

10 SE2003/1002/F – PROPOSED BUILDING FOR THE STORAGE AND REPAIRS OF AGRICULTURAL, HORTICULTURAL, AUTOMATIVE AND PLANT MACHINERY

For: Mr S Cole per RPS Ltd, Park House, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff, CF10 3AF

11 DCSE2003/2157/F - RETENTION OF EXISTING REPLACEMENT HAY BARN, HARDSTANDING AND TERRACE

THORNY ORCHARD, PART OS 8691, COUGHTON, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE

For: Mr S Cole per C F Knock, 22 Aston Court, Aston Ingham, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7LS

Date Received: 16th July 2003 Ward: Kerne Bridge Grid Ref: 5988 20885
Expiry Date: 10th September 2003

Local Member: Councillor Mrs. R. F. Lincoln

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The site to which these applications relate is a roughly triangular area of land lying on the south-east side of the unclassified road leading from Coughton up Howle Hill. The site is approximately 0.9ha. in area. It is about half way up the hill with the wooded hillside rising to the south-east.
- 1.2 Various building and engineering operations have been undertaken and the applications are (i) to regularise these and (ii) for the erection of a new building for storage and repair of agricultural, horticultural, automotive and plant machinery. The earlier application (SE2003/1002/F) refers to the formation of a terrace or platform, improvements to the access and turning radius, closure of two other accesses onto the adjacent highway, storage shed and landscaping including a bund. The shed would be about 46m long x 10.7m wide x 7.7m to ridge. The later application (DCSE2003/2157/F) is for retention of a hay barn, hardstanding and terrace. The barn is 13.7m x 6.4m x about 4.8m high (maximum height). The external materials are grey corrugated sheets with a grey profiled sheet roof.
- 1.3 It is understood that the use of land at Orchard House for agricultural and haulage contractors business would transfer to the new site and the former be returned to agricultural use.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Guidance

- PPG.7 - The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

- Policy CTC.1 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy CTC.2 - Areas of Great Landscape Value
Policy E.6 - Industrial Development in Rural Areas
Policy A.3 - Agricultural Buildings

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

- Policy C.1 - Development within Open Countryside
Policy C.2 - Settlement Boundaries
Policy C.4 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Protection
Policy C.5 - Development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy C.6 - Landscape and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy C.8 - Development within Area of Great Landscape Value
Policy C.9 - Landscape Features
Policy C.11 - Protection of Best Agricultural Land
Policy ED.5 - Expansion of Existing Businesses
Policy ED.6 - Employment in the Countryside
Policy ED.9 - New Agricultural Buildings
Policy GD.1 - General Development Criteria
Policy T.3 - Highway Safety Requirements

2.4 Unitary Development Plan – Deposit Draft

- Policy S.7 - Natural and Historic Heritage
Policy LA.1 - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy LA.2 - Landscape Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change
Policy E.6 - Expansion of Existing Businesses
Policy E.8 - Design Standards for Employment Sites
Policy E.11 - Employment in the Countryside

3. Planning History

- 3.1 There have not been any recent applications relating to this site.

4. Consultation Summary

- 4.1 No statutory or non-statutory consultations required.

Responses by internal consultees that raise material planning issues are summarised and considered in the Officers Appraisal.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Walford Parish Council observe in respect of SE2003/1002/F:

"As far as the provisions under Policy GD.1 are understood by the Parish Council, there seems to be no reason to build a large commercial building in open country in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on an elevated site and with a narrow, twisting access road. The impact of the recently built 'replacement' barn, two or three times the size and height of the original wooden shed, and which is not part of the current application, has been noted. If retrospective consent is given for the earth-moving/hardstandings and for this building, the Parish Council ask that the following points be taken into consideration:

The building is so large that a condition be made not to allow machinery to be left out in the open; that no outside floodlighting be permitted, that the bunds be planted with native species, not conifers; that the work shop be sound-proofed; that note be taken of possible damage to WA50 from the newly-carved-away drop. It was noted that local electors who attended the site meeting were all in favour of the new building apparently because it would aid the clear up of the field next to Orchard House."

5.2 Walford Parish Council observe in respect of DCSE2003/2157/F:

"The majority of councillors did not have objections to the retention of the replacement barn, although some objected to the height of the new building erected without consent on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty elevated site. There were vehement objections to the terracing and hardstanding given that its intended uses are now obvious from Planning Application SE2003/1002/F. It conflicts with policies GD.1, i, ii, iii, vi, ix, xi, xvii and xviii in that the site is visually obtrusive in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the access will cause dangers on the narrow twisting road. It was noted that at the site meeting on 6th July, cars had difficulty negotiating the exit on to the U70416."

