

MEETING:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE:	12 JANUARY 2011
TITLE OF REPORT:	<p>DMS/102193/F- FORMING OF NEW ACCESS AND SITE ROAD. CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PACKING SHED. ERECTION OF 2 NO. POLYTUNNELS. PLACING OF 4 NO. MOBILE STORAGE UNITS ON SITE AT LAND OPPOSITE THE BELL INN, TILLINGTON, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR4 8LH</p> <p>For: Wetland Plants per Mr Richard Ball, Ilex, Ashfield Crescent, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5PH</p>

Date Received: 25 August 2010

Ward: Burghill, Holmer and Lyde

Grid Ref: 346381,245201

Expiry Date: 18 November 2010

Local Member: Councillor SJ Robertson

Introduction

The application was referred to the Planning Committee on the 15 December 2010 and was deferred for a site visit.

The public speakers raised additional issues in respect of drainage and water supply. Additional information has been supplied and the report has been updated accordingly.

Additional conditions have been recommended.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The site is a 0.5ha parcel of agricultural land sited on the east of the C1099 (Roman Road between Tillington and Credenhill). To the south west boundary of the site are two residential properties (Sunnycroft and Southview). The site sits in an elevated position with the boundary and both the adjoining roads and the neighbouring properties being at a lower level. The road drops to the south west and the cross-roads to the north-east are also lower. The boundary with the highway is a well maintained mature hedgerow on a raised bank along the road. The remaining boundaries are also mature hedges.
- 1.2 The proposal is for the erection of two polytunnels, packhouse and storage units to facilitate the use of the land for the growing and distribution of wetland plants.

- 1.3 The two polytunnels would be 7.92m x 19.5m sited next to each other with a maximum height of 3.5m. They would be sited adjacent to the eastern boundary. To the south west of this would be the packing shed, a timber clad building with slate roof with a footprint of 11.8m by 11m, with an eaves height of 2.5m and ridge height of 4.2m. This will incorporate a packing area, office and WC. Grouped with this would be a bank of four mobile storage units that would have a total floor area of 40 sq metres. This group would be approximately 50m from the boundary with the neighbouring property. The ground to the south of this group of buildings and the adjacent dwellings would be laid to planting area / beds.
- 1.4 Access to the site would be relocated from the existing field access which has substandard visibility to an access that is to the south west corner of the site, adjacent to the driveway that serves Sunnycroft. An access track would then run along the boundary with this property before turning north to serve the buildings. In order to facilitate the access and required visibility splays a section of hedgerow (55m) would be translocated behind the visibility splay.
- 1.5 To the north of the application site, three wildlife ponds are proposed that would be planted with native British plants.

2. Policies

2.1 National Planning Policy

PPS1	-	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4	-	Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS9	-	Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007:

S2	-	Development Requirements
S7	-	Natural and Historic Heritage
DR1	-	Design
DR2	-	Land Use and Activity
DR3	-	Movement
DR14	-	Lighting
E11	-	Employment in the Smaller Settlements and Open Countryside
E13	-	Agricultural and Forestry Development
E15	-	Protection of Greenfield Land
LA2	-	Landscaped Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change
LA5	-	Protection of Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes
T8	-	Road Hierarchy

3. Planning History

- 3.1 None.

4. Consultation Summary

4.1 Conservation Manager - Landscapes:

The proposals in this application are not likely to have a significant adverse affect on the landscape character of the area. This is an agricultural landscape and the proposals are of a relatively small scale, contained within an existing field.

The visual impact of the proposal will not be prominent. Views from the adjoining road will be screened by the hedge and bank. Views from Credenhill Park Wood are restricted by the trees. The rolling topography, together with existing vegetation, also restricts views from the lower public footpath that joins Roman Road. There is a clear view of the site from higher land on the public footpath at Hill Farm, however the proposed development will be seen together with the existing residential buildings and it is not thought to cause a significant detriment effect on this viewpoint. There is no view to the site from Tillington Common or further away at Badnage.

