

**8 DCNE2006/4018/F - PROPOSED TRACK AND CAR PARK TO ALLOTMENT SITE AT FIELD NO'S 0363 AND 0824 OFF ROSS ROAD, LEDBURY (OPP RUGBY CLUB)****For: Ledbury Allotment Association per Mr R Gardner,  
123 Park Road, Barton Under Needwood, Staffordshire  
DE13 8DD****Date Received:  
21st December 2006****Ward: Ledbury****Grid Ref:  
70080, 36511****Expiry Date:  
15th February 2007**

Local Members: Councillors PE Harling, BF Ashton &amp; DW Rule MBE

**1. Site Description and Proposal**

- 1.1 The application site lies on the southern side of the Ross Road (A449) some 280 metres west of the settlement boundary of Ledbury. The site runs parallel to the meandering River Leadon to the east. The site lies within an area that is liable to flood.
- 1.2 The site is within the 'Riverside Meadows' landscape type as defined in the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment.
- 1.3 The Ledbury Allotments Association have the opportunity of acquiring a parcel of land amounting to approximately 4.43 acres some 800 metres to the south-west of the Ross Road. The use of land for allotments falls within the definition of 'agriculture' and as such does not require the benefit of planning permission. The application related development comprising:
  - The provision of a 3 metre wide access track with associated passing bays. This access track would have a single slight curve in it. It is envisaged that the access track would be constructed by excavating some 30cm of earth, laying 22.5 cm of Type 1 or hardcore sub-base and laying a 7.5 cm surface. The total length of this track would be in the region of 520 metres.
  - The provision of a car parking area accommodating sixteen cars.

**2. Policies****2.1 Central Government advice**

Planning Policy Statement 1 – 'Delivering Sustainable Development'  
Planning Policy Statement 7 – 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'  
Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'  
PPS25 – 'Flood Risk'

## 2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007

S1 – Sustainable Development  
S6 - Transport  
S8 – Recreation, sport and tourism  
DR2 – Land use and activity  
DR3 – Movement  
DR4 – Environment  
DR6 – Flood Risk  
T6 – Walking  
T7 – Cycling  
T11 – Parking Provision  
LA2 – Landscape Character  
RST1 – Criteria for recreation, sport and tourism development

### 3. **Planning History**

3.1 None relevant.

### 4. **Consultation Summary**

#### Statutory Consultations

4.1 The Environment Agency has no objections to the proposed development. They have also confirmed that they would not object to appropriate planting within the floodplain.

#### Internal Council Advice

4.2 The Transportation Section does not object subject to the provision of a visibility splay of 2.4 metres x 160 metres in a south-westerly direction.

4.3 The Senior Landscape Officer objects to the proposed development. His views are reflected in the appraisal below.

### 5. **Representations**

5.1 The Town Council state: 'That due to the Town Council's financial interest in the provision of allotments, determination be deferred to Herefordshire Council's Planning Officers'.

5.2 The Campaign to Protect Rural England make qualified comments upon the application but do not object to the access track.

5.3 Fifteen letters of support have been received. In summary they make the following planning points:

- a) the Ledbury Allotments Association have been searching for a site since 2005;
- b) there is a need for allotments within the Ledbury area and the likelihood of finding a more appropriate site closer to the Town at an appropriate price is limited;
- c) the site is accessible by pedestrians and cyclists;
- d) there are currently no other sites available.

- 5.4 Bill Wiggin MP would like the Council to take into consideration the strong support for the proposal.
- 5.5 Garden Organic – The National Charity for organic farming supports the proposal.
- 5.6 The occupiers of two dwellings in the vicinity (Orlham Lane) object to the proposed development on the following summarised:
- Visual intrusion of the access road; and
  - The site is not readily accessible by modes of transport other than the private motor vehicle.
- 5.7 The agent for the applicant has submitted a supporting statement and a Flood Risk Assessment. The full contents of these documents and the letters referred to above can be inspected at the Council Offices.
- 5.8 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