5.3 In respect of SE2003/1002/F the applicant's agent makes detailed submissions which are included in full in the Appendix to this report.

5.4 In respect of DCSE2003/2157/F:

"The applicant's agent points out that the building is slightly larger than the original building in order to accommodate the larger size hay bales both square and round shape. the external materials are the same as the original barn."

5.5 A petition (85 signatories from 67 addresses) has been received in support of planning application SE2003/1002/F.

5.6 In addition, 14 letters of support have been received. The following reasons are given:

- create local employment (2 new jobs)
- support local farming community – many farms, as well as businesses and householders rely on the applicant for repairs, contract work and hire of earth moving equipment; 90% of his work is within 10 mile radius
- would ensure existing site next to Orchard House was cleared
- new site is less visible; building would not be seen from road and no noticeable impact on landscape
- all services exist or are readily available; would be secure site both as regard equipment and safety of children; highway aspect agreed by Council's Transportation Unit; vehicle movements would be kept to a minimum
- majority of local people support proposal for above reasons

- only field applicant owns and he needs to diversify, develop and consolidate his business
 - his personal qualities are referred to; very honest and hard working.
- 5.7 5 letters of objection have been received. The following is a summary of the representations:
- this development is not appropriate in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and would conflict with policy (GD.1), intentions for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (presumably to protect its natural beauty) and initiatives to encourage tourism (by allowing an eyesore)
 - up to 2 years (6 years according to one letter) the field was open pasture and extensive earth moving has created plateau and used for storage of builder's rubble, with much of soil taken off the site
 - all presumably without planning permission
 - earth moving itself detrimental to landscape and effectiveness of tree planting on top of bund is questioned; site and new building would be clearly visible from Ross – Walford road and public footpath and no amount of landscaping will hide this blot on landscape
 - machinery may be stored outside as well as waste materials and liquids, further harming Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - this could set precedent for further development in Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, exacerbating harm identified above
 - site is awkwardly placed near blind bend on narrow road and half way up a hillside with traffic speeding downhill – turning movements of large machinery into and off site and trying to pass other large vehicles would cause considerable problems and compromise highway safety; totally inappropriate on highway grounds
 - next step will be application for dwelling
 - existing house turned into plant yard and eyesore with combine harvesters under polythene tunnels. Field (which?) must be returned to agricultural use
 - Walford Residents Association endorse the Parish Council's observations.
- 5.8 In respect of DCSE2003/2157/F one of the above letters of objection points out that the new hay barn replaces a sheep shelter that was 15' square by 6' tall, a quarter of the size of the new building.

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. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 Although two separate applications have been submitted there are obvious overlaps, for example, same application site and retention of engineering works. Nevertheless the applications are considered separately in order of receipt.

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- 6.2 There are three main issues to be considered, firstly the relevant policies and the need for the building, secondly the impact on the landscape and thirdly highway safety.
- 6.3 Both the County Structure Plan (HWCSP) and Local Plan (SHDLP) (Policies E.6 and ED.5 respectively) encourage the expansion of existing businesses. The latter specifically refers to expansion on new sites as follows:

'In its efforts to promote economic development, the Council will support appropriate proposals to develop a new site when existing businesses have outgrown their original sites and operate in cramped conditions to the detriment of surrounding residents and other land users. The Council will also support the expansion of a business activity in a settlement or countryside location where this will not give rise to serious environmental problems or have a damaging effect upon the landscape or nature conservation.'

There is clearly an existing business operated from the field adjoining Orchard House but insufficient evidence has been submitted on two occasions to satisfy the Council that this use, which started without planning permission, has now become lawful. As the use is unauthorised it is considered that the above policies do not apply. The erection of a new commercial building is referred to specifically or by inference in Policies C.1 and ED.6 (SHDLP) and in both cases it is specifically stated that "special justification" is required. Policy ED.6 reads as follows:

POLICY ED.6
Employment in the
countryside

"WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE, PROPOSALS FOR EMPLOYMENT-GENERATING USES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ARE FOR SMALL SCALE PROJECTS ON APPROPRIATE SITES WHICH ACCORD WITH THE COUNTRYSIDE POLICIES OF THE PLAN, AND ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:-