The two adjoining residential properties are likely to experience a negative effect on the adjoining landscape. The new entrance and access road will be close to their boundary, however the new built constructions will be approximately 40m away. I would request that an additional native hedge is planted along this boundary to help mitigate the visual impact of the development (part of the boundary is only a horizontal bar fence and shed).

The existing hedgerows should be protected. The proposal to relocate part of the hedge along the road boundary is supported as this will reduce the effect of the development on the character of the road.

- 4.2 Conservation Manager – Ecology: The southern half of the field appears to be improved grassland; the northern section appears to be less-improved, although not particularly species-rich. The field would not appear to have been ploughed in recent times. There would not appear to be significant habitat loss in relation to the area for proposed development, but I would be concerned about further development within the northern half of the field. I believe that with sympathetic management, this area could provide a positive contribution to biodiversity and recommend that a habitat management scheme be implemented.

I note the proposed new 'wildlife ponds' although they appear too uniform in size as well as within the setting of the field. Insufficient detail has been submitted regarding the profiles and planting within these ponds. It is also not clear whether they are purely for wildlife and to be managed as such, or whether they are likely to be used as 'stock ponds' or for propagation. This needs to be clarified prior to determination of this application.

The proposed internal access is rather close to the mature hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the field, and I would request that there is a sufficient buffer of at least 2m between the track and the hedgerow.

If the above can be resolved satisfactorily and this application is to be approved, I recommend inclusion of appropriately worded planning conditions to secure the following:

- Implementation of the recommendations of the ecological report
- Submission of a full working method statement for the translocation and subsequent monitoring of the hedgerow
- A habitat enhancement and management scheme for the ponds, hedgerows and grassland.

- 4.3 Transportation Manager: Raises no objection to the proposal subject to conditions relating to visibility splays.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Burghill Parish Council object to this proposal and make the following comments:

The site is not appropriate for any horticultural / commercial use. It enjoys an elevated position above the ridge height of adjoining properties and any form of glasshouse / polytunnel will have a detrimental effect on the landscape. The access to the site is very dangerous and the removal of the hedges causes environmental issues. This site is pasture land for the village and should be retained for that purpose as it is outside the village envelope.

5.2 Letters of objection have been received from Mr M Symonds of Goose Ploc, Tillington and Mr and Mrs Roberts of Sunny Croft, Tillington. The issues raised can be summarised as follows:

- Highways safety for the following reasons:
 - Traffic coming over the brow of the hill tend to speed up towards the gate to Sunny Croft.
 - The introduction of an access, 2 metres from the access to Sunnycroft would make the problem more dangerous for all (including users of farm access opposite).
 - a safe access could be made at the brow of the hill with good visibility in each direction.
- There would be noise and environmental pollution from the site impacting on the amenities (from kitchen window).
- Request a suitable screen in the field side, alongside the drive would be needed.
- Polytunnels or buildings should be sunk into the ground.
- This may lead to further polytunnel development in the area.

5.3 A letter of support has been received from Canon Pyon Post Office and Store that confirms that Wetland Plants has been using the PO at Canon Pyon for over 4 years and that it is a very well established business. It states that it is appreciative of the business that Wetland Plants bring to the Post Office which does great deal to continue the viability of the office.

5.4 For the purpose of clarification the applicants' agent has also provided details of the proposed use and its future that can be summarised as follows:

- The business was established in 1990 at Bodenham and was moved to Ashperton. We purchased the business in 2004 and moved it to the site at Upton Bishop where it has been to date.
- The site at Upton Bishop has a packing and storage shed, un-heated polytunnels and greenhouse and large external growing area for most of our plants. The existing premises have been sold and the company needs to move by the end of January 2011.
- We grow hardy water and moisture loving plants and we need the polytunnel and or greenhouse for over wintering a proportion of plants in pots and for propagation. Specialise in growing native British plants and supply reeds for waste treatment in waste water systems.
- We would emphasise that our plants do not need any additional heat.
- The business currently employs 3 people, the nurseryman, one person that deals with the online computer system (from their home) and a part time employee who packs plants and assists the nurseryman. Our nurseryman currently travels on a daily basis from Leominster and there is no need for 24 hour supervision on the site.

