

6 DCNW2008/0927/F - PROPOSED SITING OF THREE LODGE UNITS FOR HOLIDAY USE TOGETHER WITH ACCESS DRIVE, CAR PARKING AND SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT AT BELLWOOD, SHOBDON, LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 9NJ

**For: Mr & Mrs R Stokes per Bryan Thomas
Architectural Design Ltd The Malt House Shobdon
Leominster Herefordshire HR6 9NL**

Date Received: 28 March 2008

**Ward: Pembridge &
Lyonshall with Titley**

Grid Ref: 38975, 63206

Expiry Date: 23 May 2008

Local Member: Councillor RJ Phillips

Update:

A committee site visit was held on the 15 July 2008.

Verbal Updates were made at the last committee. These have now been included in this report, including the change to the recommendation regarding the potential ecological impact.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises a parcel of land approximately 1.5 hectares in size that lies to the east of the dwelling and business premises known as Bellwood. The site is accessed from an unclassified road approximately 1Km from the B4362 (Shobdon to Presteigne). The site is accessed using an existing vehicular existing access point. The site itself lies to the North of an existing pond within which has some existing trees along the Southern Boundary.
- 1.2 The proposal is for the siting of three mobile home type holiday lodges units (approximately 11.4m by 6.1m and capable of sleeping up to six people), together with a new access road, parking area, landscaping and packaged treatment plant. The site is described as being situated just to the South of Shobdon Wood, close to the Mortimer trail and Shobdon loop walk. The proposed development is described in the Design and Access Statement as being able to provide comfortable accommodation for walkers using the trail and others wishing to holiday in North Herefordshire.

2. Policies

Unitary Development Plan (2007)

S1 - Sustainable development
S7 - Natural and historic heritage
S8 - Recreation, Sport and Tourism
DR2 - Land use and activity
DR3 - Movement

E12 - Farm Diversification
LA2 - Landscape character and areas least resilient to change
LA4 - Protection of historic paths and gardens
LA6 - Landscaping Schemes
NC1 - Biodiversity and development
RST12 - Visitor Accommodation
RST13 - Rural and farm tourism development
RST14 - Static Caravans, chalets, camping and touring caravan sites

National Planning Policy:

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS 7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG13 - Transport

Good Practice Guide on Planning and Tourism

3. Planning History

- 3.1 2008/0128/F - Siting of three lodge units for holiday use together with access drive, car parking and treatment plant - withdrawn 4th March 2008
- 3.2 N99/0154/N - Extension to agricultural contractors workshop - approved 07-jul-1999
- 3.3 96/0708 - erection of dwelling and change of use of workshop to agricultural contracting business -approved with conditions - 12-nov-1996

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 No statutory or non statutory consultations required.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Internal Council Advice
- 4.3 The Transportation Manager makes the following comments:

Recommends refusal for the following reasons: No variation is proposed to the previous application. Visibility achievable is below standard and as the proposal would result in the intensification of use of the access, highway safety would be compromised.

- 4.4 The Conservation Manager makes the following comments:

(Landscape)

Thank you for consulting us on the above application, in response I would like to make the following comments:

- The application recognises the proximity of Shobdon Wood and the Mortimer Trail and whilst this is undoubtedly some justification for locating holiday accommodation, it also serves to highlight both the sensitivity and value of the

surrounding landscape. The site is located in the '*Principal Wooded Hills*' landscape type as identified in the Herefordshire Landscape Character assessment. This is a landscape, in part, defined by the dispersed settlement pattern and lack of buildings and structures. The landscape is heavily influenced by the proximity to the extensive woodland cover on the ridge of hills running from Ludlow to Kington, generally referred to as the Mortimer Forest.

- The condition of the landscape is generally good with few incongruous introductions visible, with the exception of a nearby poultry unit, and many historic features retained. However, the pressures of intensive agriculture are marked and the general change in the landscape is likely to be negative; loss of field boundary trees, reduction in hedgerow condition and coniferisation of woodland. To this end the landscape has a degree of sensitivity to change.
- The few buildings that are visible in this landscape tend to be of traditional scale and construction or associated with agriculture. From the site only two other buildings/groups of buildings are inter-visible; the storage unit at the Forestry Commission site and a small farm unit to the north-east. Medium distance views of the site, although partially screened by existing vegetation will be gained from both the road and the lower edges of Shobdon Wood with more extensive views across central Herefordshire in the distance. Close views will be gained from an adjacent public right of way. Furthermore, the introduction of additional car parking and a stoned/gravel drive would result in a domestication of the informal landscaped area to the east of the main house.
- As the proposed units are neither traditional in size nor scale and would be visible within a sensitive landscape and from a number of vantage points, I consider the application to have failed the criteria laid out in policy LA2 of the UDP (amongst others).

4.5 (Ecology)

As discussed earlier, I visited the site today, and thought that there was potential for great crested newts to be present. The new access track may affect GCN terrestrial habitat, and I recommend that further information is provided as to whether they are present. If found to be present, a mitigation strategy will also be required.