- (i) THE DEVELOPMENT IS REQUIRED FOR THE ESSENTIAL OPERATION OF AGRICULTURE OR FORESTRY OR THE WINNING OF MINERALS; OR
- (ii) THE PROPOSAL IS FOR A FARM DIVERSIFICATION OR TOURISM PROJECT WHERE NO OTHER SITE EXISTS IN OR ADJOINING A SETTLEMENT AND WHICH ACCORDS WITH POLICY ED.8 AND POLICY TM.1 RESPECTIVELY; OR
- (iii) THE PROPOSAL IS FOR A REUSE OR ADAPTATION OF A RURAL BUILDING IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY ED.7;

NEW DEVELOPMENT OR BUILDINGS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED PROVIDING IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR THE RE-USE OR ADAPTATION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND SUCH NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD PREFERABLY BE LOCATED EITHER WITHIN OR ADJOINING EXISTING BUILT DEVELOPMENT. **A REASONED JUSTIFICATION WILL NEED TO BE SUBMITTED WITH ANY PROPOSALS OF THIS TYPE DEMONSTRATING WHY AN EXCEPTION TO COUNTRYSIDE POLICY SHOULD BE MADE. PROPOSALS FOR SUCH DEVELOPMENT SHOULD ALSO BE IN UNOBTRUSIVE LOCATIONS CAUSING NO ADVERSE IMPACT UPON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, THE ROAD NETWORK OR LOCAL AMENITY."**

- 6.4 The reasons put forward in support of the proposal refer to the need to find an alternative site, that attempts to secure premises locally have been unsuccessful and that this is the only land available. Furthermore, it is pointed out that the business serves the local farming community and other businesses and would create additional employment. Relocation into a secure building away from houses would allow the land at Orchard House to be returned to agriculture thus improving the appearance of the area. It can be accepted that the business is conveniently located in the countryside but it does not seem to be essential. The business serves non-farming enterprises as well as local farms, according to the representations. Both the existing land and the

relocation site are in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in which priority is given to protecting the natural beauty of the countryside. The effect on the landscape is thus critical to whether an exception should be made to the policy that new commercial buildings should not normally be constructed in the open countryside.

- 6.5 In order to screen this sizeable building an earth bund would be necessary, which would be about 5m above existing ground level and the site of the building has been excavated up to 4m below the original ground level. In addition a new wider vehicular access and turning area would be required. These engineering works would alter substantially in contour the character and appearance of this former pasture, introducing angular and alien shapes into the countryside and further tarmacadam surfacing. These would all be highly visible and yet the building would not be screened from public view as there is a public footpath which passes just within the adjoining woodland along the south-east boundary. It is considered that this would seriously harm the natural beauty of this part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 6.6 The access could meet the requirements of the Council's Head of Engineering and Transportation who is satisfied that highway safety would not be compromised. However as noted above the access and turning area would require significant engineering works, involving further loss of hedgerow. Thus whilst this is not in itself grounds for refusal it would add to the harm to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 6.7 It is concluded that the harm to the countryside would be sufficiently serious as to outweigh any benefits from the development. The criteria in Policies ED.3, 5 and 6 for acceptable development in the countryside would not therefore be met and it is not considered that the case for making an exception has been made.

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- 6.8 The appraisal of the engineering operations above are relevant also to this application. The retention of the hay barn has not been discussed however. This is significantly larger than the demolished structure. It is not of attractive appearance, although a coat of paint would help, and is sited on top of a steep bank. It is not screened effectively by the hedgerow and is conspicuous from the adjoining road, as well as the public footpath. It is not clear that the hay barn is appropriately sited for agriculture, as most of the field is proposed for non-agricultural use and presumably the hay is grown or used on other parts of the applicants agricultural unit.

RECOMMENDATION

In respect of SE2003/1002/F

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1. The Council does not consider that there is special justification for a new building in open countryside in view of the serious harm that would be caused to the natural beauty of the landscape which is within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and defined as of Great Landscape Value. The proposal would conflict therefore with Policies E.6, CTC.1 and CTC.2 of Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan and ED.5, ED.6, C.1, C.5, C.6 and C.8 of South Herefordshire District Local Plan.**

In respect of DCSE2003/2157/F

That planning permission be refused for the following reason:

1. The hay barn, hardstanding and terracing are prominently sited within open countryside and seriously harm the character and appearance of this part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Retention would therefore conflict with Policies E.6, A.3, CTC.1 and CTC.2 of the Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan and ED.5, ED.6, ED.9, C.1, C.5, C.6 and C.8 of South Herefordshire District Local Plan.

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.