

DCSE2006/1146/F - CREATION OF A GREEN SPACE FOR RECREATIONAL USE BY WHOLE COMMUNITY. LANDSCAPING TO CREATE TWO FLAT AREAS TO PROVIDE PLAYGROUND AND GENERAL USE AREA FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT LAND BEHIND GOODRICH SCHOOL, GOODRICH, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 6HY

For: Mrs H Amos, Clerk to Goodrich and Welsh Bicknor Parish Council, Great Trewen Farm, Llangrove, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire HR9 6ES

Date Received: 12th April 2006 Ward: Kerne Bridge Grid Ref: 57364, 19248

Expiry Date: 7th June 2006

Local Member: Councillor JG Jarvis

INTRODUCTION:

This application was included on the Committee's Agenda for 9 June 2006 but was withdrawn because of late objections from Central Networks. This electricity supply company objected to the development of a play area beneath the overhead power cables which cross the site and recommended that the power lines be undergrounded to remove the risk, particularly to children. The applicant has been in discussion with Central networks and is now confident that the problem has been resolved.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises an irregularly shaped area of land of about 0.8 ha situated to the west of Goodrich Primary School. This area of open land rises sharply from the adjoining school playing field. It is bounded to the north by housing, with agricultural land to west and south. The site appears not to have been cultivated or maintained for some time. A public footpath (GR1) and overhead power lines cross the site.
- 1.2 The current proposal is to develop a public open space. The proposal would involve some regrading to form a flat area for play and events near to the north-west corner of the site, a new fenced children's play area near the entrance to the open area and the Primary School and new planting of trees, shrubs and a wildflower meadow. New paths would criss-cross the site, opening up the area and linking to the village church.
- 1.3 The northern section of the application site to the west of the old school was allocated in the South Herefordshire District Local Plan for residential development, with the remainder to be part of the new school. Drainage problems and concerns about the suitability of the site for housing led to it being identified as "safeguarded open space" and included within the settlement boundary for Goodrich in Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft).

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Guidance

PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

Policy CTC1 - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 Policy CTC2 - Area of Great Landscape Value
 Policy LR2 - Leisure and Recreation Development

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

Policy C4 - AONB Landscape Protection
 Policy C5 - Development within AONB
 Policy C8 - Development Within Area of Great Landscape Value
 Policy R3E - Provision and Maintenance of Public Open Space and Play Areas
 Policy R5 - Improvements to existing Recreation Land and Public Open Space

2.4 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Deposit Draft)

Policy LA1 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 Policy NC8 - Habitat Creation, Restoration and Enhancement
 Policy RST1 - Criteria for Recreation, Sport and Tourism Development
 Policy RST2 - Recreation, Sport and Tourism Development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 Policy RST4 - Safeguarding Existing Open Space

3. Planning History

3.1	SE2001/0088/F	Conversion and change of use of old school building into 3 houses and construction of 2 houses on land to west.	-	Refused 6.3.01
	SE2001/2840/O	Erection of new dwellings.	-	Not determined.
	SE2005/0409/O	Residential development	-	Withdrawn

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 Central Network now advise, in summary, as follows:

- (1) We have a concern that correspondence between Central Networks, yourselves and Goodrich PC has been construed as an outright objection to the re-scheduling of the land. The intent was not to attempt to prevent the change of use of the land but to highlight the need for a plan to be put in place for the management of the overhead lines by the land occupier including working ultimately towards their removal.

- (2) We are also concerned that whilst we are able to comment on planning applications as regards the impact on our electricity distribution network we do not believe that under the planning guidelines currently in use that this is a sufficient reason to prevent development of land.
- (3) There are plans in hand to enable the undergrounding of the overhead lines the land will form the recreational area at Goodrich as a part of Central networks programme of works associated with AONBs. At the present time we hope that this work will be completed as part of our 2007 work programme, and would wish to co-ordinate our works with the landscaping activity to be carried out by Goodrich PC to avoid land disturbance on multiple occasions, and to reduce the amount of construction activities near the lines or cables.
- (4) Given that there is a clear commitment and plan in place for the undergrounding of the overhead lines, that Goodrich PC are aware of the need to manage the site in the meantime both during the construction process and afterwards, sensible and carefully controlled conversion of the existing land to village green space need not be curtailed.
- (5) Central Networks considered that Goodrich PC's proposal for dealing with the issue of potential kite flying is appropriate given the relatively short time likely to elapse between the completion of site preparation and the undergrounding of the high voltage overhead line. Central Networks will supply any required notices free of charge, subject to the Council erecting them, and we would liaise over their placement etc. We have also offered to make our Power Discover Truck, an educational resource dedicated to the education of children in the dangers associated with equipment forming part of the electricity distribution system, available to the local school.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Traffic Manager has no objection but recommends that parking provision be considered (3 or 4 spaces).
- 4.3 Parks Development Manager considers that this will be a good scheme making good use of this difficult piece of land and approves the play area situations.
 - (i) The gated play area should be as level as possible to provide disabled access.
 - (ii) A risk assessment on the stream would be beneficial.
 - (iii) Overhead cables are a risk to play and ground levels should not be raised under them and warning signs are advised.
- 4.4 Conservation Manager comments as follows:

