farming'.*

## **4. Third Party Representations**

- 4.1 Five third-party representations of objection have been received which raise concerns (inter alia) in relation to the loss of buildings for agricultural use; potential traffic issues; working hours; lighting and noise pollution; as well as the potential for negative impacts on the area's rural character.

## **5. Consultations and publications**

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Stratton Hall Parish Council	6 October 2023	2 November 2023
	18 January 2024	No further comments in response to re-consultation.

*The Parish Council strongly objects to this Planning Application. The Parish Council held a public Planning Meeting on Tuesday, 31st November 2023.*

*The buildings are on agricultural land which is situated between the A14 and (A45) The Old Felixstowe Road opposite three further small, non-agricultural businesses and adjacent to Walk Farmhouse. The three barns are constructed on a concrete base, the walls have metal cladding, roller doors, metal sheet roofing, two of which contain refrigeration units. There is a large concrete hardstanding area to the front of the buildings.*

*Policy SCLP 4.7 Farm Diversification*

- 1. Farming activities remain the predominate use on the site.*
- 2. The proposal is of a use and scale that relates well to the setting of the existing farm.*
- 3. The proposal does not compromise highways safety to the local road.*
- 4. The proposal avoids, or adequately mitigates any adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and landscape, the ANOB and its setting or the natural or historic environment.*
- 5. The diversification is supposed by detailed information and justification that demonstrates that the proposals will contribute to the viability of the farm as a whole and its continued operation.*
- 6. The diversification retains or provides additional employment for the local community.*
- 7. The proposal supports the retention or creation of jobs associated with the farm.*
- 8. The conversation of existing farm buildings is undertaken sympathetically to the traditional character of the farm.*
- 9. The proposal does not involve permanent residential uses.*

*Support will be given to farm shops which provide continued employment opportunities and sell a range of produce associated with the farm and the local area. Proposals should be of a scale which is not detrimental to the existing shopping facilities provided in nearby towns and villages.*

*The Planning Application appears to be in breach of 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 on the basis that once the farm buildings in question are allowed to be used for light industrial and storage, there will be no buildings left on the farm for farming purposes and therefore farming activities cannot remain the predominant use on the site. This would also be contrary being of a scale that relates well the setting of the existing farm, as the existing farm will no longer exist. There is nothing to support that the diversification will contribute to the viability of the farm as the farming activity is already now conducted by a third party and their facilities are now handling their requirements.*

*There is insufficient detail on the activities proposed to support the retention or creation of jobs associated with the farm.*

*There is no indication as to the security arrangements, particularly in respect of lighting however the proposed development will likely have security lighting which will not only light up the site but also the surrounding area causing a disturbance to residents and the wider area including the approaches to the ANOB. The plan does not show any intended lighting. All night lighting in this flat and dark countryside will not only be an intrusion on the landscape but a permanent imposition to nearby properties. Development Management Policy DM27 Lighting applies to this development.*

*This application also gives no clear understanding of the specific future usage for these barns outside of light industrial and storage. There are no indications as to the working hours or the use of mechanical equipment. If passed without restrictions and guarantees the Parish Council are concerned that the number of properties in close proximity to the land will be adversely affected particularly if it is a 24-hour operation and so will undoubtedly cause a disturbance as there will be lorry movements in the early hours, reversing noise as they are shunting, coupling up trailers with low gear changes, slamming of cab doors, the use of fork lift trucks, mechanical equipment and voices.*

*As stated previously for all the above reasons the Parish Council strongly object to this application.*

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
SCC Highways Department	6 October 2023	20 October 2023
Summary of comments: No objection - conditions proposed.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Ecology	6 October 2023	26 October 2023
Summary of comments: No objection.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Environmental Protection	6 October 2023	9 February 2024
Summary of comments: Conditions proposed.		

#### **Re-consultation consultees**

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Environmental Protection	25 October 2023	12 February 2024
Summary of comments: Conditions proposed.		

#### **Site notices**

<b>Site Notice Type</b>	<b>Date Posted</b>	<b>Expiry date</b>	<b>Reason</b>
General Site Notice	11 October 2023	1 November 2023	General Site Notice

#### **6. Planning policy**

- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)
- SCLP3.2 - Settlement Hierarchy (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

- SCLP3.3 - Settlement Boundaries (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP4.1 - Existing Employment Areas (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP4.2 - New Employment Development (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP4.3 - Expansion and Intensification of Employment Sites (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP4.5 - Economic Development in Rural Areas (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP4.6 - Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP4.7 - Farm Diversification (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP12.34 - Strategy for the Rural Areas (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP10.4 - Landscape Character (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP11.1 - Design Quality (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP7.1 - Sustainable Transport (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP7.2 - Parking Proposals and Standards (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- SCLP11.2 - Residential Amenity (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020).

