

**7 DCCE2007/1894/F - CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO CAR STORAGE AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AT CALLOW MARSH GARAGE, GRAFTON LANE, GRAFTON, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR2 8BT****For: Callow Marsh Ltd per Kendricks, PO Box 69, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7WG****Date Received: 19th June, 2007    Ward: Hollington    Grid Ref: 49850, 35569****Expiry Date: 14th August, 2007**

Local Member: Councillor GFM Dawe

**1. Site Description and Proposal**

1.1 The site lies north west and adjacent to the A49 in the Callow area approximately 2.5 kilometres south west of Hereford City. The site is presently an agricultural field enclosed to the north, east and south by mature hedges and two semi-mature trees exist in the south west boundary of the site. Immediately south of the site is a detached dwelling known as Fairfield and the western boundary borders domestic garden associated with existing properties fronting Grafton Lane. Access to the site is via Grafton Lane running to the rear (north west) of the existing Renault Garage along a strip of hardstanding which is also used for the storage and parking of vehicles. The site falls within the open countryside as identified in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007.

1.2 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the land for the storage and parking of up to 50 new or nearly new cars associated with the adjoining Renault and SAAB dealerships. The vehicle turning and parking areas are to be surfaced with a grass reinforced system such as 'Netlon TurfGuard'. The boundaries of the site along with the adjoining area of land is to be landscaped with a mixture of native hedgerow planting, native woodland planting and orchard planting. The application is supported by a Detailed Landscape Visual Assessment, site layout, planting and surfacing plans and Ecological Survey.

**2. Policies****2.1 Planning Policy Guidance:**

PPG4 - Industrial and commercial development and small firms  
PPS7 - Sustainable development in rural areas

**2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007:**

S1 - Sustainable development  
S2 - Development requirements  
S4 - Employment  
S7 - Natural and historic heritage  
DR1 - Design  
DR2 - Land use and activity

DR3	-	Movement
DR4	-	Environment
E6	-	Expansion of existing businesses
E11	-	Employment in small settlements in the open countryside
T11	-	Parking provision
LA2	-	Landscape character in areas least resilient to change
LA6	-	Landscaping schemes
NC1	-	Biodiversity and development

### **3. Planning History**

- 3.1 CE2005/4092/F - Parking of motor vehicles. Planning Permission Refused 10th February, 2006. Reason for refusal was:

The proposed development, by virtue of its adverse visual impact upon the rural environment, landscape quality, and visual amenities is considered contrary to PPS7, South Herefordshire District Local Plan Policies C1, ED3, ED5 and GD1 as well as Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft) Policies S1, S2, S4, S7, DR1, E6, E8 and LA6.

Appeal lodged due to take place on the 4th December, 2007 pending the outcome of this application.

- 3.2 CE2003/2830/F - Change of use of land for storage of motor vehicles. Refused 12th November, 2003. Appeal dismissed 29th September, 2004.
- 3.3 CE2003/3815/F - Change of use of land for storage of motor vehicles. Refused 4th February, 2004.
- 3.4 An enforcement notice was also served on 20th June, 2006. Appeal lodged due to take place on the 4th December, 2007 pending the outcome of this application.

### **4. Consultation Summary**

#### Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Highways Agency: The proposal itself will only marginally increase traffic generated. Therefore the Highways Agency considers that the proposal will have no detrimental impact on the A49.

#### Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Traffic Manager: The access and turning area must be kept clear at all times and delivery transporters must be supervised during the reversing operation to maintain public safety.
- 4.3 Conservation Manager - Ecology:  
I note that the Ecological Survey was undertaken in December 2006 which is not a recommended time of year to assess unimproved grassland. I note a number of difference species and grasses were found in the preliminary survey and therefore an up to date survey of grassland is required. Low land meadow and pasture is a BAP Habitat and I would not recommend development upon the site if the site proves to be unimproved grassland.

Further survey work is also required to establish the presence of reptiles which should be undertaken prior to determination of the application and then an appropriate mitigation strategy developed if found present.

I accept the findings that the nearby pond is not suitable for great crested newts. I appreciate that the proposals do not cover the whole of the site and that significant landscaping is proposed. I also note that the southern part of the site is already used for parked cars and there is little grassland of value in this area. If the application is approved, I recommend that some areas of open grassland are maintained rather than planting shrubs and trees throughout.