## **6. Officers Appraisal**

- 6.1 There is clearly a need for an allotments site within the Ledbury area. Furthermore it is evident that the provision of allotments provides a valuable informal recreational resource. It is understood that the Ledbury Allotments Association have been seeking a site since 2005 (i.e. a period of 17 months). It is understood that five other sites have been investigated and discounted. No allocation of an appropriate site was sought through the Unitary Development Plan preparation process.
- 6.2 Nevertheless, where there is a demonstrated need for such a development / facility does not mean that it should be accepted by the Council at any environmental cost. The various planning matters considerations need to be weighed-up. This includes the environmental impact of the associated development that requires the benefit of planning permission.
- 6.3 In this particular case it is considered that there are two other planning considerations that need to be weighed against the need for a site to meet the need for allotments in the Ledbury area. These are: -
- The accessibility of the site to modes of transport other than the private motor vehicle; and
  - The landscape impact of the proposed access track.
- 6.4 In terms of accessibility of the site, it is accepted that the site is readily accessible by the private motor vehicle and by cyclists. However, the site of the proposed allotments is physically remote from the primary residential areas of Ledbury. In this regard it should be noted that the site of the allotments themselves is approximately 800 metres from the settlement boundary (i.e. the Ledbury by-pass). Accessible sites for pedestrians are normally considered to be a 400 metres walk distance. The site of the proposed allotments is also in excess of a 400 metre walk distance from any bus stop, although it is accepted that in reality allotments users are unlikely to arrive by bus.

- 6.5 Given the inaccessibility of the site by pedestrians, it is considered that the location of the proposed site would create undue reliance upon the private motor vehicle and thus represents an unsustainable pattern of development, contrary to both Central Government advice and Development Plan policies.
- 6.6 In terms of landscape impact, the first point to note is that the provision of the 2.4 metre x 160 metre south-westerly visibility splay would involve the removal of the vast majority of a roadside hedge that comprises indigenous species and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the landscape. Whilst the applicant is willing to plant a replacement hedgerow to the rear of the proposed visibility splays, such a hedge would probably take some 20 years to grow to the same height as the existing hedgerow. The removal of this hedgerow would also make the proposed access track more visible from the Ross Road.
- 6.7 The site is within the 'Riverside Meadows' landscape type as defined in the Herefordshire Landscape character assessment. This landscape type is an important one defining much of the central parts of the County and is sensitive to change and easily degraded by inappropriate development.
- 6.8 Seasonally inundated riverside meadows (flood or water meadows) have a strong pastoral heritage typically used for grazing and hay production and valuable for a wide variety of flora and fauna. Modern land drainage and cropping techniques have resulted in a serious decline in the number of traditional meadows and where possible remaining grassland sites, whether permanent pasture or rotational ley, should be retained.
- 6.9 The landscape type has a strong linear character; however, the principal direction and form of linear features in the landscape is sinuous and following the natural channel of the watercourse. Riverside tree cover often reinforces this sinuous, meandering form. Fields are often defined by no more than a ditch and post and wire fence cutting at right angles from the river and terminating at the base of rising ground at the meadows edge. The change from riverside meadow to adjoining land in is usually distinct and clearly pronounced.
- 6.10 The view from the A449, when approaching from the south-west, is of a typical riverside meadow landscape; grassland, flat, with a strong sinuous linear watercourse emphasised by trees (alder and willow) and framed by rising ground to the east and west. The character of this landscape is also apparent when viewed from Orlham Lane. The fragility of this landscape is apparent when views the buildings and sports pitches to the north of the A449. In many respects this emphasises the need to safeguard those valuable riverside meadow landscapes that remain.
- 6.11 A long access track running parallel to the river is considered to be inappropriate and detrimental to the character of the area. It is considered that the only way that the access road could be satisfactorily integrated / assimilated into the landscape would be by undertaking appropriate landscaping. An example of such planting is attached as Annex 1. The Environment Agency has confirmed that they would not object to such appropriate planting that does not impede flood flow.
- 6.12 However, in this instance the applicant does not have control of any land to undertake appropriate landscaping. In addition, it should be noted that the agent for the applicant does not consider that any landscaping of the track is necessary. The agent for the applicant considers that the track will "grass over" only leaving tyre

tracks. However, given the location of the site in the flood plain and its use by motor vehicles its construction specification will need to be robust. Furthermore given that the site is not considered to be readily accessibly on foot, the track is likely to be regularly used by motor vehicles. As such, it is considered that the degree of "grassing over" is likely to be limited.

6.13 Whilst not part of the proposal under consideration, it is considered that allotments in such a remote location are likely to require the provision of equipment storage buildings. In this regard it should be noted that such buildings would not benefit from passive surveillance.