## **7. Planning Considerations**

### Planning history:

\*DC/22/2743/AGO | Prior Notification (Agricultural) - Open sided lean too off existing cold store building for machinery storage. | Walk Farm Old Felixstowe Road Stratton Hall - Prior approval not required 29 July 2022;

\*DC/18/3197/FUL | Change of Use of two former agricultural buildings to B1 (c) | Walk Farm Old Felixstowe Road Levington - Permitted 23 January 2019;

\*DC/17/4411/FUL | Change of Use of two farm buildings to light industrial - B1 (c) | Walk Farm Old Felixstowe Road Levington - Permitted 19 March 2018.

### Principle of Development

- 7.1 As per policy SCLP3.2 (Settlement Hierarchy), the site lies within the 'Countryside' where development is generally limited to that which necessitates a countryside location or otherwise accords with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and the adopted development plan.
- 7.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) supports the prosperity of rural economies by encouraging decisions that, with relevance to this application, enable:
- a) *the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
  - b) *the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.*
- 7.3 The Framework also recognises that:
- '...sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist'.*
- 7.4 Adopted Local Plan policies SCLP4.1 (Existing Employment Areas); SCLP4.2 (New Employment Development); and SCLP4.3 (Expansion and Intensification of Employment Sites) are generally supportive of employment development subject to certain criteria, however not directly relevant to this proposal.
- 7.5 Policy SCLP4.5 (Economic Development in Rural Areas) states:
- 'Proposals that grow and diversify the rural economy, particularly where this will secure employment locally, enable agricultural growth and diversification and other land based rural businesses, will be supported...The delivery of new buildings, structures and infrastructure that the agricultural industry requires to grow, modernise and function efficiently will be supported'.*
- 7.6 However, SCLP4.5 is a broad strategy for the Rural Areas, and it turns to more detailed development management policies to assess this proposal. Most relevant is Policy SCLP4.6: Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use, which sets out that:

*'The conversion of rural buildings to employment use will be permitted where:*

*a. The business use is of a scale and character that is appropriate to its location in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy;*

*b. The proposal does not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, local roads or the living conditions of local residents and exploits opportunities to make the location more sustainable by walking, cycling or public transport;*

*c. The proposal would not conflict with neighbouring uses;*

*d. The proposal is complementary to the setting of any historic or architecturally important buildings and reflects the form and character of the existing buildings; and*

*e. The design and construction avoids, or adequately mitigates, any adverse impact on the character of the surrounding landscape, the AONB and its setting, or the natural or historic environment.'*

- 7.7 As this proposal does not involve significant new building work, and re-uses existing large agricultural buildings, the business use is in accordance with criterion (a). The spatial strategy/settlement hierarchy at table 3.4 of the Local Plan sets out that within the Countryside the creation of employment uses through conversion of buildings is acceptable and supported by SCLP4.6.
- 7.8 The site is served by a suitable existing access and there are no objections from the Highways Authority; thus, officers consider the scheme to be acceptable in highway safety terms. In this semi-rural location travel to-and-from the site will be predominantly by car (in terms of employees) with other motor vehicles required in conjunction with the new uses. However, the site is well-related to the A14 and is not a remote or isolated location.
- 7.9 The proposal is for Class E(g)iii (Industrial processes) uses, and these are typically suitable for a residential area. Given the rural location, and that the use would be restricted by planning condition to only E(g)iii, the proposal is acceptable and will not cause harm to local living conditions/residential amenity.
- 7.10 There are no designated heritage assets affected by this proposal, and as the scheme re-uses existing buildings, there will be no wider landscape impact beyond the existing situation. The modest cabins sited adjacent the buildings are low-key and will not be notable in wider views of the site.
- 7.11 For these reasons, the scheme is in accordance with SCLP4.6.
- 7.12 The Parish Council have commented in detail on policy SCLP4.7 (Farm Diversification) however, although the applicant has mentioned diversifying income sources, the application is not made on the basis of it being a farm diversification scheme. It is a comprehensive change of use of agricultural buildings to a commercial/employment use and officers consider it to be in accordance with SCLP4.6. Whilst officers acknowledge the concern of the Parish Council that the site has moved away from an agricultural use – and would do so to an even greater extent as a result of this proposal, there is no planning policy that requires retention of agricultural buildings/uses. The Local Plan allows for conversion/re-use of buildings in the Countryside, and it is expected that this will often



involve agricultural buildings changing to a non-agricultural use. The modern nature of the agricultural buildings is noted, but all that means in practice is that these buildings are eminently convertible and likely of a size and form suitable for the proposed uses. Within the context of adjacent consented uses, the proposal is acceptable and there will still be some storage and maintenance services for agricultural machinery associated with the surrounding farmland. Indeed, the open-sided lean-to covered extension to the northernmost building subject to this application would be retained for machinery storage as granted by DC/22/2743/AGO, albeit that is a small, covered area and only ancillary to the wider employment use.