- The plants are packaged on site and large packages are collected twice a week by couriers and small packages are taken by staff to the local post office (Canon Pyon) and sent by Royal Mail.
- The nursery would not be open to the public.
- At peak times (spring / summer) the projected vehicle movements are approximately 20 - 26 per week including staff / deliveries.
- We understand that there has been a suggestion that we are using this application as a means to establish a dwelling on this site, this is not the case. One of our partners lives within 10 minutes drive of this site. The purchase of this site and this application has been forced on us and it is now a commercial necessity for the continued operation of this local business.
- As far as the wildlife ponds are concerned they will be part of our operation they will contain stock plants which can be used for propagation purposes. They will be stocked with native plants which we use to supply people with packs to establish ponds which will provide a good environment to encourage native wild life.

5.5 In response to queries raised at the committee meeting on the 15 December the applicants have provided the following information for clarification.

- Water for plants will be via a borehole, we can abstract a max of 20 cubic metres per day for our operation. We have a borehole at Upton Bishop and we have never exceeded this capacity.
- In fact we only need water to top up the water in the lily and marginal tanks due to evaporation or transpiration of the plants. This is not needed on a daily basis. There is no run off, we just top up the tanks. The water for growing plants is static.
- Storage container are for the storage of plastic pots / boxes essential equipment we buy the pots and boxes in bulk this gives us a good discount for them we then need to store these items in a dry and secure area hence the storage containers.
- Emphasise that we are not removing but re locating the hedge.
- The septic tank will be the smallest available, 2800 litres, and situated 6 metres from the packing shed in the direction of the hedge. The run off from it will be via a reed bed. Any run off from that will be into a soakaway near the hedge.
- We intend to collect the rainwater from the shed and polytunnels for topping up the ponds and irrigating.
- Pond construction; they will be up to 1 metre deep, for the deeper water native plants, with planting ledges, for the marginals and gently sloping edges to allow easy access for wildlife. They will be set into the natural topography of the land and positioned to provide the preferred conditions for the plants e.g. shade, part shade or full sun.

5.6 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The issues for consideration are:

- a) The principle of development
 - b) Highway Safety
 - c) Landscape impact
 - d) Ecological impact
 - e) Impact upon amenities of neighbouring residential properties
- 6.2 The existing land use is agriculture. The proposed land use is for the growing of plants which falls within the definition of agriculture (horticulture) accordingly there would be no change of use of the land involved. The proposal requires the erection of two polytunnels, a packing / office building and storage to facilitate the packing and distribution of the plants. The business is a small scale local agricultural business.
- 6.3 Policy E13 relates to proposals that are in connection with agricultural activity and requires that where possible, new building are sited with existing groups of building and services have a functional relationship with other buildings and services or where this is not possible are not located in skyline locations and take advantage of natural land form. Impacts upon residential amenity and environment should be avoided and proposals should be well related to existing developments and the landscape in terms of scale, design, colour and materials.
- 6.4 The proposal may be viewed as being more of a commercial enterprise than agricultural because of the methods of selling the plants grown. If this was considered then having regard to employment policies Policy E11 may apply. Having regard to this the proposal is considered to have very strong links to agriculture and as such is considered acceptable in principle subject to consideration of its impact upon the landscape, ecology, highway safety and amenities of neighbouring properties.
- 6.5 The uses proposed do not require any on site supervision (i.e. no reliance of heated tunnels etc) and have been operating in this manner for 6 years in Upton Bishop.
- 6.6 Locally one of the main concerns relates to the highway safety implications of the proposal. The lane that will be used to access the site is a popular 'cut through' from Credenhill to Burghill / Tillington (C1095 - Tillington Road). The proposal does not raise an objection from the Transportation Manager and the required visibility splays can be achieved. The neighbour raises concern about the impact upon their access but this already has very limited visibility and the proposals to provide this access are likely to improve visibility to the north to their benefit. There are some differences in levels at this point and a condition is suggested to ensure that visibility is not impaired by the formation of any bank. The proposed use is small in scale and even at peak times is unlikely to cause significant traffic movements. The site is close to a good highway network travelling towards Hereford with access to bus routes. As such the proposal, subject to the appropriate conditions is considered to comply with policy DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.
- 6.7 The Landscape Officer has raised no objection to the proposal. Despite the site being in an elevated position, the scale and nature of the development and existence of a significant and mature boundary hedge precludes obtrusive and harmful views of the proposed developments. Details of the site levels are suggested by condition to ensure and enable buildings to be cut into the ground where necessary.
- 6.8 The hedgerow that is to be removed and replanted (translocated) behind the visibility splay is also welcomed and a method statement for its translocation (and replanting if this fails) is suggested by condition. A condition requiring the protection of the existing hedges on site is also suggested. In order to provide a boundary between the application site and the residential dwelling a condition relating to boundary treatments (planting specifications / fencing) is also suggested. It may also be beneficial to undertake some tree planting on the ground between the access and dwelling in the interests of providing a long term screen to the development.