#### 4.4 Conservation Manager - Landscaping and Biodiversity:

The area is described as Wooded Estate Lands in the Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document. If it is determined that the proposed is acceptable in principle, then the landscape proposals shown on the site concept plan are appropriate. The site concept plans have clearly been generated from the assessment of the surrounding landscape character and the visibility of the site. It responds to both the constraints and opportunities offered by the site in particular the opportunity to strengthen and restore the landscape character of wooded estate lands through hedgerow planting, native broadleaf woodland and orchard planting. The proposed orchard planting would both replace the historic orchard planting that has been lost from this area and it would help to filter views into the site from elevated view points.

I note that a detailed landscape scheme has not been submitted with the application. Full details of the proposed surfacing and the tree and shrub species, sizes and planting densities will be required. With regard to surfacing of the site, I recommend that grass reinforced systems should be used as this type of surfacing would be in keeping with the rural character of the area. Accordingly there should be a requirement to remove any loose surfacing on the site at present, to prepare the ground and re-seed with grass as necessary to install a grass reinforced system. It is important that the grass reinforced system is installed at the outset to prevent any erosion of the site.

#### 4.5 Comments on additional landscape and planting proposals:

There are three key landscape issues to consider. Firstly, there is the issue of landscape character – what is the character of the existing landscape and the degree of harm that the proposed development would cause to the character of the landscape. Secondly, there is the issue of the visibility of the site and the degree of adverse visual impact of the proposed development. Thirdly, the degree of mitigation that could be achieved, through a landscape scheme, needs to be considered.

##### Landscape character

It is asserted in the Landscape and Visual Assessment (May 2006) that the existing development at Portway has already reduced the rural character of the appeal site and the surrounding landscape and the proposed car storage area will therefore have a negligible adverse visual impact. I do not concur entirely with this view. In terms of assessing the proposed development in the wider context, the existing garage showrooms and external sales/parking areas at Portway, being quite large in scale and commercial in character are not consistent with the prevailing character of the landscape type Wooded Estate lands, which is described as '*wooded agricultural*

*landscapes of isolated farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional small estate villages'.*

#### Visual impact issues

With regards to the Landscape and Visual Assessment, I am in agreement with the identification of the three viewpoints from which the proposals could be considered to result in the most significant impact. These locations are: views from the A49 approaching the application site from the north, views from higher ground to the east between Hopley's and Reece's Woods and views from higher ground to the north-east on Ridge Hill.

#### Mitigation

Dealing first with the issue of planting to screen the development, I agree that views into the site from the A49 and from Ridge Hill would be screened by the proposed planting, although parked cars on the site would be more visible in winter, when hedgerows and trees are not in leaf. However, there will still be limited views of the parked cars from the higher ground to the east, between Hopley's and Reeces's Woods, although the proposed planting of orchard trees along the A49 frontage and of the Field Maples within the parking area will filter and break up the views of the cars. The proposed planting scheme will, therefore, mitigate against the adverse visual impact of the development to a large degree.

With regard to the landscape details, the proposals for planting, surfacing, drainage and boundary treatments relate well to the rural context and are all appropriate for the landscape type Wooded Estatelands. The landscape scheme is the best scheme that could be achieved on this site. From a landscape perspective, while I do have some reservations about the principle of expanding the car storage area in a rural area, I consider that the submitted landscape scheme mitigates against any adverse visual impact to an acceptable degree.

## **5. Representations**

5.1 Grafton and Haywood Parish Council: The Parish Council strongly object to this application and ask that it be refused for the following reasons:

1. The development is inappropriate for this green field rural location.
2. The site has been used for the parking of cars since the first application with a gradual increase in cars being parked, at present there are 30 cars. This has been a constant cause of complaint from local residents to the Parish Council.
3. The acces is also a constant concern with vehicles being unloaded on the highway blocking the bus stop near a dangerous junction.
4. Residents complain about loss of sleep due to vehicles delivering parts to the car dealership.
5. This is a rural setting and the car dealerships are not concerned about environmental issues or the amenity of residents in the area.

Comments awaited on additional information.