- 7.13 When assessed against the above policies and having regard to the planning history, the proposal would be in accordance with the key employment policy SCLP4.6 and the broad objectives of the employment strategy contained within the Local Plan.

Visual amenity:

- 7.14 The proposed single storey cabins represent modest additions that are unlikely to cause visual impact when read against the backdrop of the existing buildings. The scheme complies with The Framework, and policies SCLP12.34 (Strategy for the Rural Areas), SCLP10.4 (Landscape Character) or SCLP11.1 (Design Quality) of the adopted Local Plan.

Highway safety:

- 7.15 The cumulative amount of traffic generated by the proposal is considered unlikely to result in any major detriment to the local road network. The Highway Authority have not raised any objections and have otherwise stated the following:

*'...the proposed change of use benefits from an existing access that is fit for purpose. and an appropriate amount of space to accommodate parking and manoeuvrability. Therefor it is not anticipated this proposal will have a detrimental effect upon the public highway'.*

- 7.16 As such, it is found unlikely that the application holds the potential to erode highway safety below acceptable levels, when judged against the relevant provisions of the NPPF and policies SCLP7.1 (Sustainable Transport) and SCLP7.2 (Parking proposals and Standards) of the adopted development plan.

Residential amenity:

- 7.17 In consultation with the Council's Environmental Protection Team, with appropriately worded planning conditions (i.e. restricted working hours; details of fixed mechanical plant and lighting prior to installation, no outside working etc.), the scheme could be suitably controlled to enable the site to continue to function within the confines of acceptability with regard to existing neighbouring amenity, including those residing at Walk Farmhouse. Their assessment is supported by a Noise Assessment, and it is otherwise considered unlikely that the proposed application presents scope to undermine the relevant provisions of The Framework nor SCLP11.2 (Residential amenity) of the adopted Local Plan.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 The application is in accordance with The Framework and the Local Plan in so far as it would provide employment involving the re-use (mainly) of existing buildings. The development would not result in any adverse impacts on residential amenity or highway safety and is therefore acceptable.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 The application is recommended for approval with conditions.

### **Conditions:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: This condition is imposed in accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawing(s):

- 2076/23/04 Rev. B (Proposed site plan);
- 2076/23/03 Rev. A (Proposed elevations and floor plans);
- 2076/23/02 Rev. A (Existing site and location plan);
- 2076/23/01 Rev. A (Existing elevations and floor plans).

Reason: For avoidance of doubt as to what has been considered and approved.

3. The materials and finishes shall be as indicated within the submitted application and thereafter retained as such, unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development in the interests of visual amenity.

4. The working hours in connection with the hereby permitted use, shall not be other than between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday; 8pm to 1pm on Saturdays, and no work shall be carried out on Sundays, or Bank Holidays, or outside the specified hours.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and protection of the local environment.

5. No activities or processes shall be undertaken outside the buildings other than the loading and unloading of goods. There shall be no outside display or storage of any goods, materials, finished products or other articles unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and the protection of the local environment.

6. The buildings subject to this planning permission shall only be used for Class E(g)iii (Industrial processes) purposes only and for no other purpose (including any other use class of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning [Use Classes] Order 1987) (as amended) [or any Order revoking or re-enacting the said Order].

Reasons: In order that the local planning authority may retain control over this development/site in the interests of amenity and the protection of the local environment.

7. No floodlighting or other means of external lighting shall be installed at the site unless submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details submitted shall include position, operating times, details of luminaires, aiming angles and vertical and horizontal illuminance on areas outside the site. Thereafter the lighting scheme shall be implemented and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: In the interests of amenity, and protection of the local rural environment.

8. Prior to the installation of any fixed plant or machinery (e.g., heat pumps, compressors, extractor systems, air conditioning plant or refrigeration plant etc) a noise assessment shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority to include all proposed plant and machinery and be based on BS4142:2014+A1:2019). A noise rating level (LAr) of at least 5dB below the typical background sound level (LA90,T) should be achieved at the nearest noise sensitive receptor. Where the noise rating level cannot be achieved, the noise mitigation measures considered should be explained and the achievable noise level should be identified and justified.