- 6.9 On the basis of the above, with the appropriate conditions attached the proposal is considered to comply with policies LA2, LA5 and LA6 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.
- 6.10 The Council's Ecologist has also raised no objection to the proposals subject to the clarification of the planting to the 'wildlife ponds' and its management and the slight repositioning of the access. This matter has been clarified and a condition is recommended to secure detailed requirements. As such the proposal is considered to comply with policy NC1 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and guidance contained with PPS9 – Biodiversity and geological conservation.
- 6.11 The residential properties immediately adjacent to the application site are likely to be affected in some way by the development. The levels of noise and disturbance are not however likely to be so significant that they would cause unacceptable harm to their living conditions, especially given that the garage and parking areas form quite a distinct separation from the agricultural land and the dwellings. A landscaped boundary is recommended to provide additional screening. This would be planted on a quite substantial bank which will increase its effectiveness. The main issue would relate to traffic movements but these are minimal and can be restricted to normal working hours thus reducing impact in the early morning, late evening, weekends and public holidays.
- 6.12 In order to protect these residential amenities, conditions relating to hours of working and deliveries are recommended. Conditions relating to landscaping and lighting are also suggested.
- 6.13 In conclusion, the proposed development is considered to be primarily agricultural in nature and small in scale. The impact of the development on the landscape and biodiversity is negligible and can be mitigated and in part enhanced. Accordingly the relocation of the small scale rural business is supported.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. A01 Time limit for commencement (full permission).**
- 2. G10 Landscaping scheme.**
- 3. G11 Landscaping scheme - implementation.**
- 4. H03 Visibility splays.**
- 5. H06 Vehicular access construction.**
- 6. H09 Driveway gradient.**
- 7. H13 Access, turning area and parking.**
- 8. C01 Samples of external materials.**
- 9. F01 Restriction on hours of working.**
- 10. Restriction on hours of delivery.**
- 11. The use / buildings hereby permitted shall not be open to customers at any time.**

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and the amenities of the locality having regard to policies DR2 and DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

- 12. F06 Restriction on use.**
- 13. I32 Details of floodlighting / external lighting.**
- 14. K4 Nature Conservation - Implementation.**
- 15. K5 Habitat Enhancement Scheme.**
- 16. H27 - Parking for site operatives.**
- 17. G01 - Earthworks (including ponds, access and surrounding areas).**
- 18. I16 - Restriction of hours during construction.**
- 19. I18 - Scheme of foul drainage disposal.**

Prior to the commencement of works a full working method statement for the translocation and subsequent monitoring (including timetable of works) of the hedgerow identified on the approved plans shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of landscape impact and to ensure that the nature conservation interest of the site is protected having regard to policies LA2, LA5, LA6, NC1 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

Informative:

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

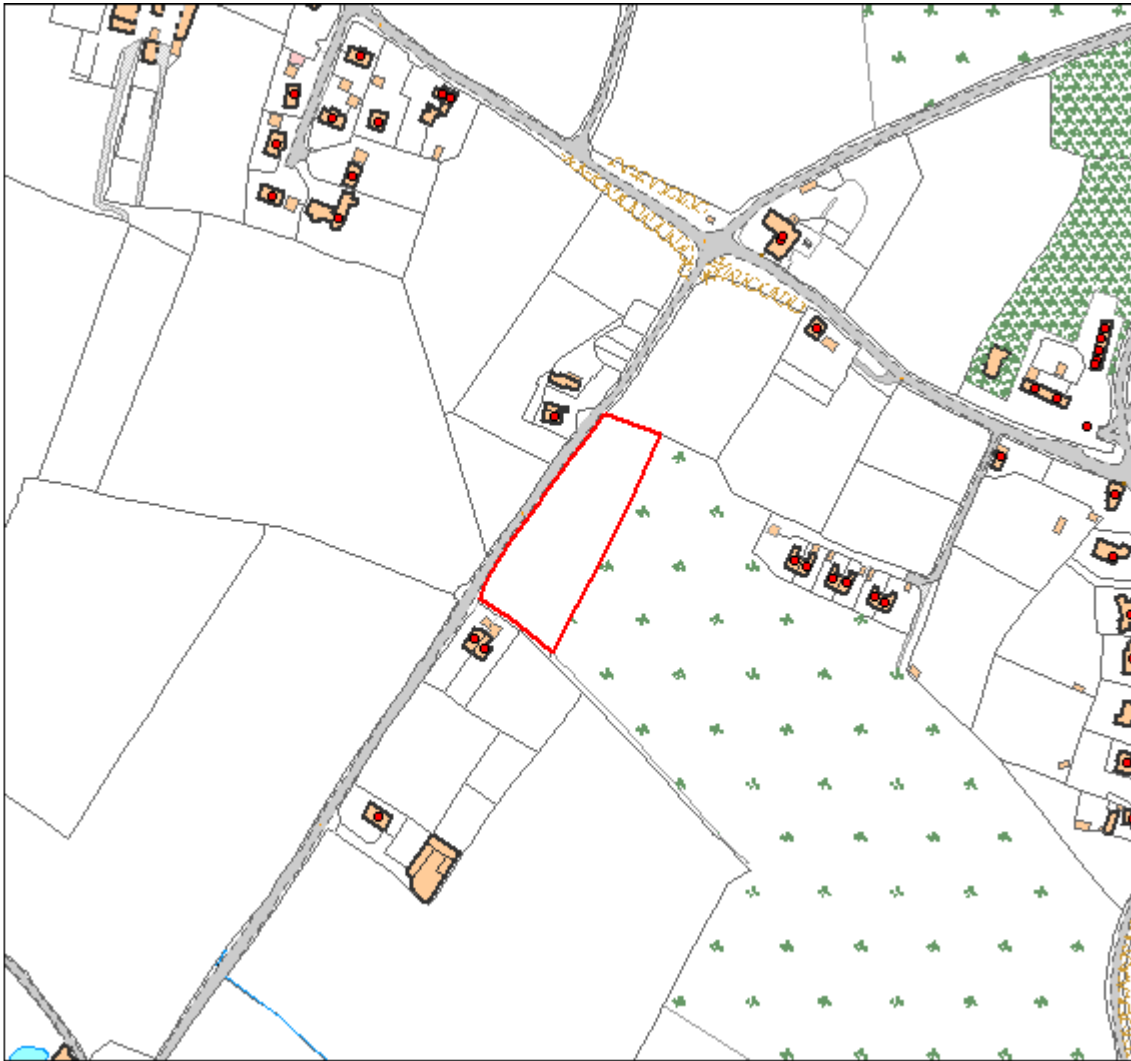
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DMS/102193/F

SITE ADDRESS : LAND OPPOSITE THE BELL INN, TILLINGTON, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR4 8LH

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