6.14 Therefore whilst there is a need for allotments in the Ledbury area, it is considered that in this particular case the environmental cost outweighs the need. It is considered that in the medium to long-term a more appropriate site may become available. Certainly through the preparation of the Development Allocations Development Plan Document the Ledbury Allotments Association could seek the allocation of land for allotment purposes.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That planning permission be refused on the following grounds:**

- 1. **The proposed access track by virtue of its siting and extent would represent a visual intrusion into the riverside meadow landscape harmful to both its character and appearance. The absence of any landscaping scheme means that the track would not be satisfactorily assimilated/integrated into the landscape. Furthermore the loss of the roadside hedge to accomodate the required south-westerly visibility splay would harm the character and appearance of the landscape. As such the proposed development is considered to be contrary to policies S1, DR4, LA2 and RST1 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007.**
- 2. **The location of the proposed development is such that it would not be readily by modes of transport other than the private motor vehicle and bicycle. As such the proposed development is considered to be in an unsustainable location contrary to policies S1, S6, S8, DR2, DR3, T6 and RST1 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007.**

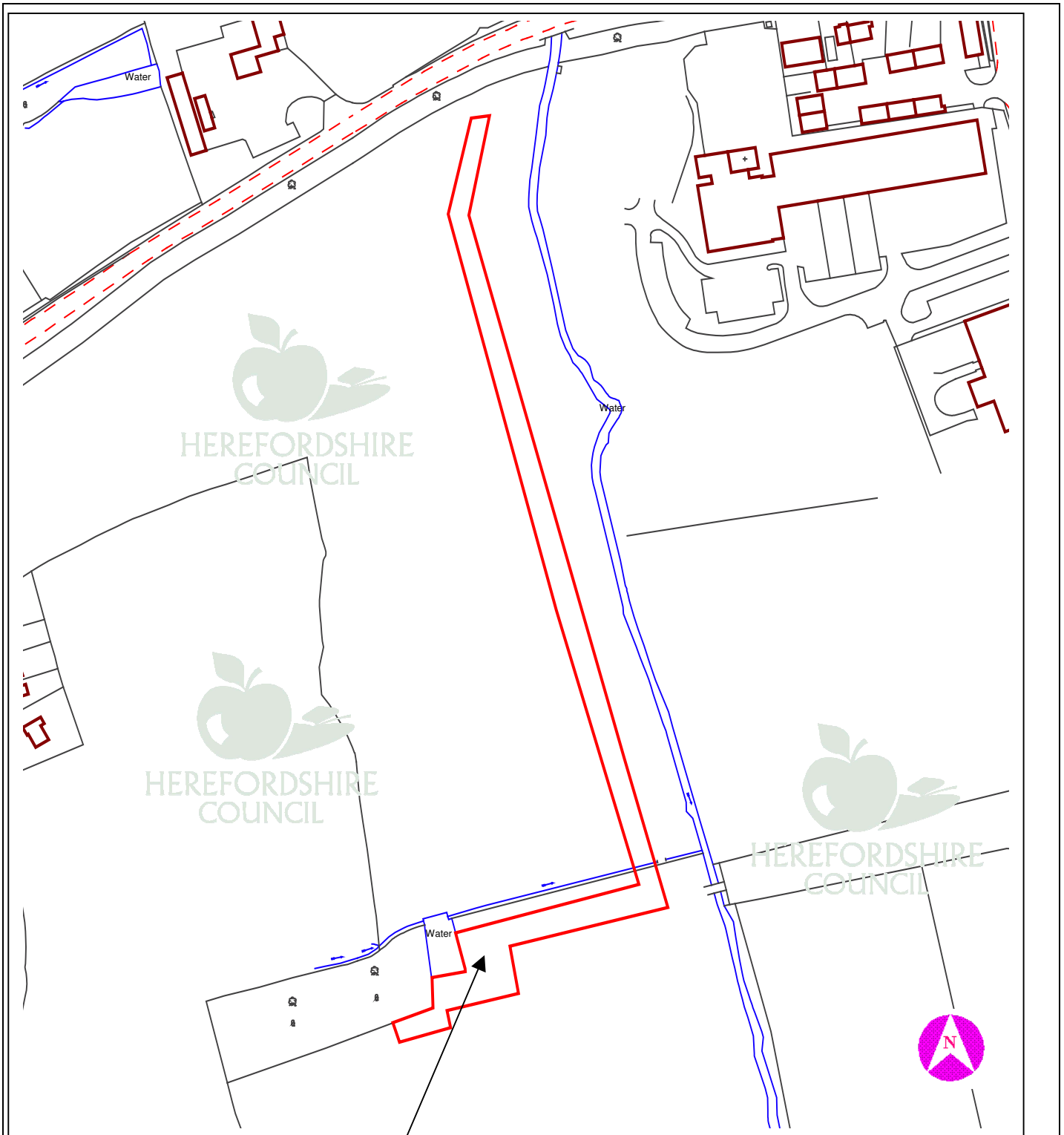
Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies



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**APPLICATION NO:** DCNE2006/4018/F

**SCALE :** 1 : 2578

**SITE ADDRESS :** Field No's 0363 and 0824 off Ross Road, Ledbury (opp Rugby Club)

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