"I have no objection to the sketch design proposals. I do think it is very important that any tree and shrub planting on the grass slope, is native species, to maintain the rural character. To this end I will require details of the proposed species. I have no objection to 'decorative' planting being undertaken along the edge of the car park area (item 17).

With regard to the proposed wildflower meadow, I have no objection to this concept, but the specification would need to be very carefully considered. It is quite difficult to

establish a wildflower meadow successfully. They require quite a high level of maintenance which will have cost implications. In addition, wildflower meadows are only in flower for a few months of the year (normally Summer), when they can look spectacular – for the remaining time they can look rather dull and unkempt.

I do not wish to discourage the Parish Council from establishing a wildflower meadow, particularly as it would increase the diversity of wildlife habitat, but I suggest that they ask their agent to prepare a detailed schedule of ground preparation, seeding and maintenance and to check the likely cost implications of on-going maintenance. Given the relatively small area of wildflower meadow proposed it is possible that voluntary labour could be used for some maintenance tasks.”

5. Representations

5.1 The applicant (Parish Council) would be leasing the land from the Council and requests that the following be noted:

- (i) Location of children's play area is recommended by Council's Parks Department as most safe and suitable location.
- (ii) Plan subject to extensive local consultation funded by Wye Valley AONB Sustainability Fund and have strong community support and involvement.
- (iii) Aimed to minimise visual impact and scope to move upper flattened area further from Endene if necessary.
- (iv) Feedback from consultation within Parish is included.

5.2 Parish Council fully supports this application. We would note than an open meeting, held recently, voted unanimously to support the application.

5.3 7 letters have been received objecting to the proposals or expressing reservations. The points made are as follows:

- (1) a vague proposal : what is intended by “general use”? Is it for village residents only?
- (2) not suitable for use by whole community and general use by children and adults
- (3) very real fear that will become a centre for inappropriate activities and behaviour especially from out of parish participants
- (4) loss of peaceful and quiet enjoyment by nearby residents (Well Cottage and Greenspace adjoin the site) of their properties
- (5) loss of security - need much more substantial fencing along boundaries with residential properties
- (6) if paths used as cycle tracks would conflict with elderly walkers
- (7) problem of supervision/policing - reliance on voluntary assistance has not always proved successful elsewhere
- (8) future costs are unknown - no decision should be made until this information is disseminated
- (9) 90 out of potentially 500 attended the open meeting - hardly a majority
- (10) in view of public subsidy should be planning gain : upgraded public footpath for wheelchair users is suggested
- (11) who is responsible for insuring the open space?
- (12) concern that works would cause movement of nearby houses.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

- 6.1 In principle the proposal accords with the emerging Unitary Development Plan. The site is not attractive in current condition and the proposals would ensure that this was remedied and the land used for the benefit of the community. The main planning issues are whether the amenities and security of adjoining residents would be affected and the safety of users of the site.
- 6.2 The two main play areas would be close to houses and the potential problem of noise and disturbance would be eased if moved further into the site. However this is constrained by the site's topography, the overhead power lines and the need for ready access. The location has been carefully considered by the Council's Parks Development Manager taking all these factors into account and the sites selected are considered the optimum. Details of boundary treatment are not shown and these could be the subject of a planning condition. Further details of planting should also be submitted.
- 6.3 The open space is intended as a local facility. There is car parking at the school and there appears to be no reason why this cannot be used outside school hours which would obviate the need for additional spaces.
- 6.4 The safety issue arises because the development of this recreational area would encourage children to play in close proximity to overhead power lines. Kite flying in particular was referred to by Central Networks' Proximity Engineer. Central Networks' full advice is included in paragraph 4.1 above. Undergrounding of these lines is part of the company's programme and should be carried out during 2007. There would therefore be only a short period between completion of the works to form the play area and the measures proposed by the parish Council to discourage kite flying are considered acceptable by Central Networks. There would not therefore be grounds to refuse permission on this issue.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1 A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2 G01 (Details of boundary treatments)

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure dwellings have satisfactory privacy.