Reason: To comply with UDP Policies NC1 and NC5 with regard to the impact of development upon protected species.

5. Representations

5.1 Shobdon Parish Council make the following comments:

Has no objection providing run-off water enters the existing pool and does not drain into the surrounding fields. Also any outside lighting is sympathetic to the Countryside area.

5.2 A letter of representation has been received from Mr Simon Arbuthnott, Belgate House, Shobdon whose comments/objections were later formally withdrawn.

5.3 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. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The main issues for consideration in the appraisal of this proposal are:

- The policies and principle of the change of use of land from agriculture to a holiday lodge / chalet park
- Sustainability of location
- Landscape Impact in relation to scale and character
- Ecology

Policies and principles

6.2 There are policies of the UDP which are broadly supportive of such proposals and these chalet / caravans parks can be successful tourism based facilities within the County where of an appropriate scale and in a suitable location.

6.3 Policy RST14 of the Unitary Development Plans deals explicitly with the creation of new chalet and caravan sites. In particular new parks will not be permitted where they would cause harm to the character and appearance of the countryside. In other locations the success of proposals will depend on a number of criteria. Amongst others these include requirement that the site is well screened, or capable of being screened, from roads viewpoints and other public places. The proposal would also need to be of a scale, which relates sensitively to its location, is well laid out, designed and landscaped. Traffic generated must be safely accommodated on the local highway network and arrangements must be made to ensure that the units are retained for holiday use.

6.4 Planning Policy Statement 7 sets out the governments specific objectives to promote sustainable patterns of development in rural areas. It recognises that diversification into non-agricultural activities is vital to the continued viability of many farm enterprises and suggests that local authorities should be supportive of well conceived farm diversification that contribute to sustainable development objectives and help to sustain the agricultural enterprise. This application provides no evidence that this is a farm diversification programme that may warrant some consideration under these policies. As such the application lacks any justification for the encroachments into the open countryside.

Sustainable Location

6.5 Unitary Development Plan Policies S1, S6, DR2 and DR3 aim to ensure that new developments be sited in locations which are located and designed so as to facilitate a genuine choice of mode of travel, including public transport, cycling and walking as alternative to the private car. The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism also make reference to the siting of parks where local services may be accessed by means other than by car. Paragraph 35 of PPS7 also where new or additional facilities are required these should normally be provided in, or close to, service centres or villages.

6.6 The application submission makes no reference to the proximity to facilities in the village of Shobdon and towns of Presteigne or Kington. The site is approximately 1km to the main Presteigne road and a significant distance to an public service. Whilst it may attract those who wish to walk or cycle, realistically the predominant mode of

transport will be the private motorcar. The scale of development also then become relevant where there will be additional car movement for 3 units, sleeping up to six persons. This is considered inappropriate and a level of development which would increase traffic movements to the detriment of the environment and locality.

- 6.7 The existing access to the site is substandard and the Transportation Manager raises an objection in terms of highway safety having particular regard to the intensification of the use. As such the proposal is considered to be contrary to policies DR3 and RST14 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (2007).

Landscape Impact and Scale and Character of Development

- 6.8 The application site itself is has some screening and would benefit from additional screening to protect views from public vantage points. However, the scale of the development would have an impact on the rural character of this area. These units would inevitably acquire a clutter of domestic paraphernalia such as decking, washing lines, parasols and outside seating, barbeques and vehicles parking. The introduction of three units and a new driveway to the South of the existing pond would unavoidably make this site more assertive in the landscape, not least because of the sheer presence of households in terms of movement or people and vehicles. The intensification of activity and density would have a more urban nature and would change the character of the area, eroding its extremely quiet and rural qualities. As such the proposal is considered to be contrary to policies DR2, LA2 and RST14 of the Unitary Development Plan (2007).
- 6.9 It remains a central principle of government policy to protect the countryside for its own sake. The fact that development may be well screened is not justification for that development. The Councils Landscape Officer has made detailed comments on this matter and also recommends refusal.

Ecology

- 6.10 The Councils Ecologist has also visited the site and raised concerns that the development may impact on protected species. Without the benefit of an ecological report on this matter, that would identify the presence of such species and make recommendations (if present) to mitigate against harm, the Council is unable to confirm compliance with the relevant policies of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (2007) and guidance contained within PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.

Conclusion

- 6.11 Whilst policies are generally supportive of chalet / caravans parks in appropriate locations, the proposed siting of three holiday lodges on a site which is considered remote from services and facilities is considered contrary to policies S1, S6, DR2 and DR3 as well as the principle and aims of PPS7 and the Good Practice Guide for Tourism. Whilst it is accepted that the proposal would not have a far-reaching landscape impact the development of this scale, would, by its nature, change the character of the locality to the detriment of the landscape quality. As such it is considered to be contrary to policies DR2, LA2 and RST14 of the UDP (2007). The proposal also lacks detail as to the ecological impact of the development contrary to policies NC1, NC5, NC6, NC7, NC8 and NC9 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (2007).