Reason: In the interests of amenity, and protection of the local rural environment.

9. The use shall not commence until the area(s) within the site shown on drawing no. 2076/23/04 Rev. B for the purposes of loading, unloading, manoeuvring, and parking of vehicles have been fully provided and thereafter the area(s) shall be retained, maintained and used for no other purposes.

Reason: To ensure that sufficient areas for vehicles to be parked are provided in accordance with Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2019) where on-street parking and or loading, unloading, and manoeuvring would be detrimental to the safe use of the highway.

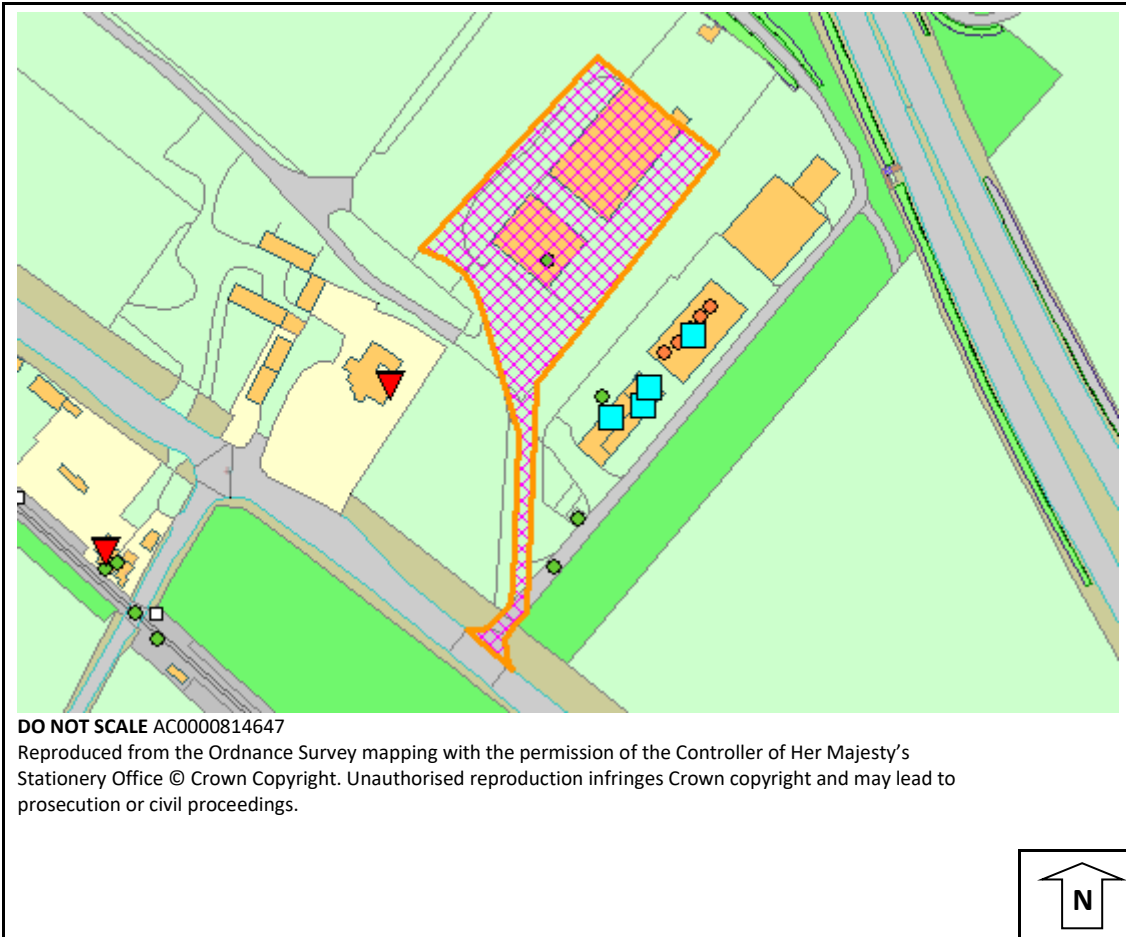
10. Before the development is brought into use, details of the areas to be provided for the secure, covered, and lit cycle storage including electric assisted cycles shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be carried out in its entirety before the development is brought into use and shall be retained thereafter and used for no other purpose. The approved scheme shall be implemented for each building prior to its first use and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To promote sustainable travel by ensuring the provision at an appropriate time and long term maintenance of adequate on-site areas and infrastructure for the storage of cycles and charging of electrically assisted cycles in accordance with Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2019).

## **Background information**

See application reference DC/23/3717/FUL on [Public Access](#)

# Map



## Key



Notified, no comments received



Objection



Representation



Support