5.2 Six letters of objection have been received, four from local residents and one from the Herefordshire Branch for the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the main points raised are:

1. The site access is unsafe being located so close to a busy junction with little space for the manoeuvring of car transporters who currently regularly block the highway.
  2. The application is a ploy to enable the enlargement of the existing garage development leading to creeping industrialisation into the countryside.
  3. The development will adversely affect the amenity of properties in the locality.
  4. If the garage requires additional space they should seek more suitable premises in a more appropriate location.
  5. The approval of this application will inevitably lead for a request for a permanent building on site.
  6. The development will lead to the need for additional lighting further increasing light pollution.
  7. The development will change the character of the area from residential to commercial.
  8. The development will lead to increased noise from compressors, washers, tannoy systems and car alarms.
  9. The development will lead to increased run-off water on to adjacent properties and their gardens, a situation which is already occurring.
  10. The local highway network of lanes is not suitable to accommodate any increased traffic to and from the site.
  11. The development will result in further devaluation of existing properties in the area.
  12. The site is not a brownfield site.
- 5.3 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Central Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

## **6. Officers Appraisal**

- 6.1 The most recent use of the application site is agriculture but it is understood that the land has not been used for agricultural purposes for several years. Nevertheless, the planning land use of the application site is agricultural land. Furthermore, the site falls within the open countryside where there is a general presumption against inappropriate development that would lead to the deterioration of the landscape character of the area. Therefore any further encroachment into the countryside with development associated with the adjoining car garages must be carefully considered. Section three of the report details the planning history where it can be seen that several applications for similar proposals have been refused and an appeal dismissed. In all instances, however the key issue was considered to be the visual and landscape impact of the proposed change of use to car storage.
- 6.2 In order to address the visual and landscape impact the applicants have undertaken a detailed landscape assessment which illustrates the impact and visual prominence of the proposed site both locally and from wider vantage points. This assessment has then informed the detailed planting proposals required to mitigate any visual or landscape impact. The site area is now around half that which was dismissed on appeal in 2004 although it is the same site area as was considered under the more recent application, refused in early 2006. The proposed capacity of the site is 50 cars and detailed layout plans have been provided illustrating how 50 cars can be accommodated on the site. The plans enable the existing boundaries to the south and east to be strengthened with additional hedgerow and orchard planting with further tree planting along the western boundary. To mitigate the impact further the remainder of the field (also within the applicants ownership) is to be comprehensively landscaped to

integrate with existing field hedgerows. The proposals include further orchard planting and woodland tree planting. The detailed landscape and planting proposals are supported by the Council's Landscape Officer.

- 6.3 The applicants have also provided a HGV Tracking Plan to demonstrate that with the revisions to the existing parking arrangements on site; a HGV car transporter can enter and leave the site in a forward gear. This will result in a highway gain as the HGVs currently have to off-load vehicles on the highway. The existing access from the site directly on to the A49 is to be permanently closed. A grass re-inforced system will be used to provide a hard surface for parts of the site. There is therefore unlikely to be any additional runoff. Nevertheless, an open ditch is proposed along the western boundary to intercept any runoff that may occur. Other matters and concerns raised by the objectors and the Parish Council can be dealt with by conditions such as limitation on illumination and unloading/loading restrictions.
- 6.4 Whilst there remain concerns with the principle and associated landscape impact of allowing the encroachment of the existing commercial garage use into the countryside, the landscape officers previous objections have been addressed and overcome and therefore the revised scheme is considered acceptable. This is subject to the submission of further ecological surveys addressing the ecologist concerns. The consultation period on the additional landscape and planting information has not expired and therefore any further representations received will be reported verbally to Committee.

## RECOMMENDATION

**Subject to no further objections raising additional material planning considerations by the end of the consultation period and the receipt of satisfactory further Ecological Surveys, the officers named in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers be authorised to issue planning permission subject to the following conditions and any additional conditions considered necessary be officers:**

1. **E01 (Restriction on hours of working).**  
**Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the locality.**
2. **E02 (Restriction on hours of delivery).**  
**Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the locality.**
3. **E06 (Restriction on Use).**  
**Reason: The local planning authority wish to control the specific use of the land/premises, in the interest of local amenity.**
4. **No servicing of the site or loading or unloading of cars or other vehicles shall take place on, or from, the public highway.**  
**Reason: In the interests of highway safety.**
5. **The motor car storage use hereby approved shall remain ancillary to the existing car dealership (edged blue in the application particulars) and shall not at any time be occupied as a separate and independent commercial or business unit.**

**Reason: To accord with the terms of the application and safeguard the countryside from inappropriate development.**

- 6. No surfacing materials shall be applied to the site (including bound or unbound materials) without the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority.**

**Reason: To accord with the terms of the application and safeguard the amenities of the countryside.**

- 7. There shall be no discharge of foul or contaminated drainage from the site into either ground water or any surface waters, whether direct or via soakaways.**

**Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment.**

- 8. F32 (Details of floodlighting/external lighting).**

**Reason: To safeguard local amenities.**

- 9. G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general)).**

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

- 10. H13 (Access, turning area and parking).**

**Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure the free flow of traffic using the adjoining highway.**

**Informatives:**

- 1. N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC.**
- 2. N19 - Avoidance of doubt.**

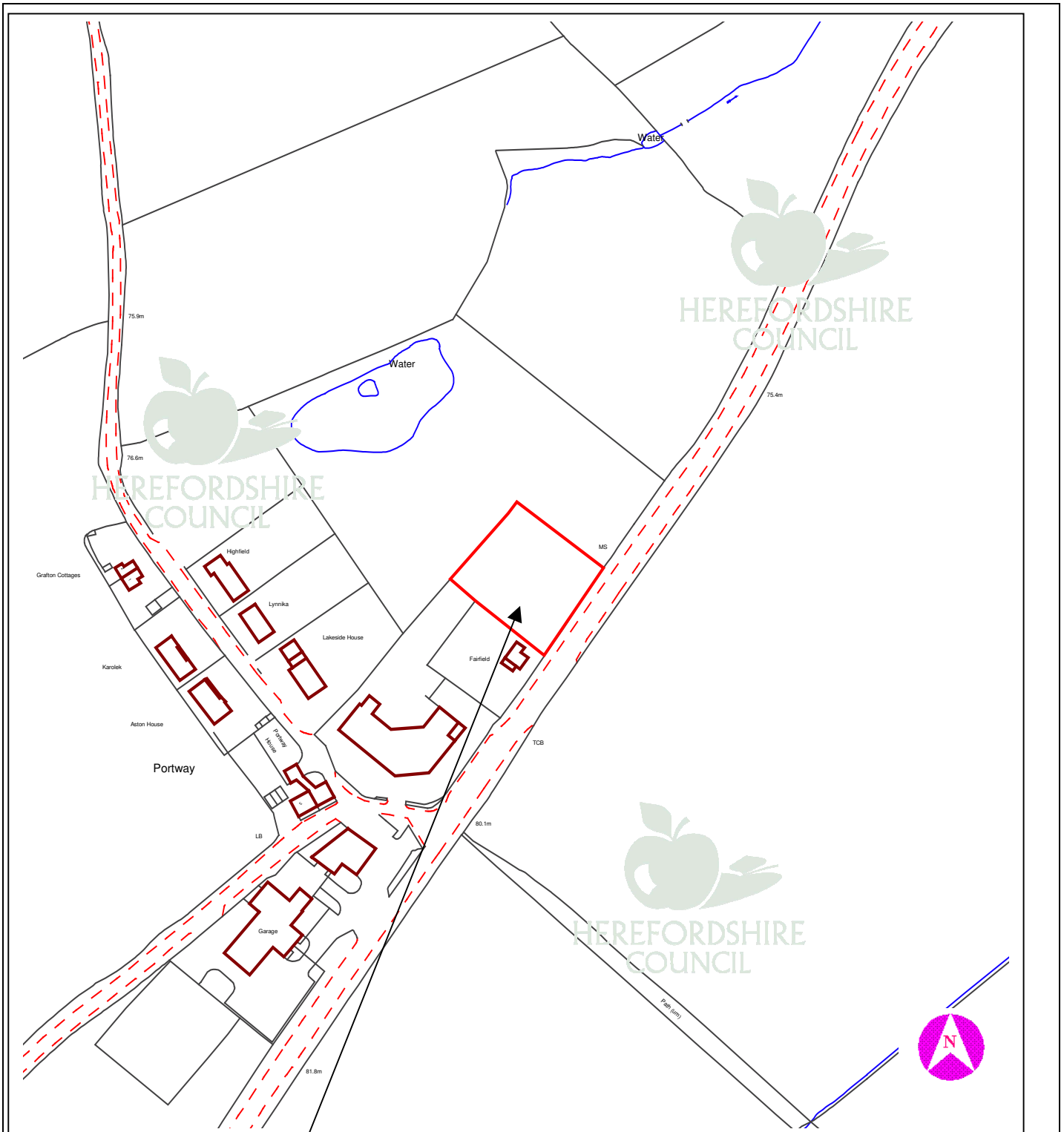
Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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**APPLICATION NO:** DCCE2007/1894/F

**SCALE :** 1 : 2500

**SITE ADDRESS :** Callow Marsh Garage, Grafton Lane, Grafton, Herefordshire HR2 8BT

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