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development, by virtue of its scale, nature and siting would be an inappropriate form of development that would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and character of the immediate area and on the open countryside. As such the proposal is considered to be contrary to polices DR2, LA2 and RST14 of the Unitary Development Plan (2007).
2. The proposed development, by virtue of its scale and siting would be an unsustainable form of development contrary to policies S1, S6, DR2 and DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (2007)as well as the objectives of PPS7- Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.
3. The intensified use of the existing substandard access that would serve the proposed site would be to the detriment of highway safety and as such would be contrary to the aims of policy DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (2007).
4. In the absence of an ecological survey to the contrary, the proposal cannot be considered to comply with Policies NC1, NC5, NC6, NC7, NC8 and NC9 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (2007).

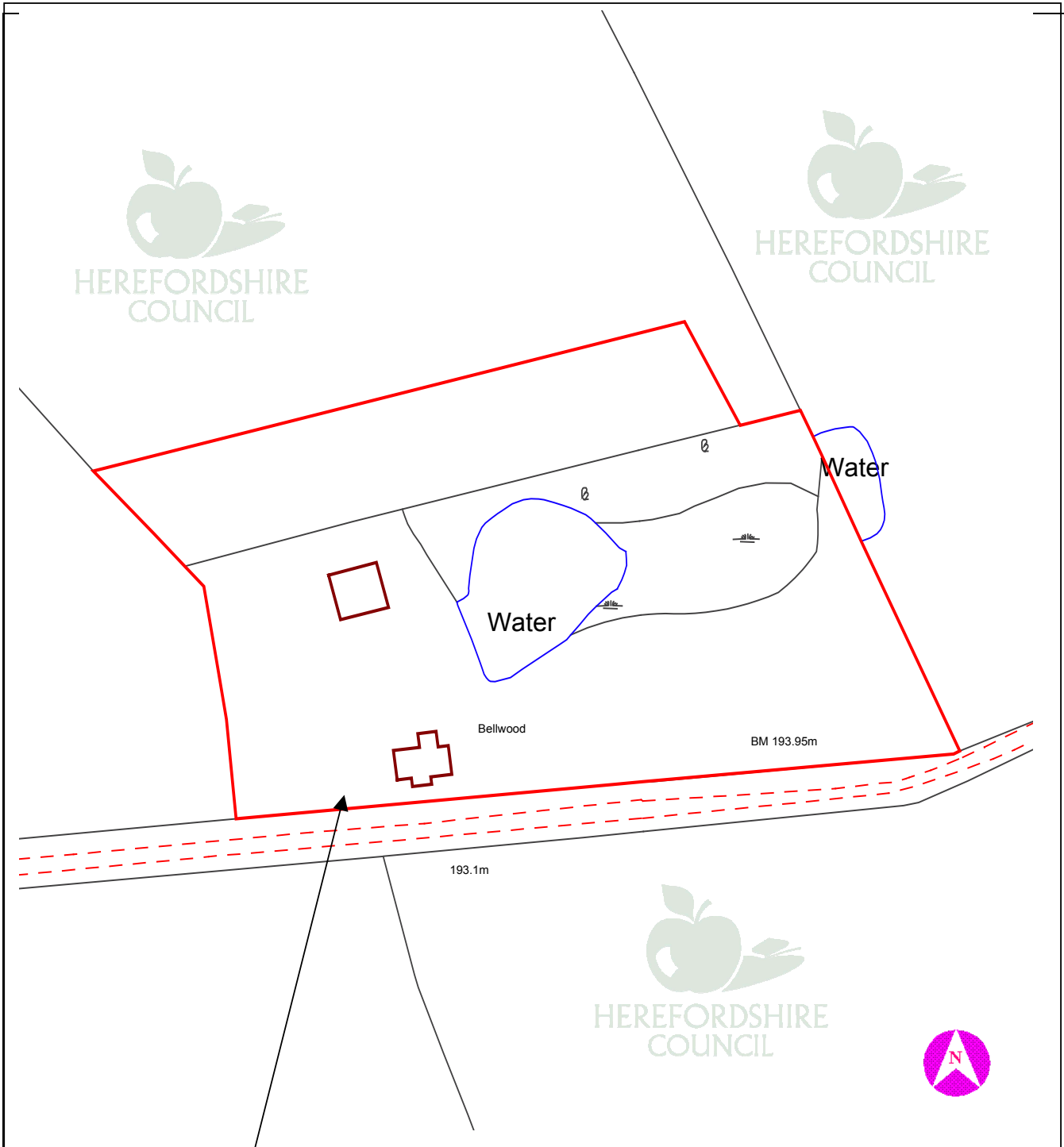
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCNW2008/0927/F

SCALE: 1: 1250

SITE ADDRESS: Bellwood, Shobdon, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 9NJ

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