3 G04 (Landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

4 G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

- 5 No development shall take place until details of the fencing, surfacing and play equipment forming part of the children's play area have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a safe and satisfactory play area.

Informative:

1 N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission

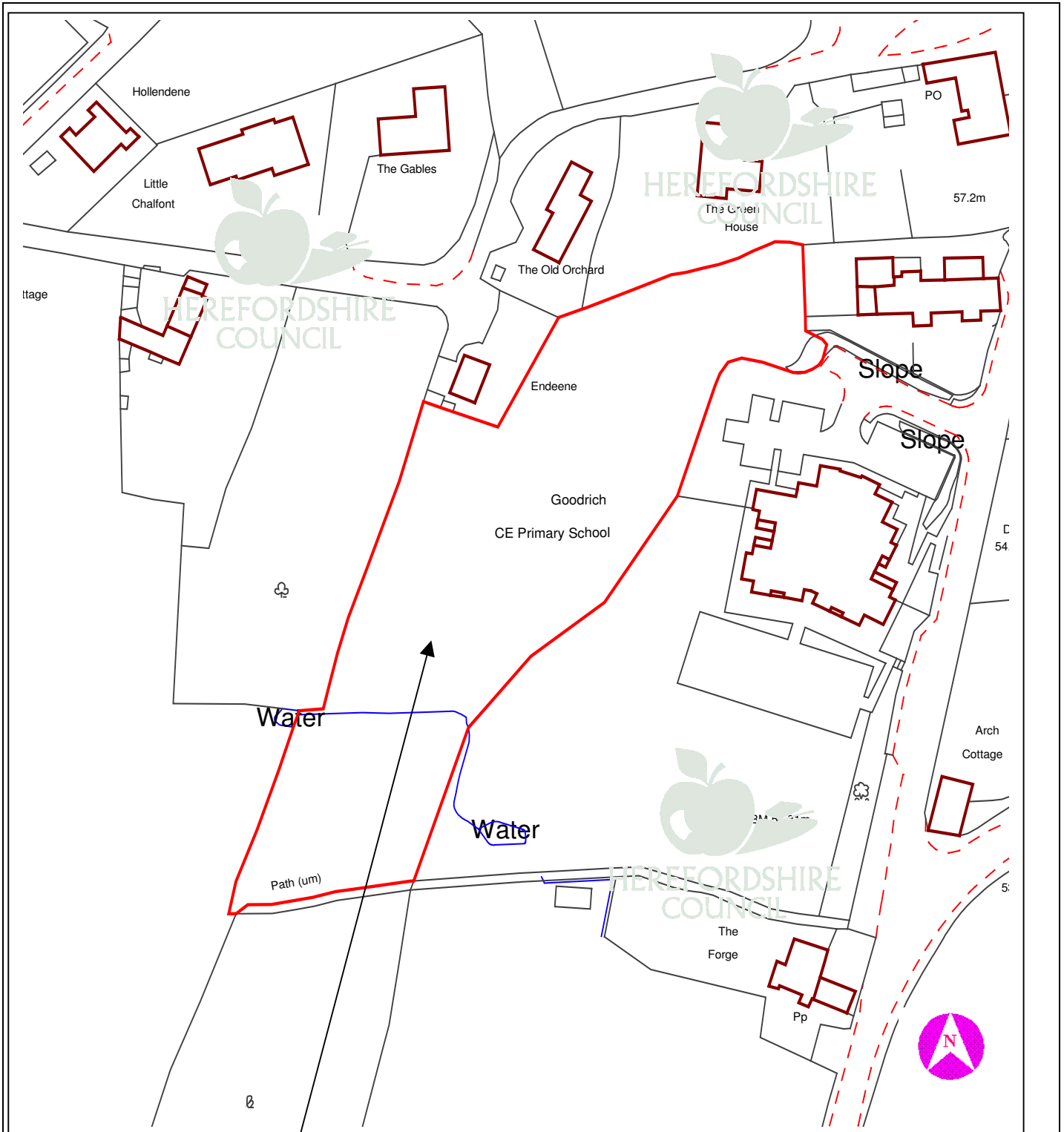
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCSE2006/1146/F

SCALE : 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : Land behind Goodrich School, Goodrich, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6HY

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